

LOST HORIZONS

**The United States and the Challenge of British North America,
1760-1871**

GARETH DAVIS

UCL

Doctor of Philosophy in History

I, Gareth Davis, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that it has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature

ABSTRACT

The historical problem this dissertation addresses is the persistent challenge British North America posed for those who transited from British colonists to citizens of the USA. A Greater North America post-1760 encompassed Catholic Canadiens challenging what it meant to be British American. Following Independence, that challenge was heightened as nascent Americans confronted both a foreign country and the past they had rejected. The American identity, contested within the Republic itself, was constructed not only in response to a distant world, but to the Britain that persisted on its doorstep. In defining themselves, socially, politically, and culturally, the attributes of that identity upon which Americans fixed were explored in their relationship with British America.

The sources upon which I focus are those that engaged with the American public imagination. These were magazines, journals, newspapers, travel guides, pulpit sermons, and political debates. Both as consumers of popular media and as visitors to the provinces, Americans explored what it meant to be different using their nearest point of comparison. Commitments to the republican experiment and egalitarian democracy were accentuated in contact with monarchical, hierarchical British America.

I argue that the survival of Catholic Canadiens reaffirmed an aggressive Protestant Anglophone identity that was specifically American, and the notion that national integrity could only be denuded by multiculturalism. Fugitive black Americans found a space in Canada where hierarchy trounced white Jacksonian democracy, enabling them to assert positive identities as families, communities, and citizen-subjects. More importantly, the British American presence sustained continentalism, a core ideology of the Revolution, complicating Americans' definition of their own space and place within the hemisphere they occupied. The British provinces were unlike any other polity in the western hemisphere. They demanded America's attention because of proximity and seeming similarity, both confusing and affirming the nation's identity.

IMPACT STATEMENT

This thesis represents an intervention in a historical field of study that is growing, specifically in the exploration of the evolution of the United States. What has been termed a “continental turn” involves stepping outside the well-established parameters of the nation to place the USA in conversation with its neighbours. My focus is the interaction of the nascent Republic of the end of the eighteenth and first three quarters of the nineteenth centuries with the surviving colonies that constituted British North America. I aim to initiate further exploration of the cultural and political relationships hitherto neglected between the States and the provinces. The field of pre-1900 American-British American relations beyond that of diplomacy in which Great Britain predominates is invisible on academic curricula. I hope this intervention will further stimulate the continental turn in classrooms to encompass the neighbours Americans most resembled.

As a broadcaster and writer, my aim has always been to communicate the research undertaken here and the conclusions reached to a public audience in the forms of documentary media, magazine features, and a published work of interest to both academics and a broader public readership.

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NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

Any study of North America that straddles the American Revolution, embracing both the colonial period and the evolution of the American Republic faces challenges in terminology. As colonists changed identities, the titles they adopted become increasingly confusing. “British North Americans,” “British Americans,” “Americans,” “Canadians,” and “Canadiens,” can confuse both the reader and the writer.

In this study, prior to the Revolution, “British North Americans” and “British Americans” denote all Anglophone colonists in North America. Post-1783, they denote only those inhabitants of the surviving British American colonies while “Americans” are those who are citizens of the new United States. “Canadiens” always describes the French-speaking inhabitants of Quebec, or Canada as it was sometimes called. It was these whom contemporaries pre-1783 called “Canadians,” and post-1783, “French Canadians.” * “Canadien” describes all things appertaining to them. “Canadians” denotes Canada’s Anglophone inhabitants throughout the period under examination. In addition, “seigneurs” are the Canadien land holding elite and “habitants” the Canadien tenant farmers. All place names in Quebec are rendered in French except when quoting from primary sources.

Geographic terms are equally confusing. During the period examined, French Canada was known as Nouvelle France (1760-3), the Province of Quebec (1763-91), Lower Canada (1791-1840), Canada East (1840-67), and Quebec (1867-). English Canada was Upper Canada (1791-1840), Canada West (1840-67), and Ontario (1867-).

*Though confusingly, post-Independence, Canadiens were still sometimes called “Canadians” as opposed to Anglophone Canadians who were simply “British.”

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This thesis started in hospital and ended in hospital. There were times when I wished it had stayed there. That it did not was thanks not only to an enthusiasm for the project that propelled me onwards, but the support and encouragement I received from others. The chronological arc I had chosen always suggested a need for two supervisors, masters of the pre- and post-1783 American worlds I was exploring. I was lucky to find them in Professors Stephen Conway and Adam Smith at the wonderful department that is UCL History. My debt to both is huge. Stephen and Adam nurtured me through the peaks and troughs of the PhD experience. They have been mentors in every sense of the word, not least in weaning me away from habits acquired in twenty years of broadcast writing to embrace the very different requirements of the academic discipline. When I doubted, they did not. They have become friends whose encouragement I treasure.

During my studies, I was fortunate to spend three months as a Visiting Assistant in Research at Yale University, and I was awarded the Lord Baltimore Scholarship by the Maryland Historical Society. I would like to thank the staff at Yale and its Beinecke Library, the MdHS, and the Virginia and Massachusetts Historical Societies for allowing me access to their collections and their professionalism in meeting my every need. This is especially true of the staff of the Rare Books and Music Reading Room at the British Library, my home for the past four years. Warm, supportive and eminently capable, this thesis could not have been completed without them.

My time at UCL History coincided with a Golden Age in postgraduate research in the history of the United States. A PhD is usually depicted as a lonely endeavour. That this has not been my experience is thanks to a merry band of fellow PhD Americanists. I raise a glass of Birkbeck Bar's best to David Tiedemann, Mark Power Smith, Andrew Short, Matt Griffin and Alys Beverton, dear fellow voyagers. Also, cheers to two other PhD compatriots, Shane Horwell and Alessandro de Arcangelis, the one a perfect flatmate for the past two and a half years, the other a friend who has never been too busy on Vesuvius to provide support. Outside the academy, my thanks go to my dearest friends of over twenty years, Mark Wilson and Dr. Christopher Etheridge who have applauded my triumphs and endured my despairs throughout. Most of all, I thank my

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CHAPTER ONE

EXPLAINING LOST HORIZONS

Most Americans do not think about Canada. Despite a shared language and common cultural traits, they pay scant attention to their larger continental cousin.¹ The historical relationship between the two countries has long since been enveloped in the fog of what Gore Vidal called the United States of Amnesia.² Few Americans are familiar with their invasion of Quebec in 1775-6, or many attempts to conquer Canada during the War of 1812.³ The American memory is famously selective.⁴ Today, amnesia seems an inadequate explanation of the public's lack of interest in the country on their doorstep. Indifference would seem more apt, unless you count the quadrennial spikes in internet searches when a would-be émigré minority imagine a northern haven from a presidency they never wanted.⁵ Little has changed since 1990, when a *Maclean's Magazine* survey entitled 'Portrait of Two Nations,' led Seymour Martin Lipset to

¹ A cursory search on YouTube supports this.

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4ccEwn2f1o>> Accessed 9 December 2014. Evident differences exist between Americans and the Québécois and Acadiens.

² Gore Vidal, *Imperial America: Reflections on the United States of Amnesia* (New York: Nation Books, 2004).

³ Though not government sanctioned, to these could be added Americans' involvement in the Canadian Rebellions 1837-8, the 1838-9 Aroostook War, the 1859 Pig War, and the 1866-1871 Fenian Raids. See Shaun J. McLaughlin, *The Patriot War along the Michigan-Canada Border: Raiders and Rebels* (Charleston: The History Press, 2013); W. E. Campbell, *The Aroostook War of 1839* (Fredericton NB: Goose Lane Editions, 2013); Robert Gordon Lyall, 'From Imbroglia to Pig War: The San Juan Island Dispute, 1853-71, in History and Memory,' *BC Studies*, Iss. 186, (Summer 2015), 73-95; David Brundage, *Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile, 1798-1998* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 104-6. Also Kathleen Burk, *The Lion & The Eagle: The Interaction of the British and American Empires, 1783-1972* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 114-21, 121-5, 134-45.

⁴ Donald Trump's ignorance of the War of 1812 is indicative.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-44394156?intlink_from_url=https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cg41ylwvxd7t/justin-trudeau&link_location=live-reporting-story> Accessed 11 June 2018.

⁵ There are many examples e.g. <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/trump-election-clinton-loss-drives-immigration-canada-1.3844242>> Accessed 16 April 2018.

conclude that ‘Americans know very little or nothing about their northern neighbour.’⁶ That was not always the case.

Before Canada, there was British North America, and as this study argues, between 1760 and 1871, those British American colonists who became US citizens remained engaged with the world they had rejected, and yet, which retained a persistent, siren-like presence upon the continent they increasingly called their own. Throughout a period that witnessed the sometimes hesitant, often internally contested, emergence of the USA, and its territorial expansion south and west, American engagement with their neighbours to the north was wide ranging. As Reginald Stuart has reminded us, ‘anyone who believes that Canadian-American relations are just about presidents and prime ministers has missed 98 percent of what goes on.’⁷ It was as true in the period under examination when those relations prompted debates over differing politics, societies, cultures, and economies. Far from indifferent, Americans’ curiosity in the British provinces involved them in examinations of who they were, where they were, and what it meant to be American.

L. P. Hartley’s famous phrase that, ‘the past is a foreign country,’ is particularly suited to British America. There, Americans confronted both.⁸ To their north lay a foreign space where their own past was embarked upon a separate trajectory. In the century from Revolution to Reconstruction, the British American experience seemed to veer between vindication of the US experiment, and rejection of all that it represented. American claims to exceptionalism were slowly challenged by an equally exceptional political system in the British provinces, though it did not always seem so. The American Republic bulldozed forward alongside the tortoise-like steps of the surviving British colonies towards consolidation and their own national integration. A very different city was rising on another hill, and Americans were fascinated, confounded, confused and

⁶ Seymour Martin Lipset, *Continental Divide: The Values and Institutions of the United States and Canada* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. xvi-ii.

⁷ Reginald C. Stuart, *Dispersed Relations: Americans and Canadians in Upper North America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2007), 293.

⁸ L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1953), 9.

dismissive. British America 'intrigued and infuriated Americans for more than a century.'⁹ As tourists, journalists, writers, and politicians, they engaged in a national discourse in which the British provinces were appropriated to explain and construct their own past, present, and future. The dogged British presence was the mirror before which they refined and preened themselves. Essentially, British North America assisted Americans in the construction of their own identity. There are indeed lost horizons.

This study explores those horizons, and argues that doing so enriches our understanding of the evolution of the American experience. Situating that within a broader continental context, not least in conversation with the neighbours it so resembled highlights the breadth of that conversation and its importance to Americans navigating their own regional, sectional, and national identities. Debates in which Americans as colonists and citizens were involved, intersected with a broader discourse embracing the reconfigured British Americas of the 1760 and 1783 settlements. I argue that a Quebec, integrated in the 1760s and 70s, and separated from the 1780s onwards, helped rebel colonists hone their continental identities, and continued to inform US citizens how that identity should be understood. This was particularly pertinent in the case of Irish Catholic immigration from the 1830s onwards, considered a threat to the Anglophone Protestant nation. The past was never a foreign place for evolving Americans. It was the place in which they moulded themselves. The 1774 Quebec Act that sustained Canadian culture and its Catholic religion was continuously revisited to inform the citizenry of imperial mistakes that the Republic should avoid. Similarly, the Revolution itself was mythologised by political changes in the British provinces that could only be explained as a reflection of America's own trajectory. Even the American South, so distant from the colonies, understood that the future of the nation was far from isolated from the British presence north of the border. I also argue that for black Americans fleeing the USA as free refugees or fugitive slaves, the British American sojourn was not simply a pit stop before eventual return to an emancipated America. It was a space in which black agency was invigorated. It fostered choice, enabling the construction of black identities, whether American or British American, and social and

⁹ Adam Burns, *American Imperialism: The Territorial Expansion of the United States, 1783-2013* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 30.

political statuses denied in the 'Empire of liberty.'¹⁰ Finally, I argue that annexation of British America cannot be dismissed as a fringe aspiration of an American minority but rather it was a core belief of a nation structured within an imagined continental space. In effect, the idea of America, continent and nation, was both a conceptual and emotional continuum, a persistent heartbeat throughout our period, and its geopolitical promise a sometime agitated bleep on its ECG. As this study shows, in engaging with their British neighbours, Americans revisited who they had been, who they were, and what they ultimately should be.

The dynamism of that engagement with British America presents such a contrast to the stagnant situation in the USA today that Vidal's diagnosis of amnesia seems justified, but it does not explain the sea change that has taken place over the last century and a half. Asking, 'how much do we still forget as we remember?' David Blight has highlighted the historical conundrum that Eric Foner, paraphrasing Nietzsche, termed 'creative forgetfulness – how the memory of some aspects of the past is predicated on amnesia about others.'¹¹ Elsewhere, Foner has drawn our attention to the duplicitous nature of this process, reminding us that history involves 'lies of omission.'¹² In the case of British North America, contrived forgetfulness and deception have been the engines of change, extracting it from Americans' historical memory. Amnesia in this context is not the result of accident or neglect. It is a constructed state. Its purpose has been the creation of a selective American narrative that has proven a useful tool, not least in the

¹⁰ Thomas Jefferson to George Rogers Clark, 25 December 1780. Admittedly written during the height of the War of Independence, in hindsight, the letter is ironic as Jefferson contrasted his 'Empire' with 'the dangerous extension of the British Province of Canada' that would ultimately provide succour to black Americans. <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/01-04-02-0295>> Accessed 19 October 2018. His later characterisation of the USA as an 'empire for liberty' was in the context of the acquisition of slaveholding Cuba. Thomas Jefferson to James Madison, 27 April 1809. <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-01-02-0140>> Accessed 19 October 2018.

¹¹ David W. Blight, 'The Silent Type,' *New York Review of Books* Vol. LXV, No. 9 (May 24 - June 6, 2018), 52; Eric Foner, *Who Owns History? Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), xii-xiii.

¹² Eric Foner, *Battles for Freedom: The Use and Abuse of American History* (London: I. B. Tauris & The Nation Company, 2017), 103.

preservation of a shielded public memory. Comparative analysis of the once-imperial neighbour that evolved from a clutch of loyal colonies into an independent and successful constitutional monarchy without recourse to revolution or war, veers uncomfortably close to questioning the USA itself, shaking its republican foundations. Far more comforting has been narratives spun by the likes of nationalist historians such as James Ford Rhodes, Whig tales in which the Civil War, central to the nation's evolution, became a bloody but brave blip with heroes on both sides who finally united to meet the destiny they were always fated to fulfil. Though dismissed by modern historians, this account continues to have purchase with the American public.¹³

Leland G. Stauber asks in vain if there would have been advantages to the Revolutionary generation following 'something closer to the Canadian path of peaceful and gradual evolution,' because answering that question requires, as even Stauber concedes, the surrendering of 'an enormous volume of American pride.'¹⁴ Best let Canada alone. Doing so also means that black agency in combatting slavery and its baggage, the inversions of family, status, and gender, can be silenced. The 'dilemma of slavery' need not be further complicated by British America's apparently unflustered emancipation of its black slaves, and any embarrassment caused by the empowering experience provided refugee and fugitive black Americans in Her Majesty's provinces can be avoided.¹⁵ It is striking how the last half century's swathe of American historiography dealing with slavery has constructed a narrative of the nineteenth century black experience in which the British provinces barely register.¹⁶ Volumes attest to the thousands who fled over the northern horizon, some to the fate of those who returned, but few have explored the impact of the

¹³ 'Our Monumental Mistakes' and 'The Civil War in "Postracial" America,' Ibid.

¹⁴ Leland G. Stauber, *The American Revolution: A Grand Mistake* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2010), 11.

¹⁵ Ibid., 243-5.

¹⁶ Even W. E. B. Du Bois in his seminal work made only passing remarks to Canada as a destination for fugitives, though he recognised its positive impact. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), 490-1.

provincial sojourn on black American identity.¹⁷ Disengagement with Canada proves useful today in evading continuing American racism and its contested memorialisation from challenge by the commitments to multiculturalism and equality in which Canadians set such stock.¹⁸ Finally, there is the sea-to-shining-sea mythos that in 1889 already burned so bright that Theodore Roosevelt, gazing upon Canada, could describe its westward course as ‘merely a less important repetition of what has gone on in the United States.’¹⁹ Teddy stressed the centrality of the shift West to the national psyche, but in doing so he ignored the far broader continental aspirations that had fuelled Americans through much of the nineteenth century. In fact, he demonstrated that such aspirations were diminishing to the point that they would be forgotten, as would that Other *a mari usque ad mare* to the north.²⁰ The American public’s ignorance has been well fed.

The progeniting factors in the evolution of modern Canada proving too awkward to confront, the historiographic act of ignoring, or forgetting, British North America highlights the role of ‘the politics of history.’²¹ It is politics that has helped influence historians’ dismissal of the British provinces as an unimportant factor in the

¹⁷ The few include Karolyn Smardz Frost, *I’ve Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad* (New York: Farrar, Faust and Giroux, 2007); Adam Arenson, ‘Experience Rather than Imagination: Researching the Return Migration of African North Americans during the American Civil War and Reconstruction’ *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Winter 2013), 73-7; Dann J. Broyld, ‘Harriet Tubman: *Transnationalism and the Land of a Queen in the Late Antebellum*’ *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (2014), 79-98.

¹⁸ One need only contrast Justin Trudeau’s multiple apologies to wronged minorities with Donald Trump’s refusal to condemn white supremacists.
< <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-43560817>>
< <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/12/us/trump-charlottesville-protest-nationalist-riot.html>> Accessed 14 May 2018.

¹⁹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West, Volume I: From the Alleghenies to the Mississippi, 1769-1776* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1889), 15.

²⁰ Canada’s official motto, adopted in 1921, and translated as “From Sea to Sea.”
<<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/a-mari-usque-ad-mare/>> Accessed 1 May 2018.

²¹ Eric Foner, *Battles for Freedom*, 1.

construction of the American identity. A comparison can be drawn with the Dunning School's representation of post-Civil War Reconstruction, still influential with the American public, though effectively repudiated by the Civil Rights movement and dismantled by Foner in the 1980s.²² In historiographical terms, what the Dunning School did to Reconstruction, what I call the Carnegie School did for our understanding of American engagement with British North America. Sponsored by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, its work consisted of academic conferences held in the USA and Canada between 1935 and 1941, and an influential twenty-five volume series *The Relations of Canada and the United States*, published between 1936 and 1945.²³ The story it constructed went as follows. Despite conflict during the Revolution and War of 1812, further regrettable clashes, and niggling disputes over boundaries, it is mutual respect and conciliation that has always characterised the US-Canadian relationship. That relationship, based on a shared heritage and culture, along with the cohesive geography of the continent itself, predestined North America to showcase to the world a masterclass in harmonious coexistence. The Carnegie School believed that the USA and Canada were friends, they always would be friends, and, with an Orwellian hand, it reached back into the past to assert, they always were friends. The message conveyed to the American public that stuck was that 'Canada and the United States had always been good neighbors.'²⁴ Such audacity was facilitated by two factors. Firstly, the political imperatives of the project, and secondly, historical foundations that had been long in the making.

The influence of the former is well recognised.²⁵ That of the latter in determining the future trajectory of American historiographical engagement with British North America

²² Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988), xix-xxvii;

²³ Forty-three volumes were originally planned. See Donald Wright, *The Professionalization of History in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 129-46.

²⁴ Gordon T. Stewart, *The American Response to Canada since 1776* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1992), 11.

²⁵ See Carl C. Berger, 'Internationalism, Continentalism, and the Writing of History: Comments on the Carnegie Series on the Relations of Canada and the United States,' in Richard A. Preston (Ed.), *The Influence of the United States on Canadian Development:*

less so. As to the first, given the Carnegie Endowment's remit, it was no accident that the series emerged in the 1930s when increasing international tensions cast a radiance over the peaceful relations of North America.²⁶ The School did not deny that tensions had also characterised US-Canadian relations throughout the nineteenth century, but its appealing point was that they had been resolved without recourse to war. What emerged from the project was a continentalist paradigm that emphasised similarity, not difference, between the two countries. Interestingly, the School's output 'was initiated, largely supervised, and partly written by Canadian-born scholars in the United States aided by scholars who were American-trained and living in Canada.'²⁷ Yet, it had little impact upon subsequent Canadian historiography.²⁸ The Americans involved were described at the time as 'second-string men,' and despite this, or because of it, the Carnegie message resonated with the American public.²⁹ This was particularly true in the case of the series' central Orwellian creation, the myth of the "undefended border" in which the longest shared border in the world was held up as a testament to successful peaceful coexistence. American-born Marcus L. Hansen concluded his volume with a repudiation of the saying that 'good fences make good neighbours' for 'in the case of the United States and Canada, at least, history would seem to justify some very substantial doubts.'³⁰ He brushed aside a century and a half of friction during which

Eleven Case Studies (Durham: Duke University Press, 1972); Stewart, *American Response to Canada since 1776*, 6-12;

²⁶ Ironically, in 1921, the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence in Canada produced Defence Scheme No. 1, a plan for invading the USA, while in 1930, the USA approved War Plan Red, a strategy for war against Great Britain that focused on conquering Canada. The latter was only declassified in 1974. See Kevin Lippert, *War Plan Red: The United States' Secret Plan to Invade Canada and Canada's Secret Plan to Invade the United States* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2015).

²⁷ Berger, 'Internationalism, Continentalism, and the Writing of History,' 36.

²⁸ Stewart, *American Response to Canada since 1776*, 12.

²⁹ Quoted in John Herd Thompson & Stephen J. Randall, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies* 4th Edition (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 136.

³⁰ M. L. Hansen (completed by J. B. Brebner), *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples. Vol. 1. The Relations of the United States and Canada* (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1940), 263.

much British money had been spent on mortar and manpower to defend that '3,000 miles of undefended frontier.'³¹ In his volume, as elsewhere, the border was characterised as 'an artificial and unnatural boundary dividing two peoples who share a common history and an almost identical culture.'³² As Phillip Buckner has emphasised, not all the Carnegie School subscribed to its agenda. The one volume that proved influential in Canada, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850*, explained geography as the reason for the separation of the two nations.³³ But in the States, the myth gained traction. Nothing illustrates its pervasiveness more than Allan S. Everest's statement at the time of the Revolution's Bicentennial that, 'the two countries have long since learned to live together as good neighbours, and they possess the longest unprotected border in the world. This condition stems in large part from the events of 1776.'³⁴ This is a baffling assessment unless understood within the context of an ongoing politicised historiography.³⁵

Firm historical foundations promoted such conclusions. Canadiens yearning to be free of the British yoke could be traced back to Mercy Otis Warren who, displaying Shakespearean tenacity, constructed a fictional chronology for the 1775-6 invasion of Quebec. It was only the failure of repeated political attempts to support supposedly

³¹ Wright, *Professionalization of History*, 132.

³² My thanks to Phillip Buckner, Emeritus Professor of History at New Brunswick University, for his kind permission to cite from his paper 'American-Canadian Relations in a British World, 1815-1871' delivered at UCL Institute of the Americas, 25 November 2013, 4.

³³ 'Introduction' in Phillip Buckner (Ed.), *Canada and the British Empire: The Oxford History of the British Empire Companion Series* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 11; D. G. Creighton, *The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937).

³⁴ 'Introduction' in Allan S. Everest (ed.), *The Journal of Charles Carroll of Carrollton as One of the Congressional Commissioners to Canada in 1776* (Fort Ticonderoga, NY: Champlain-Upper Hudson Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 15. Similarly, John H. G. Pell, Chairman of the New York State American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, in his Introduction to Everest's *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees in the American Revolution* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1976) bizarrely described it as an effort 'to rededicate the bonds of friendship and international cooperation, which have long characterized the relations between Canada and the United States.' (vii-iii).

³⁵ Stuart, *Dispersed Relations*, is a recent work to continue the trend.

unhappy Canadiens that, finally, compelled Congress to accept that military force “was the only mode to be relied on.”³⁶ Conquest had been imposed upon reluctant saviours of an oppressed unhappy people. Much of George Bancroft’s Carlylean history, written between 1834 and 1874, dovetailed with the mid-century annexation debate that focused on the consensual acquisition of British America. As we shall see, this debate was often initiated by provincials themselves, whether in the 1849 Montreal Annexation Manifesto, or pro-annexation movements in British Columbia and Nova Scotia in response to Confederation in the late 1860s. Bancroft titled his chapter on the 1775 invasion, the “Annexation of Canada,” as the habitants, the Canadian peasants, were ‘willing to welcome an invasion.’³⁷ Further evidence that Americans had always been in tune with their neighbours’ aspirations was the Articles of Confederation that stated, ‘if Canada would so choose, they [the States] were ready to annex Canada.’³⁸ Though annexation never came, the volumes of the Carnegie School that drew attention to contested British American politics that were contemporaneous with Bancroft’s work merely stoked American preconceptions.³⁹ It is ironic that it was a group of US-oriented Canadians with their own political drum to beat, who muddied the waters of the British American past for an American audience, and in doing so, confirmed what the latter had always thought. To wit, there was little to distinguish the British provincials from themselves, they were bound geographically to their stronger neighbour, and frustrated by a desire to become part of the United States.

³⁶ Mercy Otis Warren *History of the Rise, Progress and Termination of the American Revolution interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations. In Three Volumes.* (Boston: Manning and Loring, for E. Larkin, 1805), Vol. I, 257.

³⁷ George Bancroft, *History of the United States of America, From the Discovery of the American Continent. The Author’s Last Revision.* VI Vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1885), Vol. IV, xii & 291. The volumes discussed here were published between 1852 and 1874. See Russel B. Nye, *George Bancroft: Brahmin Rebel* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), 188 & 283.

³⁸ Bancroft, *History of the United States*, Vol. V, 200.

³⁹ See especially A. B. Corey, *The Crisis of 1830-1842 in Canadian-American Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941) Ch. II; L. B. Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations 1849-1874* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), Chs. I & IX; C. C. Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations 1875-1911* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), Chs. XIII & XIV.

No less important than the role of the Canadian contributors to the Carnegie School was that of the few quiescent American scholars involved. Indeed, that ‘the subject was of such marginal interest’ to American historians at the time, testifies to the strength of the myth that lack of interest in British North America had always been an American trait.⁴⁰ If nineteenth century Americans themselves had been indifferent, surely there could be little to prick the historian’s curiosity. This conclusion was fostered by the narrative of westward-only US expansion that gained traction from the 1880s. Later re-evaluation of the American experience was projected back into a constructed past. Theodore Roosevelt wrote that at the turn of the nineteenth century, ‘Canada lay north, and the tendency of the backwoodsman was to thrust west.’ He reminded readers that ‘the lands south of the Lakes were more fertile than those north of the Lakes.’ In fact, ‘there was no temptation to them to take possession of Canada.’⁴¹ Echoing the ringing mid-nineteenth century appeal to Go West, he concocted an American expansionism that was, and always had been, purely westward. This proved influential as his first two volumes, published in 1889, were immensely popular, receiving rave reviews.⁴² Four years later, his thesis received the academic seal of approval from Frederick Jackson Turner. Turner’s seminal situating of the American experience as a western trajectory, resonated with Roosevelt, who acknowledged the contribution of Turner’s 1893 essay, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” in his work.⁴³ This concentration on the West would prove long lasting, obscuring expansionism’s broader continental character. Turner, for example, highlighted the failure of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 to stifle trans-Appalachian settlement, but he ignored colonial enthusiasm for the

⁴⁰ Stewart, *American Response to Canada since 1776*, 11.

⁴¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West, Volume IV: Louisiana and the Northwest, 1791-1807* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1896), 251.

⁴² Edmund Morris, *The Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (London: Collins, 1979), 405 & 410-11; H. W. Brands, *T. R. The Last Romantic* (New York; Basic Books, 1997), 233-4, 262-3. There were some negative reviews. See Kathleen Dalton, *Theodore Roosevelt: A Strenuous Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 131-2.

⁴³ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West, Volume III: The Founding of the Trans-Alleghany Commonwealths, 1784-1790* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1894), 208.

conquest of Quebec, New England settlement in Nova Scotia through the 1760s, and attempts to conquer Canada during the War of 1812.⁴⁴ It is true that following the end of the Seven Years' War, British hopes that land-hungry colonists could be sifted north into the recently conquered Canadian territories, and south into post-Spanish Florida were never fully realised.⁴⁵ But in the 1790s and 1800s, thousands of Americans flooded into Upper Canada, modern day Ontario. Their presence fuelled expectations of the ease with which the latter could be taken in 1812, inspiring Jefferson's famous presumption that capture of Canada involved 'a mere matter of marching.'⁴⁶ Both Roosevelt and Turner ignored these dynamics. Despite the importance of this migration, historians continued focus post-1815 remains the opening of the old Northwest, and its inauguration of the great, predestined movement West.⁴⁷ However, as expansion into the west and southwest in the 1840s, and the far-flung northwest in the 1860s demonstrates, the US would acquire territory on the continent it characterised as its own wherever and whenever a suitable opportunity arose.

⁴⁴ Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920), 5-6.

⁴⁵ Stephen Conway, 'The Consequences of the Conquest: Quebec and British Politics, 1760-1774,' in Phillip Buckner and John G. Reid (Eds.), *Revisiting 1759: The Conquest of Canada in Historical Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 151 & 156; Robin F. A. Fabel, 'British Rule in the Floridas,' in Michael Gannon (Ed.), *The New History of Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1996), 135-7, 141-2. James W. Raab, *Spain, Britain, and the American Revolution in Florida, 1763-1783* (Jefferson NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2008), 23-5, 34-41.

⁴⁶ Thomas Jefferson to William Duane, 4 August 1812
<<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-05-02-0231>> Accessed 23 December 2017. That the conquest of Canada was not the Madison Administration's objective has been persuasively argued in Richard W. Maass, "'Difficult to Relinquish Territory Which Had Been Conquered": Expansionism and the War of 1812,' *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 39, Iss. 1 (January 2015), 70-97. However, that does not negate the aspirations of individuals and non-governmental agency, nor am I convinced that had the outcome been otherwise, the US would have returned Canada to Great Britain.

⁴⁷ Sam W. Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution: The Early American Republic in a British World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 6; Alan Taylor, *The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels, & Indian Allies* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), 426-35, 447.

A core argument of this thesis is that Americans through to 1871 never abandoned hope of acquiring Britain's surviving provinces. It was this hope, even expectation, that defined much of the American discourse in which British America featured. US continental aspirations did not begin and end with the Treaty of Ghent. Mrs Warren, capturing the zeitgeist of 1805, refused to accept the continuing presence of a British North America when she referred to the surviving colonies as 'the American territory yet claimed by Great Britain,' thus dismissing the choices of those who inhabited that 'territory.'⁴⁸ Having referred to the Revolutionaries throughout her history as Americans, it is not unreasonable to suppose that here, she employed a national demonym, and not a continental descriptive, laying claim to the territory to which she considered Britain had no right. As we shall see, George Bancroft was but one voice amongst many who reminded contemporaries that the Continental Congress had foreseen one republic, 'even though it should extend from the Gulf of Mexico to the uttermost limit of Canada and the eastern limit of Newfoundland.'⁴⁹ It has been said that nineteenth century America was *A Nation Without Borders*.⁵⁰ Steven Hahn's title is both misleading and illuminating. Borders there were, but beyond the cartographic demarcations of politicians, they were far from fixed, shifting in response to 'numerous conflicts and contingencies.'⁵¹

Explaining why the USA in a period of such flux failed to acquire the British provinces highlights the role of Great Britain. Teddy Roosevelt recognised Britain's influence in his 1887 biography of the Democratic Senator from Missouri, Thomas Hart Benton. During

⁴⁸ Otis Warren, *American Revolution*, Vol III, 262. 'British Territory,' with its implicit dismissal of the inhabitants, continues to have traction. It is the designation for British North America on maps of our period in Ken Burns' documentary series 'The West' (1996). Even more denuding is "British Possessions" as in the maps in Andy Doolen, *Territories of Empire: U.S. Writing from the Louisiana Purchase to Mexican Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 24 & 67.

⁴⁹ Bancroft, *History of the United States of America*, Vol. V, 206.

⁵⁰ Steven Hahn, *A Nation Without Borders: The United States and Its World in an Age of Civil Wars, 1830-1910* (New York: Viking, 2016).

⁵¹ Eric Foner, 'The Embryo Caesar,' *London Review of Books*, Vol. 39, No. 24 (December 14, 2017), 23.

James Monroe's second term, he wrote, the Northeast opposed the acquisition of Canada as it was 'an unattractive and already well-settled country, jealously guarded by the might of Great Britain.'⁵² Britain's predominance as the imperial parent state was decisive in the historiographic side-lining of her American provinces. These played a mere bit part in foreign affairs until the Treaty of Washington in 1871, when Canada emerged as a player in what had been a British game.⁵³ British control of foreign policy was complemented by cultural and economic ties with the States.⁵⁴ Politically and diplomatically, 'the State Department kept its attention riveted on London to a much greater extent than any other capital.'⁵⁵ British America's absence at the negotiating table thus helped ensure its invisibility in the historiography.

The Carnegie School reflected this. The historiographical core of five volumes on diplomatic negotiations presented the US-British American relationship as a succession of disputes peacefully resolved.⁵⁶ This ensured that what followed was 'written either by American or by British scholars whose primary interest was not American-Canadian relations but Anglo-American relations.'⁵⁷ English historian H. C. Allen set the tone in

⁵² Theodore Roosevelt, *American Statesmen: Life of Thomas Hart Benton*, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1887), 55.

⁵³ Although politicians Sir Francis Hincks of Canada East, and Edward Barron Chandler of New Brunswick accompanied Governor-General Lord Elgin to Washington DC in 1854 to negotiate the Reciprocity Treaty. See Donald C. Masters, *The Reciprocity Treaty of 1854, Its History, Its Relation to British Colonial and Foreign Policy and to the Development of Canadian Fiscal Autonomy* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1937), 71-90.

⁵⁴ See Elisa Tamarkin, *Anglophilia: Deference, Devotion, and Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*; Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁵⁵ Charles Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974), 34.

⁵⁶ Those volumes were M. Savelle, *The Diplomatic History of the Canadian Boundary, 1749-1763* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940); A. L. Burt, *The United States, Great Britain and British North America: From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940); Corey, *The Crisis of 1830-1842*; Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations 1849-1874*; Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations 1875-1911*.

⁵⁷ Buckner, 'American-Canadian Relations,' 25 Nov 2013, 7.

‘the classic historiographical description of the “special relationship” approach’ between the USA and Great Britain.⁵⁸ As Allen made clear, ‘for us Canada is very much the tertium quid.’ He stated that his aim was ‘the reverse of Brebner’s in North Atlantic Triangle.’⁵⁹ He referred to the final volume in the Carnegie Series, J. B. Brebner’s 1945 thesis that presented a theoretical paradigm of a North Atlantic Triangle consisting of Britain, the United States, and Canada in which the role of the latter was to the fore.⁶⁰ Allen dismissed this, so that subsequently the provinces appear to have ‘played a relatively minor role in the international power struggle that would decide their destiny.’⁶¹ As we shall see, British American politics were to the fore in determining the provinces’ future, but the result has been that Canadian-American relations have ‘produced a torrent of writing from Canada but only a trickle in the United States.’⁶² The focus on diplomatic history has heightened Britain’s role at British America’s expense.⁶³ This is also true in those works that explore the cultural and social aspects of the Anglo-American relationship.⁶⁴ American historians’ neglect of the broader kaleidoscope of

⁵⁸ David Reynolds, ‘Rethinking Anglo-American Relations,’ *International Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 1 (Winter 1988-9), 89.

⁵⁹ H. C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (New York: St Martin’s Press Inc., 1955), 18.

⁶⁰ John Bartlett Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1945).

⁶¹ Richard A. Preston, *The Defence of the Undefended Border: Planning for War in North America, 1867-1939* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1977), 8.

⁶² Stewart, *American Response to Canada since 1776*, 4.

⁶³ See Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* ((Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement*; David L. Dykstra, *The Shifting Balance of Power: American-British Diplomacy in North America, 1842-1848* (Lanham MD: University Press of America, 1999); George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U. S. Foreign Relations since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); David C. Hendrickson, *Union, Nation, or Empire: The American Debate over International Relations, 1789-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

⁶⁴ See Duncan Andrew Campbell, *Unlikely Allies: Britain, America and the Victorian Origins of the Special Relationship* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2007); Kathleen Burk, *Old World, New World: The Story of Britain and America* (London: Little, Brown, 2007).

the US-British North American engagement has reaffirmed the idea that post-Independence, Americans had little interest in their British neighbours.⁶⁵ This faux assessment is one from which historians have yet to extricate themselves. Today, a typical Americanist response to the subject of British North America in US public discourse is somnolence.

This study reminds us of British America's contribution to that discourse. It seeks to reorient our understanding of North America from the late colonial period through to the beginning of rapprochement between Great Britain and the United States in 1871. It contends that the United States was as much involved with the British presence on its doorstep, and in some ways more so, than it was with the Britain that remained for most citizens a not forgotten, but far more distant, horizon. Such a reorientation reveals the extent to which the fixing of borders and diplomatic negotiations were only the tip of an iceberg, the mass of which, consisting of personal encounters between Americans and British colonists, ideas and attitudes expressed Stateside in political debate, published non-fiction and the press, remain diffuse and little explored. In 1783, 'America had won its political independence but had yet not established a national identity.'⁶⁶ There is a lacuna in our understanding of the evolution of that identity at a time when even the parameters of national space remained fluid and disputed. Throughout the period, Americans debated their identity. To understand that debate, and the role of British America, we must re-triangulate Brebner's thesis. Donald Creighton was right to critique the North Atlantic Triangle for overegging the role of British America in transatlantic diplomacy.⁶⁷ But if we shift our attention to those neglected dynamics of the US-British North American relationship I have listed, the provinces spring into the foreground, and the critique has little relevance. In this

⁶⁵ This is disproved in Reginald C. Stuart, *American Expansionism and British North America, 1775-1871* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 148-66 where he discusses tourism from the USA to the Canadas. Stuart is a Canadian.

⁶⁶ James Oliver Horton & Lois E. Horton, *In Hope of Liberty: Culture, Community, and Protest among Northern Free Blacks, 1700-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 155.

⁶⁷ Donald Creighton, *The Passionate Observer: Selected Writings* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1980), 169.

context, the Atlantic World perspective is revealed to be more hindrance than help, though even a diminished British presence remains far more visible over British America's shoulder than the provinces ever are in the historiography of foreign relations. Indeed, if the relationship with Great Britain 'played a crucial role in the process of national definition,' then how much more the relationship with the British presence that lay on the nation's doorstep?⁶⁸

The period I have chosen extends from the surrender of French Canada to Great Britain in 1760, to the negotiation of the Treaty of Washington between Britain and the United States in 1871. The latter saw the senior attendance of a Canadian, the new Prime Minister John A. McDonald, for the first time. 1760, and the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, represent the apotheosis of an extensive, cohesive British North America, unthreatened by a viable rival west of the Mississippi. Conversely, 1871 saw the emergence of a newly unified, almost-cohesive British North American polity, soon to be geographically larger than the United States, and involved in determining its own continental future. Both represent key moments of transition. In 1763, long-established British colonists saw the continent that they had hitherto contested secured, and whilst Spain held the trans-Mississippi, it bolstered confidence in the empire to which they belonged. It fuelled a broader identity as they saw themselves as 'members of an expansive continental community.'⁶⁹ The 1871 Treaty of Washington, with its recourse to negotiation by arbitration, is considered to set the scene for the gradual emergence of the Anglo-American special relationship. But it was also a moment of closure in which a vitalised though uncertain post-Civil War America stepped back from its long-held continental dream.⁷⁰ American recognition of the great northern polity informed the newly triangulated Anglo-American-Canadian relationship in which the US and Canada

⁶⁸ Haynes, *Unfinished Revolution*, 1.

⁶⁹ James D. Drake, *The Nation's Nature: How Continental Presumptions Gave Rise to the United States of America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 11.

⁷⁰ Diplomatic controversies between Britain and the USA continued down to the outbreak of World War I. See Walter LaFeber, *The New Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations, Vol. 2: The American Search for Opportunity, 1865-1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 58-9; also, Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, Ch. VII.

embraced continental objectives distinct from Britain.⁷¹ The USA saw itself as preeminent in North America, and if Canada was not its adherent, then it was at least, in its opinion, a subordinate despite British support. Annexation did not disappear but morphed from the political into cultural and economic forms of integration and control, the limits of which Americans continue to debate.⁷² Canadians have long been sensitive to the fact that ‘the American influence on Canada’s cultural life is substantial and needs to be diminished.’⁷³ The evolutionary arc of a continentalist identity is central to this thesis, which is unusual in its focus on a period that encompasses both colonial and national American narratives. That this is so fruitful a space for exploring the American genesis is proven by two historical problems inherent in the term continentalism itself. These highlight fissures in Americans’ negotiation of their identity.

The first centres on what we mean by continentalism when applied to the USA in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁷⁴ To date, historians have defined it as a purely

⁷¹ Goldwin Smith, *The Treaty of Washington 1871: A Study in Imperial History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1941), Ch. I; Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 254-55.

⁷² Canadian political annexation was debated down to 1911. See Burns, *American Imperialism*, 35-6. For economic integration, see Robert E. Hannigan, ‘Reciprocity 1911: Continentalism and American Weltpolitik,’ *Diplomatic History* Vol. 4, No. 1 (January 1980), 1-18. Advocates of Canadian-American union are a small minority whose voices are occasionally heard e.g. Diane Francis, *Merger of the Century: Why Canada and America Should Become One Country* (Toronto: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd, 2013).

⁷³ Allan Smith, *Canada – An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 40.

⁷⁴ Continentalism has many meanings. The current “continentalist turn” amongst American historians is focused on placing the evolution of the USA in conversation with other developments in North America, work to which this study contributes. Examples include Michael M. Brescia and John C. Super, *North America: An Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Alan Taylor *American Revolutions: A Continental History, 1750-1804* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2016). There is a continentalism that informs a post-NAFTA and 9/11 scholarship concerned with a Washington-focused economic integration, the potential political ramifications of which concern many Canadians. See Ricardo Grinspun & Yasmine Shamsie, *Whose Canada? Continental Integration, Fortress America, and the Corporate Agenda* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007); Thompson & Randall, *Canada and the United States*, Chs X & XI; Ronald Inglehart, Neil Nevitte, and Miguel Basañez, *The North American Trajectory: Cultural, Economic, and Political Ties among the United States, Canada, and Mexico* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017). This is reflected in the Canadian Encyclopaedia’s definition of continentalism in

geopolitical ideology, the drive towards annexation by the United States of the whole of North America, its apogee being the expansionism of the 1840s tied to the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. However, it is essential to reformulate it as more than a simple ideology of political expansion, otherwise we are left with the model formulated by Frederick Merk in 1963.⁷⁵ America's failure to realise its All-North America ambitions persuaded Merk that the period between Revolution and Reconstruction must be understood as one of continentalist decline. What were once seemingly shared national aspirations dissipated to become occasional political aberrations. Within this framework, arguments for annexation in the late 1860s, when an American majority had repudiated continentalism, were simply politically contingent. Merk explained them as campaigns of minority interest, generated by groups or individuals out of touch with the mainstream. In his narrative arc of "the Demise of Continentalism," an -ism we are told that never seriously resonated with the American public, it was an ideological cul-de-sac, easily dismissed.⁷⁶ If we are to continue to characterise a complex eighteenth and nineteenth century discourse as "continentalist," the term must be freed from its geopolitical straitjacket without abandoning its expansionist aspirations but recognising its broader imagined parameters. In newspapers, on the floor of Congress, and on the election campaign trail, the nation's geographic space, its limits and potentials, was conjured throughout the period.

At its core, there was the continent itself that from the seventeenth century through to independence separated British Americans from the mother country. This sense of separation, the sundering of the Old World from the New, was rooted in the new nation's spatial identity. Yet, it existed within the broader Atlantic World with which its citizens were engaged. The nation was conceived in concrete space, but reflected an identity in flux. Americans had neither a fixed concept of the nation's boundaries nor their situated place within North America. The result was a permeable geographic

purely economic terms. <<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/continentalism>> Accessed 2 August 2018.

⁷⁵ Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1963).

⁷⁶ Ibid. "The Demise of Continentalism" is the title of Ch. X.

membrane with which political leaders and citizens could conjure. The “imagined community,” which the United States constituted pre-1860, and with which a third of its members went to war, occupied such an imagined space.⁷⁷ Expansion, annexation, and imagination of the nation’s parameters were in a constant dialectic. Continentalism as a political doctrine is the focus of Chapter Five, but as an imagined construct, one that informed Americans’ fluid sense of geographic space, it informs this study throughout. British America was part of the America to which they laid claim. The persistence of separate polities with different inhabitants determined American opinions and understanding of who British Americans were, and who they were not. They were usually not Americans

This brings us to the second historical problem involving the USA’s acquisition of the continent’s name for its own. Continentalism became an ideological framework differentiating Them from Us. This determined the response to Mexican acquisitions in 1848, and the Nativism of the 1850s. Today, the USA’s exclusive appropriation of America as title, and American as demonym seems a given. Its usage emerged very early.⁷⁸ As Revolutionaries, they embraced their separateness as Americans, a shift in which Britons assisted.⁷⁹ When others shed their imperial chains, the appropriation became more problematic. New polities to the south were keen to emphasise that “the United States is a political entity, but “America” is a place.”⁸⁰ In March 1852, Canadian Liberal George Brown, editor of the *Toronto Globe*, staked British American claims. ‘We are in the habit of calling the people of the United States ‘the American,’’ he complained,

⁷⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism Revised Edition* (London: Verso, 2006). The spatial dimension is implicit in Anderson’s analysis but never fully explored. See 5-7.

⁷⁸John M. Murrin, ‘The Jeffersonian Triumph and American Exceptionalism,’ *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 20. No. 1 (Spring 2000), 2.

⁷⁹ Stephen Conway, ‘From Fellow-Nationals to Foreigners: British Perceptions of the Americans, circa 1739-1783,’ *The William & Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (January 2002), 65-100.

⁸⁰ Lester D. Langley, *America and the Americas: The United States in the Western Hemisphere* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), xvii.

'but we too are Americans.'⁸¹ Presumptuous Americans themselves recognised the conundrum. An 1842 article in the *Democratic Review* (hereafter *DR*) saw the confusion between nation and continent as denuding the former of a cohesive identity. 'We must get another name for ourselves or for the continent,' it said. Where did the two Americas begin and end? The limits for the *DR* writer were more than hinted at. Having identified the appropriation of America by others in the Western Hemisphere as the source of the problem, he considered it preferable 'to give the name of Columbus to the continent, and to retain America for ourselves.'⁸² Effectively, the US should appropriate the continent in spirit, if not in fact. No other claimant to the demonym was to be permitted a say in what was evidently to be an US decision. The writer was blunt. 'We lead the mind as we control the politics of the hemisphere.'⁸³ This was an argument for appropriation, even if only of nomenclature, and yet, it had territorial implications. This debate was less evidence of the absence or hollowness of Americans' continentalist aspirations than the complex negotiation of national identity, and its place within a continent that many assumed would eventually be encompassed by the Great Republic. As even the Governor-General of Siberia reminded the Tsar in 1853, 'we ought to be convinced that the United States are bound to spread over the whole of North America.'⁸⁴ The question for Americans was what to do in the interim, until their prophesied future arrived.

The answer was a destiny determined by appropriation, if not seizure, of the continent's name. The result was a geographic framework for the American identity that from the outset was inherently problematic. In the Old World, French or Germans might also be Europeans, but in the New World, the citizens of the United States were confronted by

⁸¹ Quoted in Robin W. Winks, *Canada and the United States: The Civil War Years* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1960), 9.

⁸² "American Names," *DR*, Vol. 11, Iss. 43 (November 1842), 477. The debate continued when in May 1845 the title United States of Alleghania was suggested. 'Alleghan, or Alleghanian America,' *DR*, Vol. 16, Iss. 83 (May 1845), 492-94.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 478.

⁸⁴ Quoted in C. Ian Jackson, 'The Stikine Territory Lease and Its Relevance to the Alaska Purchase,' *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (August 1967), 291.

the tautology of being both American and Americans. It is unsurprising that its negotiation and re-examination should repeatedly intrude into national discourse. And what of surviving British Americans? To the rest of the world, Canadians today may appear 'indistinguishable' from their neighbours, and to even most Americans.⁸⁵ But during our period, the citizens of the Republic were keenly aware of the differences. British Americans seemed involved in an existentialist debate about a defunct identity. The possibility of being both British and American was oxymoronic. The latter refuted the former, but for British provincials, it had credence. It was the inheritance to which they clung, and encompassed a spatial identity that, for them, surpassed that of their republican neighbours. It was hemispheric, global, imperial, and had clarity. Little wonder it provided American Americans with food for thought.

These many facets of continentalism must be borne in mind as we examine the American engagement with British North America that is central to this study. I am not suggesting that the Southern planter in his Charleston house, or the Illinois lawyer in his office, or the thousands who set out West spent their days focused on the British presence in America. But cultural, religious, ethnic, political and historical debates focusing on British America periodically intruded into everyday lives. They were recurrent themes in newspapers, journals, Congressional debates, and on the election trail. They were disseminated to a mass audience. It assisted them in formulating their own opinions. Given my chronological parameters, the choice of sources has been necessarily selective. In 1850 alone, the nation had over two thousand newspapers with an annual circulation of half a billion copies.⁸⁶

My selection is focused upon the leading publications of the period, argued to reach the broadest audience, and key to gauging the diffusion of ideas. The *Debates and Proceedings in the Congress of the United States* (or *Annals of Congress*, 1789-1824), and the *Congressional Globe* (1833-73) reported Congressional debates, resolutions and acts that formed the bedrock of newspaper and journal political reporting. Care must be

⁸⁵ Francis, *Merger of the Century*, 3.

⁸⁶ <<http://americanantiquarian.org/earlyamericannewsmedia/exhibits/show/news-in-antebellum-america/the-newspaper-boom>> Accessed 15 June 2018.

taken, for whilst the *New York Herald* may have had the largest national circulation by the 1860s, subscription figures do not always reveal a newspaper's true impact. James Ford Rhodes wrote of the *New York Tribune* that 'one copy did service for many readers.'⁸⁷ This study recognises regional variation and highlights its differences. As the lion's share of my chronology consists of pre-Civil War America, unsurprisingly, the focus is differences between North and South. That New York was 'the center of the newspaper universe' by the 1850s is indicated by some of the titles I have chosen, but this study also includes leading publications from the South.⁸⁸ The nation's most influential journals reflect a broad readership in both sections. *De Bow's Review* was 'the antebellum South's most prominent economic journal.'⁸⁹ The *DR* celebrated its cross-sectional appeal as 'a work circulating equally in the South as in the North.'⁹⁰ Their differing political agendas are highlighted as the aim is not only to provide a rounded assessment of American discourse, but also the diverse uses that were made of British America. The articles and reports I have selected made use of the provinces to explain the nation's past, influence the decisions of the present, and set a course for the future. At a time when relations with Britain remained fraught, the models its provinces seemed to provide were often negatively assessed.

This study makes use of two further types of sources that focus primarily on American engagement with the two Canadas. Guidebooks and travelogues shed an important light on French Canada. One might assume that these, the products of a wide range of professions, such as publishers, journalists, businessmen, novelists, and politicians, would reflect a broad range of opinions, and judgements. However, these shared the often highly partisan, ideological approaches that characterised newspapers and

⁸⁷ Quoted in W. P. Trent et al (Eds.), *A History of American Literature Vol. II. Supplementary to The Cambridge History of English Literature* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1919), 193.

⁸⁸ Adam Tuchinsky, *Horace Greeley's New-York Tribune: Civil War-Era Socialism and the Crisis of Free Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 3.

⁸⁹ John F. Kvach, *De Bow's Review: The Antebellum Vision of a New South* (Lexington KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 5.

⁹⁰ "Annexation," *DR*, Vol. 17, Iss, 85 (July-August 1845), 8.

journals. Alien French Canada was fertile ground in which to cull geographical, religious and ethnic material that communicated what it meant to be an American. Following the end of the War of 1812, the province became the focus of what the first American guidebook called 'The Fashionable Tour.'⁹¹ Between 1822 and 1840, Davison's pocket guide went through eight editions, and was only one of a plethora of publications describing French Canada.⁹² Their importance is indicated by the fact that travel writing emerged as one of 'the most popular literary genres in 19th-century America.'⁹³ The very rise of tourism took place at 'a decisive time in American society, when Americans were in the process of defining their national identity.'⁹⁴ North America, and especially Lower Canada, remained the most popular destination for Americans through to the Civil War. So much so, that travel guides, penned by northerners, appealed to southern tourists eager to escape their summer heat. These books drew comparisons with the Canadian world, and in so doing, created the tools with which writers could mould the American identity by rote. Opinions became motifs shared across the genre, constantly affirming the nation's superiority.

All the sources so far discussed represent the output of a white male elite. Women and the poor remain silent. My final source group consists of the voices of those who were the poorest. They are those of black Americans, men and women, who fled the USA as refugee freemen or fugitive slaves from the 1830s, primarily to Canada West, today's Ontario. They testify to a different type of engagement as the British provinces functioned as much more than a tourist destination. Whether as permanent emigrants or temporary residents, British America allowed them to construct new identities that

⁹¹ Gideon Minor Davison, *The Fashionable Tour, or, a Trip to the Springs, Niagara, Quebeck, and Boston, in the Summer of 1821*. (Saratoga Springs NY: G. M. Davison, 1822).

⁹² Dona Brown, 'Travel Books' in Robert A. Gross & Mary Kelley, *A History of the Book in America Vol. 2: An Extensive Republic – Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840* (Chapel Hill NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 455 & 646 n. 75.

⁹³ Daniel Kilbride, 'Travel Writing as Evidence with Special Attention to Nineteenth-Century Anglo-America,' *History Compass* Vol. 9, Issue 4 (April 2011), 341.

⁹⁴ Richard H. Gassan, *The Birth of American Tourism: New York, the Hudson Valley, and American Culture, 1790-1830* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 3.

had hitherto been stifled or denied. These identities were familial, gendered, social, economic and political. A black female slave from Kentucky named Ruthie on entering Canada with her husband in 1833 shed her slave name. Now, 'a free woman in a free country, for the rest of her life she would be Lucie Blackburn,' and, equally transformative, 'Mrs. Blackburn, a title she would never have been accorded in slavery.'⁹⁵ In Canada, slavery had been a dead letter since the beginning of the century, and black and white equality was recognised before the bar and ballot box. But, for some, it proved to be no Canaan.⁹⁶ Prejudice remained rife, and at the end of the Civil War, 25,000 blacks left Canada West alone, to return to the USA.

Their contribution to the historical problem with which I am engaged is twofold. Firstly, the British sojourn represented an important transitional period in the emergence of black American identity through the exercise of black agency. Some of those who fled, returned during Reconstruction as physicians, teachers, judges and politicians.⁹⁷ Secondly, the British experience raises questions about the very Americanness of that nascent identity. 15,000 emigrants chose to remain in the provinces, including Mrs Blackburn and her husband. And yet, even those who embraced their British Americanness employed it to challenge and refute those negative black identities forced upon them and their fellows as slaves and would-be citizens by the United States. The British American monarchy was a powerful tool with which to prick the republic's empire for liberty. As subjects in the British provinces, blacks fought to be citizens in the United States, and in doing so, they contributed to the emergence of a new American citizenship in the late 1860s. The extent to which black agency forced some white Americans to question their own identities was captured by white Bostonian abolitionist Benjamin Drew when he challenged his readers to consider what it was that had driven black Americans away from 'a government which acknowledges that "all men are born free and equal," ... What circumstances have led them to prefer a

⁹⁵ Frost, *I've Got a Home in Glory Land*, 193 & 350.

⁹⁶ Black American emigrants characterised Canada West as "Canaan" or the "Promised Land." *Ibid.*, 221.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 328-9.

monarchy to a republic?’⁹⁸ Drew, a key source for this investigation, draws our attention to the fact that the testimonies at my disposal are not unproblematic. In 1854, he interviewed 113 blacks in 14 communities, both urban and rural, which he published as *A North-Side View of Slavery*.⁹⁹ Drew’s work, in the words of George Elliott Clarke, was, ‘to put it plainly, propaganda.’¹⁰⁰ This is evident in the testimony of William Johnson, a fugitive from Virginia, whose positive description of the black community at St Catherines as industrious, averse to liquor, and hungry for literacy, ticked all the abolitionist boxes, proof of the racial uplift freedom provided blacks.¹⁰¹ However, even for Clarke, this does not detract from the value of the testimonies acquired. As Tilden G. Edelstein has noted, despite Drew’s journalistic recourse to ‘transmuting the language of the fugitive into educated prose,’ the British American experiences of those who had fled slavery, and the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act provided a valuable counterpoint to the more prevalent voices of the Frederick Douglasses who many whites saw as representing an untypical black elite.¹⁰² In this, Drew’s interviews supersede even the first-hand accounts of the hundreds who fled north with the help of William Still, black activist in Philadelphia, to be found in his 1872 work, *The Underground Railroad*, which I also discuss.

This study is not all-encompassing. The focus on national and regional evidence means local engagement is neglected. Whilst this inevitably shapes my overall thesis, localities, particularly along the northern border, have been a source of much study as they

⁹⁸ Benjamin Drew, *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee: or the Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Conditions of the Colored Population of Upper Canada*. (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1856), 13-14. Drew wrote in response to Bostonian clergyman Nehemiah Adams’ defence of southern slavery. Nehemiah Adams, *A South-Side View of Slavery; or, Three Months at the South, in 1854*. (Boston: T. R. Marvin, and Sanborn, Carter and Bazin, 1855).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁰⁰ George Elliott Clarke, ‘Introduction’ in Benjamin Drew, *The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada* (Reprint Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2008), 10.

¹⁰¹ Drew, *Refugee* (1856), 30.

¹⁰² Tilden G. Edelstein, ‘Introduction,’ in Benjamin Drew, *The Refugee: A North-Side View of Slavery* (Reading MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969), xviii.

involved those conflicts that were sometimes characteristic of borderlands. These are the familiar subjects of incursions, disputes, leading to diplomatic negotiations that have been extensively examined in the long-studied Anglo-American historiography earlier identified. This thesis does not explore trade and economic negotiations in which ongoing conflict over American access to the Newfoundland fisheries predominated. Indigenous peoples who mapped their own borderlands onto those of others, determining the trajectory of US-British American engagement are absent. And the elephant-in-the-room is the persistence of monarchy in the Republic's New World, and its impact upon an evolving America, which will be the subject of a future project. Even so, as has been said of another written genre, the sources I have chosen 'say as much about the reading public for which they were written as they do the experiences of those who wrote them.'¹⁰³ Similarly, contra Merk, the constant revisiting of ideas and themes in debate, in print, and on the election trail surely calls to mind what I would term the lesson of Trump's Wall. For future historians, whether the wall is built or not will be neither here nor there. Its importance lies in what it tells us of the times, its popularity that is both inspired by and inspires the repetition of the message.¹⁰⁴ I examine responses to the events that loom largest in American discourse, the 1774 Quebec Act, the 1837-8 Canadian Rebellions, the 1839 Durham Report, the introduction of responsible government in the provinces, the 1849 Montreal Annexation Manifesto, and the Confederation of Canada in 1867. All marked important transitional points in the evolution of British America, and in addition to the travelogues and testimonies of emigrant black Americans, were influential discursive elements in Americans' own negotiation of themselves and their role in the continent they inhabited.

The four chapters that follow explore these themes from a time when as subjects in British America, they basked in its imperial glory, to the moment when as citizens of an even newer republic following civil war, they balked as bystanders at its reinvention.

¹⁰³ Eliga H. Gould, 'The Laws of War and Peace: Legitimizing Slavery in the Age of the American Revolution,' in Peter Thompson & Peter S. Onuf (Eds.), *State and Citizen: British America and the Early United States* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 64.

¹⁰⁴ < <http://theconversation.com/why-trumps-wall-with-mexico-is-so-popular-and-why-it-wont-work-70047>> Accessed 18 June 2018.

This is not an arc that can be approached chronologically. The breadth of my subject involves engagement with multiple events, many of them concurrent. Skipping from one to the other with recourse to “meanwhile” is not a satisfactory option. I, therefore, adopt a thematic approach. Chapter Two focuses on French Canada, that part of the surviving British provinces that remained most alien and anomalous in America’s imagined New World, and the long impact of the 1774 Quebec Act. It explores the ways in which a Canadian presence, and Americans’ engagement with it, primarily as tourists, facilitated a discourse that validated their commitment to republicanism, democracy, and progress, reassuring them that the United States was ‘the great nation of futurity.’¹⁰⁵ Chapter Three examines literary journals, in which analyses of the provinces emerged as combative tools in American political and sectional debates. It highlights how British America served as a point of comparison for American mapping of political, economic and cultural opinions that were increasingly difficult to promote in a divided nation. It especially draws attention to the contribution of British American politics to the evolution of Revolutionary myths. It also examines how whites North and South, beyond abolitionist circles, countered the realities of the black diaspora to the provinces from the late 1820s onwards.

The experiences of black American fugitives and refugees are the subject of Chapter Four. There, I explore how the British provinces, and the opportunities they afforded, empowered blacks in the construction of identities that exploded those considered both appropriate and scientifically proven. For blacks, becoming British American initiated changes that were political, social, familial, cultural and geographic in their scope. Chapter Five traces the evolution of America’s belief that British America’s future was inevitably to join the United States. Invasion and conquest morphed in the late 1840s into a conviction that consensual annexation was the key to achieving it. By the late 1860s, for many it was a given, widely debated. The chapter shows that the ‘continental imaginary’ that encompassed both the nation’s place and its expansive potential in space, remained a core feature of the American psyche from the Revolution to Civil War and beyond.¹⁰⁶ Engagement with British America proved no easy route to the

¹⁰⁵ “The Great Nation of Futurity,” *DR*, Vol. 6, Iss. 23 (November 1839), 426.

¹⁰⁶ I borrow the term from Doolen, *Territories of Empire*, 10-11.

emergence of a clearer American continental identity. Continentalism as a national ideology, dismissive of others that share the same space, is far from dormant in today's United States.

My recourse to Vidal's *United States of Amnesia* at the outset of this study might suggest my own fettering by the 'politics of history.' The historian of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century United States who casts an eye on British North America is indeed a rarity, but the exercise highlights from the outset three groups of factors worth consideration. The first is the similarity of experience between British America and the USA. This might seem a strange assertion given the rupture of the Revolution, and the contrasting constitutional paths that both followed. But from the creation of a new British North America in 1763, through Independence, and even the American Civil War, British America and the USA experienced parallel evolutionary processes that in broad terms displayed similarities. Prior to the Civil War, the United States "were" not "was," the title always expressed in the plural. The states themselves, though members of a nascent nation, were in constant negotiation of their rights, and in increasing conflict with the federal government and one another.¹⁰⁷ The British provinces, members of a greater imperial whole, too were negotiating their status, often in conflict with the metropole. Like some of the disgruntled states to their south, they sought the recognition of regional political power. America's 'Age of Democratic Revolution,' was paralleled by British North America's striving for its own control over domestic rights.¹⁰⁸ Both were involved in the process of nation building, the one within the US federal system, the other eventually as a federal confederation within the British Empire. Both achieved their goals, though the differences in the paths they followed are as striking as their similarities. By 1867, the Canadian Fathers of Confederation were keenly attuned to the USA's pitfalls. New Brunswick was peacefully separated from Nova Scotia in 1784 in accordance with the wishes of its inhabitants. The separation of

¹⁰⁷ The USA was not unique. Paul Quigley has pointed out that variety of nationalisms, and contestation of their meaning was characteristic of the emergence of nation-states in the 19th century. See P. Quigley, *Shifting Grounds: Nationalism and the American South, 1848-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6-8.

¹⁰⁸ Sean Wilentz, *Andrew Jackson* (New York: Times Books, 2005), 1.

Maine from Massachusetts in 1820, on the other hand, had taken place as part of the volatile Missouri Compromise, from which point Gordon Wood has argued 'the Civil War was inevitable.'¹⁰⁹ The Compromise with its demarcation of 36° 30' as the northern boundary of slavery, survived until 1854, and was seen by its supporters as evidence of the resilience of the federal system. Secession and Civil War would prove it wrong. The nearest British America came to all-out conflict was the 1837-8 Rebellions in the Canadas, minor militarily, though violent in the Lower Province. They elicited a rapid re-evaluation by Britain of its policy in the North American provinces, and a further slow step forward in the reconfiguring of provincial status that would lead to responsible government from the late 1840s onwards.

I am not papering over the significant ideological differences between the provinces and States. The important point is that during our period, British America was not an acquiescent group of colonies, and the USA not an integrated nation.¹¹⁰ The American imagination was abstract in its grasp of the nation's parameters as the national identity itself was an abstract concept. Prior to the Civil War, the sharpest divergences between Americans and their neighbours were illuminated by their contrasting geneses. The US was founded in opposition to Britain whilst Canada was created in support of Britain and in defence against the USA. The ironies were never more striking than in 1860-61, when not only did seceding southern states conclude that their own national identity could only be realised outside the nation they had helped create, but that their new identity was to be a mirror image of 'the national identity of a nation-state they had voluntarily left.'¹¹¹ Again, it might seem that British America got it right in 1867 when

¹⁰⁹ <<https://www.humanitiestexas.org/news/articles/gordon-s-wood-revolutionary-origins-civil-war>> Accessed June 20, 2018.

¹¹⁰ In an address to the Oto Indians in August 1804, Lewis and Clark repeatedly described the Presidency as 'the great chief of the Seventeen great nations of America.' Donald Jackson (Ed.), *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition with Related Documents, 1783-1854*, 2nd Ed., II Vols. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), I, 204-8. Nicholas and Peter Onuf differentiate between the federal system of compromises that increasingly seemed to prolong 'the waning life of an increasingly moribund union,' and the nation of the people for whom Lincoln fought. Nicholas Onuf and Peter Onuf, *Nations, Markets, and War: Modern History and the American Civil War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 2.

¹¹¹ Quigley, *Shifting Grounds*, 9.

the provinces confederated to establish their identity based on ever stronger ties, not only with one another, but with the imperial centre. The Americanist reader, however, may be reassured that confederation was bitterly contested, as observers in the USA realised.

The second group of factors hampered American engagement with the provinces to the extent that British America, its politics, aspirations, cultures, and people were never properly understood. These factors were memory and ignorance. The construction of memory, as many have shown, is 'a process of forgetting as much as remembering.'¹¹² The mythic character of the American genesis was quick to emerge. The Revolution was quickly stripped of both its violent and emotional traumas.¹¹³ Instead, its providential certainty was emphasised and became central to Americans' understanding of themselves. This failure to understand and re-interrogate the past did not result in a 'vulgar presentism,' but what I suggest was an intransigent pastism.¹¹⁴ Events in the present were consistently refracted through a fixed memory of the past, specifically the founding of the nation, and its implications were never more apparent than in their evaluation of events in British North America. As we shall see, Americans, even the more informed, could never move beyond the framework of their own national experiment, testimony, surely, to the intensity of commitment required to ensure its survival. That intensity was captured by Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts in his concluding statement to Senator Robert Hayne of South Carolina in 1830 when he thundered, 'Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable.'¹¹⁵ Its importance lay not in convincing the many who would have agreed, but the many who did not.

¹¹² David W. Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield: Race, Memory, & the American Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 3.

¹¹³ For emotional trauma, see Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688-1776* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), Ch. X; for violence, see Holger Hock, *Scars of Independence: America's Violent Birth* (New York: Crown, 2017).

¹¹⁴ Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), xxvi.

¹¹⁵ *Speeches of the Hon. Robert Y. Hayne, and the Hon. Daniel Webster, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, Jan. 21 and 26, 1830.* (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1830), 131.

Americans' dilemma was, that in assessing events in British North America from the 1830s onwards, they could not move beyond their own understanding of the British Empire, which was that of the 1760s and 70s. American judgement was trapped in historical aspic. Added to this was ignorance. Unable or unwilling to engage with the complexities of imperial politics, its subtleties escaped them. Ethnic, historical, and cultural ties proved a hindrance as time after time, when Canadians and Canadiens rebelled, provincial assemblies battled for control of domestic affairs, Montreal merchants cried annexation, and British Americans noisily debated confederation, Americans could only see these through the lens of their own past. As Teddy Roosevelt later asserted, it seemed British America was merely following in America's footsteps.

The third factors to bear in mind veer dangerously close to a teleological insistence upon the inevitability of history. They are that from 1815 onwards, Britain did not want war with the United States, and the States did not want war with Britain. Opportunities for war there were, but I agree with Phillip Buckner's analysis that America sought negotiation, not confrontation, faced as it was by 'the Royal Navy as the ultimate deterrent.'¹¹⁶ Britain too did not wish an expensive conflict with America that would prove impossible to win on land. In its negotiation of the borders between the States and its provinces as it sought to maintain peace, Britain often seemed to err on the side of the former, much to the latter's chagrin. But the influence of British American agency must be recognised. Whilst Britain would not go to war for her American provinces, neither would she abandon them. British public opinion was key, as was the loss of honour the imperial power would suffer by conceding its possessions to the USA. Equally important were the wishes of British American colonists themselves. The provincial dissensions I have mentioned were repeatedly misinterpreted in America as evidence of a desire to rend the imperial system when, in fact, they were more often strategies for renegotiating the relationship with the mother country or even sustaining the maintenance of the empire's status quo. It was only at the end of our period that the USA came to recognise that the voice of British America spoke both in support of the imperial whole and with its own distinct agenda. Bearing these factors in mind, it is

¹¹⁶ Buckner, 'American-Canadian Relations,' 25 Nov 2013, 29. Also 12 & 16.

possible to unpick Americans' lengthy engagement with their British neighbours, and recognise its rich contribution to the evolution of their own identity.

CHAPTER TWO

L'HORIZON PERDU: Forgotten Encounters in Quebec

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1763, Francophone Quebec's entry into Anglophone British America unsurprisingly caused tensions within the new province. The conflict between the trickle of post-war Protestant Canadians into Quebec, and the entrenched Catholic Canadien population came to a head on May 1st, 1775, when Montreal awoke to find King George III defaced. The monarch's bust in the Place d'Armes was smeared with black paint. Around his neck hung a rosary of potatoes, and a cross upon which was scrawled, 'Voilà le pap du Canada et le sot Anglais,' (Here is the Pope of Canada and the English fool).¹ It was the day the Quebec Act came into effect. Such was the response to an act that acknowledged the rights of the Catholic Church in the province, provided a familiar non-elected government, recognised French civil law, and extended the provincial borders south into the Ohio and upper Mississippi valleys where Canadiens had long settled and traded. It flaunted Catholic trappings, mocked with a Canadien voice, and was in every way the blast of sectarianism that it seemed. It was the angry response of the Canadian minority who a year earlier had petitioned Parliament to secure the Act's repeal, and failed.² The vandalism captured the frustration of long-time British American subjects with their nouveaux co-provincials.

¹ Peter Force, *American Archives: Fourth Series, Containing a Documentary History of the English Colonies in North America, from the King's Message to Parliament, of March 7, 1774, to the Declaration of Independence by the United States*. VI Vols. (Washington DC: M. St Clair Clarke & Peter Force, 1837-46) Vol. II: 518-9.

² Adam Shortt & Arthur G. Doughty, *Canadian Archives: Documents Relating to the Constitutional History of Canada, 1759-1791*. II Vols. (Ottawa: J. de L. Taché, 1918), Vol. II, 589-94; for Canadians' response to the Act see Gustave Lanctot, *Canada & the American Revolution* (Toronto: George H. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1967), 14; Philip Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge: Quebec and Britain in the Age of the American Revolution* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), 91-2.

The assault on the monarch's bust is a fitting entry point for this examination of American engagement with Quebec that explores the ways in which the Canadian presence was mobilised in the construction of American identities, and the persistence of the Quebec Act in negotiating that process. At first glance, a fracas in distant Montreal might seem an episode from Canadian rather than US history when it is in fact both. Canadians too were British Americans, and they shared their fellow Anglophone colonists' anger with the imperial government. The vandalism's perpetrator was identified as Thomas Walker, a Canadian merchant and known anti-government agitator.³ Walker was English. He had settled in Boston in 1752, and moved on to Montreal in 1763.⁴ A leader of his community, he, like other Canadians, was forced to choose sides when the American rebellion spilled over into Quebec, but unlike the Canadian majority, he would end his life a citizen of the United States. For Thomas Walker and those that joined him, the conflict between disgruntled Canadians and the imperial authorities was very much a part of the American story. This chapter explains why Canadian anger, and the Act itself, had such longevity in determining American attitudes towards the Canadiens that assisted the nation in moulding its own identity. It first explores hitherto neglected accounts of Quebec in provincial newspapers post-Conquest. These show that Walker was well-known to his fellow colonists and help clarify why the Quebec Act had the impact it did. I then examine the travel literature consumed by generations of Americans from the 1790s onwards for whom Canada was the preferred vacation destination through to the Civil War. In its pages, we see the emergence of a dismissive critique of Quebec and its people that enhanced both readers' and travellers' sense of their Americanness.

As I shall show, Canadian society, its culture and religion, propped up by Britain, proved a fertile field in which to manure American self-assurance. For tourists, foreign Quebec with its rarefied inhabitants, antique rituals, and ancient towns served less as a Disneyfied getaway, and more as evidence of American progress. The province, its own masses huddled along the St Lawrence, stood in contrast to a nation advancing its

³ Lanctot, *Canada & the American Revolution*, 41.

⁴ Dictionary of Canadian Biography, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/walker_thomas_1788_4E.html> Accessed 10 June 2015

settlements west to the Pacific. In answer to de Crevecoeur's famous question, Americans, gazing at the British province, asserted that they would not tolerate the persistence of foreign ways nor Catholicism as they confronted the challenge of Irish immigration. The example of Quebec proved valuable when assessing the dangers such immigration posed from the 1830s onwards. The province was proof that what an imperial monarchy could get wrong a republic could get right. The integration of Louisiana post-1803 into the Union was waved as a flag of success. Americans went to Quebec in search of their past, Wolfe's 1759 conquest and Montgomery's 1775 sacrifice, and in doing so, they found affirmation of their own futurity. The spirit of America was celebrated when confronting the spectre of Quebec.

The genesis of that spirit took place both within and without the new province between 1760 and 1775, and yet, Quebec during this period presents a historiographic conundrum. How British American colonists engaged with Quebec is subsumed to a predominant narrative of the coming of Revolution. Canadian historians are introspective, focused on the integration of Quebec into the British Empire.⁵ Americanists present us with an empty shelf, bookended by histories of the Conquest and Quebec Act.⁶ Even British imperial historians are dismissive, clinging to established historiographic arcs. *The Oxford History of the British Empire* underlines the perceived disconnect between Quebec and its neighbours, relegating the province to a chapter entitled "British North America, 1760-1815."⁷ It seems the greater British America of

⁵ Examples of this approach include Lanctot, *Canada & the American Revolution*; Hilda Neatby, *Quebec: The Revolutionary Age, 1760-1791* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge*; John G. Reid & Elizabeth Mancke, 'From Global Processes to Continental Strategies: The Emergence of British North America to 1783' in Phillip Buckner (Ed.), *Canada and the British Empire OHBE Companion Series* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 22-42.

⁶ The impact of the Quebec Act upon colonists in their transition to revolution is acknowledged in much of the Revolutionary historiography – examples include Theodore Draper, *A Struggle for Power: The American Revolution* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1996), 434-5; Francis Jennings, *The Creation of America: Through Revolution to Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 146-7; Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2005), 171-2.

⁷ Peter Marshall 'British North America, 1760-1815,' P. J. Marshall & Alaine Low (Eds.), *OHBE: Vol. II – The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 372-93.

1760-1783 never really existed. Even the *OHBE Companion Series* volume aiming to plug existing blanks barely mentions Quebec.⁸ The province is truly a lost horizon. But this was a period in which the colonial press flourished, popularising news across British North America on subjects as broad as ‘religion and slaves, crime and comets, obituaries and animals, disease and weather, Native Americans and medicine, sensationalism and agriculture,’ to all of which Quebec contributed.⁹ Without exploring how the province functioned in this public debate, it is impossible to understand the impact of the Act or the Revolutionaries’ interest in Quebec. Indeed, the open-ended invitation to Canada in the Articles of Confederation to become part of the fledgling USA is only explicable if we consider the ways in which Americans had engaged with Quebec since its incorporation.

It did so through newspapers. Admittedly, ‘the full effect of newspaper influence upon colonists can only be speculated,’ but its growing importance cannot be denied.¹⁰ The number of newspapers multiplied ‘from twenty-one in 1763 to forty-two in 1775.’¹¹ By the Revolution, it has been suggested that some papers had ‘as many as 3,000 readers,’ and were accessed by most literate individuals, subscribed copies being read aloud in taverns.¹² If newspapers ‘helped to create a cohesiveness in America, a feeling that the citizens of South Carolina and New York, for example, had something in common,’ it is not unreasonable to suggest that in reading about Quebec, colonists fashioned for themselves an even broader sense of continental coherence.¹³ Some had even settled

⁸ Stephen Foster (Ed.), *British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. OHBE Companion Series*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁹ David A. Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers: Character and Content* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 13-4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹ Stephen Botein, ‘Printers and the American Revolution’ in Bernard Bailyn & John B. Hench (Eds.), *The Press & the American Revolution* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1981), 41.

¹² Sidney Kobre, *The Development of the Colonial Newspaper* (Gloucester MA: Peter Smith, 1960), 95; David A. Copeland, *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers: Primary Documents on Events of the Period* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), viii.

¹³ Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers*, 274.

there. The new Canadians had come from or via the colonies.¹⁴ They shared with fellow British Americans a common language, culture, and religion. They were pro-representative government, anti-Catholic, and anti-French. The aspirations of such long-established colonists seemed realised by the Peace of Paris, and the Royal Proclamation of 1763. Article IV of the peace treaty only recognised the rights of Catholic Canadiens, 'as far as the laws of Great Britain permit,'¹⁵ effectively removing them from the political sphere. Organising 'Quebec, East Florida, West Florida and Grenada,' the Proclamation promised to 'call general assemblies within the said governments respectively,' albeit 'so soon as the state and circumstances of the said colonies will admit thereof.'¹⁶ The future for Anglophone colonists both within and without Quebec seemed assured.

That future was never realised as a Protestant immigration that would tip the population balance in favour of the Canadians never materialised.¹⁷ Even so, Walker's Canadians expected to function as a Protestant Ascendancy, a shrunken version of the Irish establishment, in control of all political and economic spheres.¹⁸ Instead, the imperial government's answer was the 1774 Quebec Act.¹⁹ The Act was not original.

¹⁴ Allan S. Everest, *Moses Hazen and the Canadian Refugees in the American Revolution* (Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1976), 15-16.

¹⁵ Shortt & Doughty, *Canadian Archives*, Vol. I, 115.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 164 & 165.

¹⁷ For the failure of immigration post-1763, see Pierre Tousignant, "Comment on Professor Marshall's Paper," in V. B. Platt & D. C. Skaggs (Eds.), *Of Mother Country and Plantations: Proceedings of the Twenty-Seventh Conference in Early American History* (Bowling Green, KY: Green State University Press, 1971), 64; Stephen Conway, 'The Consequences of the Conquest: Quebec and British Politics, 1760-1774' in Buckner & Reid (Eds.), *Revisiting 1759*, 156.

¹⁸ For clarification of the Irish political establishment, see Conway in Buckner & Reid (Eds.), *Revisiting 1759*, 146-7.

¹⁹ The Quebec Act and its impact upon British Americans, Canadiens, Canadians, and the British metropolis have been the subject of multiple studies. The Act is regularly cited in histories of the American Revolution. Primary amongst those studies that focus on the Act itself are Reginald Coupland, *The Quebec Act: A Study in Statesmanship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925) in which his assessment can be deduced from his choice of subheading; Charles H. Metzger, S. J., *The Quebec Act: A Primary Cause of the American Revolution*, United States Catholic Historical Society Monograph Series XVI (New York: The United States

Britain had long struggled with Minorca and its Catholic population of over 30,000, ruled by a governor and British garrison, where ‘to all intents and purposes the fabric of local government, land ownership, and religion remained unaltered.’²⁰ Whilst the Minorcan model was far from perfect, the Catholic Canadian majority of Quebec seemed less of a liability when championed by a Protestant governor whose support of the Canadiens in Parliament contrasted so starkly with the fractious relationship between the Minorcans and their administrators.²¹ For the Canadians who could see the Act coming, it heightened existing tensions in the province. For British Americans elsewhere, it came as a bombshell.

British Americans in the old colonies were not unfamiliar with Quebec’s internal dissensions. They had followed Walker’s career. The events of the evening of December 6th, 1764, when a group of disguised men burst into Walker’s home, and violently assaulted him, severing half his left ear, became a cause célèbre in the mid-1760s. The Case of Walker’s Ear resulted in trials spanning three years. Walker accused British officers of the assault whereas the judicature’s judgement was that the assailants remained a mystery.²² His failure to attain justice enhanced Walker’s anti-government image, and his travails were reported by the colonial press.²³ Walker’s opposition to the

Catholic Historical Society, 1936) focuses on the Act’s pivotal religious role; Hilda Neatby, *The Quebec Act: Protest and Policy* (Scarborough, Ont: Prentice-Hall of Canada Ltd., 1972) is a Canadianist assessment of the Act and its long-term effects on the province; Lawson, *The Imperial Challenge* is concerned with the process whereby the imperial government formulated the Act. Ch. VII explores the metropolitan response.

²⁰ Conway in Buckner & Reid (eds.), *Revisiting 1759*, 147.

²¹ Hansard, *The Parliamentary History of England, From the Earliest Period to The Year 1803*. XXXVI Vols. (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), Vol. XVII, 1367-70.

²² For an analysis of the early trials, see A. L. Burt, ‘The mystery of Walker’s ear,’ *Canadian Historical Review* III (September 1922), 233-55.

²³ Walker’s story was reported in the *Boston Evening Post* 18 February, 23 September & 7 October 1765, 26 May & 1 December 1766, 12 January, 9 February, 9 March, 16 March, 6 April, 18 May, 17 August & 16 November 1767; *New-York Mercury* 8 July, 16 September & 18 November 1765, 10 February & 29 December 1766, 2 February, 9 February, 9 March, 16 March, 30 March & 4 May 1767; *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury* 11 April, 23 May & 26 September 1768; *Georgia Gazette* 20 June 1765, 24 December 1766, 18 February, 1 April, 1 July & 30 December 1767; *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser* 9 February, 9 March & 11 November 1767, 5 December 1768.

Quebec administration reflected confrontations between colonists and administrators in other British colonies. Thomas Walker became not only a celebrity, but someone with whom the colonial public could relate. That a silence, however, shrouded the deeper divisions between Canadians and Canadiens that led to the Quebec Act helps explain its explosive impact. Northern newspapers reported the Montreal incident of May 1st, 1775.²⁴ The *New York Journal* printed an 'Extract of a letter from Philadelphia, dated May 25th, 1775' in which the writer stated that the assault upon the king 'made a very great noise in Montreal, where all was running into disorder and confusion, on account of the late acts respecting them.'²⁵ Such reports resonated with the re-evaluation of loyalty to the monarch that was taking place in other colonies.²⁶ They reaffirmed that Quebec's politics reflected their own. At the same time, Walker was in communication with rebel colonists, singing a siren song that disseminated an exaggerated but attractive impression of both Canadian and Canadien disaffection with the British regime.²⁷ This, accompanied by fears of a southward thrust by British troops from

²⁴ The bust's installation had also been reported – see 'Extract of a Letter from Montreal. Dated Oct. 3, 1773,' *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, 1 November 1773.

²⁵ *New York Journal*, 1 June 1775; *Pennsylvania Journal*, 30 May 1775; Also *Massachusetts Spy*, 7 June 1775.

²⁶ For the "Fall of Royal America" and the multiple displays of anti-monarchism following the Quebec Act, see McConville, *The King's Three Faces*. Today, the Montreal incident has been relegated to the sphere of Canadian historiography or works that focus exclusively on Canada's role in the Revolution, further underlining the teleological disconnect between Quebec and its colonial neighbours in the pre-Revolutionary period. Examples of this include Lanctot, *Canada & the American Revolution*, 41; Mark R. Anderson, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of Liberation in Canada, 1774-1776* (Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 2013), 57. American historians, their attention fixed on the emergence of the United States, ignore it e.g. John Ferling, *A Leap in the Dark: The Struggle to Create the American Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789, The Oxford History of the United States Vol. I, 2nd Ed.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); John Ferling, *Independence: The Struggle to Set America Free* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011). Charles Metzger dismissed it, stating, that 'it merely proved that Montreal had its quota of desperate characters who shrank from no method of manifesting their hostility to the Quebec Bill.' Metzger, *The Quebec Act*, 79.

²⁷ For Walker's communications with rebels, see A. L. Burt, *The Old Province of Quebec* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1933), 208-9; Robert McConnell Hatch, *Thrust for Canada: The American Attempt on Quebec in 1775-1776* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979), 19, 22, 32-4; Mark R. Anderson, *The Battle for the Fourteenth Colony: America's War of*

Canada, urged Congress to authorise an invasion of Quebec in autumn 1775. That invasion failed as did the Articles of Confederation's attempts to seduce the province into joining the new USA.

Instead, the province, renamed Lower Canada in 1791, became a destination of choice for American tourists. Tourism north flourished following the War of 1812. Its growth, the transport infrastructure that supported it, the shifting demographics of tourists themselves, and the emergence of a popular market for books have all been well explored.²⁸ I examine how negative opinion of the Canadiens was preserved and expanded by travel writers communicating Lower Canada to American readers. The examination shows that the province's appeal lay in Old World vistas and customs that seemed exotic to a USA culturally and economically attached by transatlantic umbilical cord to the old mother country, and yet, reinventing itself through territorial acquisition and the impact of the market revolution. By the mid nineteenth century, Canadien exoticism testified to aberration, evidence of a linguistic, religious, and ethnic dinosaur that stubbornly refused to die. Canadien survival highlighted the flawed British North American system. This Americans contrasted with Louisiana, which they showcased as a triumph of successful integration despite fraught relations between Anglophones and Francophones that mirrored those in Quebec. By the late 1860s, the reconstituted Union that sought confidence post-Civil War vivified its rejection of Quebec, concluding that it was the Achilles' heel of the new Dominion of Canada, and an experiment not to be replicated by America.

Liberation in Canada, 1774-1776 (Hanover NH: University Press of New England, 2013), 54-5, 67, 82, 88-9.

²⁸ E.g. Stuart, *United States Expansionism*, Ch. 7, John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Gassan, *Birth of American Tourism*; Gross & Kelley, *A History of the Book in America Vol. 2*; Daniel Kilbride, *Being American in Europe, 1750-1860* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 2013)

2. QUEBEC FOUND AND LOST – A New Province in a New British North America

Gazing at Quebec from the outside, the historiographic silence between Conquest and the Quebec Act becomes apparent when we read the January 2nd, 1766 entry to John Adams' diary. There, Adams commented on the province's response to the Stamp Act. "I pity my unhappy fellow Subjects in Quebeck," he wrote, 'Quebec consists chiefly of French Men who [are mixed] with a few English and awed by an Army—tho it seems the Discontent there is so great that the Gazette is drop'd.'²⁹ Adams referred to the *Quebec Gazette* that had ceased publication on November 1st, 1765, the day the Act came into force. The *Gazette* was an important publication. It was the province's sole newspaper, not a government organ though 'the official medium for the publication of official documents and notices.'³⁰ It was British North America's only "bilingual newspaper from its beginnings," read by both Canadians and Canadiens.³¹ That Adams was well-informed should come as no surprise. It indicates that he, like many, read his newspaper. A few days previously, the *Boston Evening Post* reported that the *Gazette* had been dropped, 'their Customers all refusing to receive it, if stamped.'³² And yet, Adams' words strike us as those of a voice in the wilderness, highlighting the silence that engulfs the established British American colonies engagement with their new neighbour. It is a silence that is not reflected in the colonial press of the time. This section examines its coverage, testifying to the extent to which Quebec was incorporated into colonists' understanding of their new British America.

The Adams diary entry and the *Post* reflect an assumption that had evidently gained traction as early as 1765-6. Adams was clearly aware of Quebec society, majority Canadien and minority Canadian, but for him, the 'Discontent' with the Stamp Act was

²⁹ L. H. Butterfield et al (Eds.) *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, IV Vols. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1961), Vol. I, 284-5.

³⁰ Burt, *Quebec*, 504.

³¹ Michael Eamon, *Imprinting Britain: Newspapers, Sociability, and the Shaping of British North America* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 34.

³² *Boston Evening Post*, 30 December 1765.

such that it transcended any division. He hinted at unity in opposition. The *Post's* reference to the *Gazette's* unhappy "Customers all" suggested a similar conclusion. Adams and the *Post* implied that Canadians and Canadiens were united with their fellow colonists in their opposition to taxed paper. As Adams had hinted in the phrase 'unhappy fellow subjects,' and historians have since recognised, 'the great Misfortune' that actually befell the province was its population's acquiescence to the Stamp Act.³³ By mid-January, the *Post* was forced to backtrack, explaining Quebec's submission; 'the Stamps, we hear, are by a Military Power forced upon the Inhabitants of Canada, Nova Scotia, and the new conquered settlements in America.'³⁴ This echoed Adams. Canadiens and Canadians were portrayed as victims, and a warning of the dangers of a standing army. The problem was that the most vocal in opposition to the Act were a minority, those Canadians dissatisfied with the Quebec regime. It was they who communicated their dissent to their fellow colonists in the press. 'The Calamities and Distresses occasioned by the Stamp Act in this Place is inconceivable,' groaned a Canadian from Montreal in a letter.³⁵ Opinions such as these strengthened colonial newspapers' construction of a communal solidarity. Such testimony confirmed earlier reports that, 'His Majesty's new Subjects in CANADA, begin to grumble about the STAMP-ACT... and begin to say 'Where is now your English LIBERTY!'"³⁶ But grumble though the 'new Subjects' might, Canadians and Canadiens complied in payment of the tax.³⁷

³³ W. B. Kerr, 'The Stamp Act in Quebec,' *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 7, No. 188 (October 1932), 648-51; Neatby, *Quebec*, 88.

³⁴ *Boston Evening Post*, 13 January 1766.

³⁵ *New-York Mercury*, 21 April 1766; *Boston Evening Post*, 28 April 1766.

³⁶ *New-York Mercury*, 18 November 1765, *Boston Evening Post*, 25 November 1765.

³⁷ The *Gazette's* cessation was also a complex issue. Michael Eamon has argued that 'William Brown and Thomas Gilmore of the *Quebec Gazette* ceased operations voluntarily during the Stamp Act Crisis' and on its resumption, they asserted in the first issue that, 'our paper has been, and ever shall be, as free from the Inspection or Restrictions of any Person whatsoever, as it is of the late Stamp.' Eamon, *Imprinting Britain*, 40. But this is contradicted by the same issue's lead editorial that states, 'we find ourselves emerged from an *involuntary* inactivity (my emphasis).' Quoted in Lawson, *Imperial Challenge*, 92. Michael Eamon's further suggestion that Brown and Gilmore may have been influenced by the dismissal of Isaiah Thomas at the Halifax *Gazette* for featuring anti-Stamp Act content also seems unlikely. Thomas lost his job on February 20th, 1766, when he ceased to print using stamped paper, almost four months after the *Gazette* had been discontinued. See Marcus A.

Thus, Quebec could be constructed as a stifled supporter of the broader British American political community. That the new province could be embraced as a conspicuous partner so soon after the conquest is indicated by the coverage of the press from 1764 to 1774. In the main, examination of the colonial press of this period has been concerned with the breakdown of the imperial relationship.³⁸ Discussion of the newspaper culture of Quebec has recently materialised, though the province persists to be a detached adjunct to the rest of British America. Michael Eamon's study, focusing on the emerging print culture of Halifax and Quebec City, celebrates its own 'conscious departure from the rich scholarly debate that addresses print and its reception and role in daily life in the thirteen British North America colonies that would later form the United States of America.'³⁹ That a fourteenth colony could have aught to do with the other thirteen seems unimportant. Quebec's contribution to both 'reception and role' are ignored by Eamon, though he states that 'in 1769, over thirty printers, stationers, and schoolmasters from across America received free subscriptions to the Quebec Gazette.'⁴⁰ This examination recognises the importance of that reception.

I concentrate on four newspapers across the decade, chosen as they reflect a diverse geography and outlook, revealing the variety of news that contributed to the construction of Quebec. The newspapers chosen are Messrs Fleet's *Boston Evening Post* (published in Boston, 1735-75), Hugh Gaine's *New-York Mercury* (published in New

McCorison, 'Foreword' in Bernard Bailyn & John B. Hench (Eds.), *The Press & the American Revolution*, 4. How one interprets 'involuntary,' the result of government fiat or a disconcerting realisation that continued publication could incite public unrest, is a moot point, though the latter corroborates the mood of the Canadian minority.

³⁸ Examples of this approach include Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941); Edmund S. Morgan & Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1953); A. M. Schlesinger, *Prelude to Independence: The Newspaper War on Britain, 1764-1776* (New York, 1958); Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).

³⁹ Eamon, *Imprinting Britain*, xiv.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.

York, 1752-1768) that became the *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury* (1768-1783), William Goddard's *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser* (published in Philadelphia, 1767-1774), and James Johnston's *Georgia Gazette* (published in Savannah, 1763-1776). The political content of each was mixed, consisting of pro- and anti-British coverage for much of the period. Messrs Fleet and Goddard paid for this equivocation and were forced to cease publication as the colonies transited into rebellion. Following the British capture of New York, Gaine fled to Newark in New Jersey, where the *Gazette* turned Patriot for part of 1776. In November, he returned to the city, and resumed publication as a Royalist. Johnston proved a dogged supporter of the British and the *Georgia Gazette* was terminated in 1776.⁴¹

Nothing is more striking than the paucity of debate generated by Canadian Catholicism suggesting the extent to which British Americans post-1763 anticipated the future Protestantisation of Quebec. It remained a cause for concern in New England at a time when 'many colonists were becoming nearly hysterical over the possibility that England would send bishops to live in the colonies.'⁴² Yet, the appointment of a new Catholic bishop in Quebec in 1766, was reported in the most positive tones across the northern colonies.⁴³ More surprising is the fact that it was barely mentioned in contemporary

⁴¹ For discussion of all four newspapers see Kobre, *Development of the Colonial Newspaper*, 118, 138-9, 156 & 181.

⁴² Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith: Providence, Politics, and the Birth of Religious Freedom in America* (New York: Random House, 2008), 47.

⁴³ The report from the *Quebec Gazette* was only republished in the northern colonies; *New-York Mercury*, 28 July 1766; *New-York Gazette*, 28 July 1766; *Boston Evening Post*, 4 August 1766; *Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser*, 4 August 1766; *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News-Letter*, 7 August 1766; *New Hampshire Gazette and Historical Chronicle*, 8 August 1766; *Connecticut Courant*, 11 August 1766. The historiography remains virtually silent on the new bishop and focuses on internal episcopal debates. Carl Bridenbaugh makes brief reference to his arrival in *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics, 1689-1775* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962) 236-7, but his focus is the conflict between Dissenters and Anglicans, 214-340; for further discussion of the Episcopal debates, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* Enlarged Edition (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press, 1992), 95-8; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 216-8; Walter A. McDougall, *Freedom Just Around The Corner: A New American History, 1585-1828* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 211; Waldman, *Founding Faith*, 47-9.

episcopal debates. It does not feature in the twenty-one instalments of *The Centinel* in which Francis Alison, John Dickinson and George Bryan alerted their fellow Pennsylvanians to the dangers of an episcopate.⁴⁴ It is first referred to in December 1768 when news from London reported that the reason for the 'Popish Bishop in Canada was, to furnish a pretence for establishing a Protestant Prelatic Hierarchy through out all the other English Colonies in America.'⁴⁵ It was an opinion only repeated once, in December 1771.⁴⁶ By the 1770s, there was some unease that the Protestantisation of Quebec had stalled. Correspondents expressed their concerns in letters to publishers, though the numbers involved were small, and opinion seems to have been evenly divided.⁴⁷ Some suspected Catholicism's reinforcement, others thought it would wane. Few were those who anticipated the contents of the Quebec Act. In 1772, the *Post* seemed to anticipate the coming storm when a writer calling himself 'A Farmer's Son addressed the King,' commenting 'what more could James the Second have done in Granada than is now carrying on there; and as for Canada all discouragements imaginable are given to the conversion of Papists even to the Church of England,'⁴⁸ In Grenada, Catholics could vote and even serve in the island's assembly. In the same year, Junius Americanus accused Lord Hillsborough, Secretary of State for the Colonies, of 'establishing the Roman Catholic Religion in Canada, Nova-Scotia, and Grenada.'⁴⁹ Most colonial newspapers remained silent on the subject. Quaker John Dickinson broached Canada in Letter VIII of his Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania

⁴⁴ Elizabeth I. Nybakken, *The Centinel: Warnings of a Revolution* (Cranbury NJ: Associated University Presses, 1980), 13.

⁴⁵ *Boston Evening Post*, 5 December 1768; *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, 12 December 1768.

⁴⁶ *Boston Evening Post*, 30 December 1771.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9 & 23 October 1769; *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, 6 November 1769.

⁴⁸ *Boston Evening Post*, 17 February 1772.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 24 August 1772.

but then only to counteract British claims that American taxation was necessary to finance the province's protection.⁵⁰

From its inception, Quebec proffered other subjects of interest, and primary was trade. In the *Post, Gazette, and Chronicle*, this reflected the interests of merchants in Boston, New York and Philadelphia, but it also testified to Quebec's role within the shared empire. The new acquisition became a destination for merchant shipping. In 1764, nine outward and inward bound cargoes to and from Quebec via New York's Custom House were reported between March 5th and August 27th.⁵¹ By 1767, between March 30th and November 23rd, the number had risen to thirteen, and as late as 1774, there were five between May 2nd and September 12th, the decline possibly explained by rumours of the Quebec Act, and the Act's eventual publication across the colonies.⁵² In this trade, the broader involvement of British American merchants is suggested by the fact that other colonial newspapers reported on the clearance of goods and their arrival at New York's Custom House. The *Pennsylvania Chronicle* cited those involved; the arrival in New York of a shipment by Smith bound for Quebec, or the clearance of the goods of Cumming for export.⁵³ The Custom House at Philadelphia piloted its own import and export business to the new province.⁵⁴ Mere weeks before the full details of the Quebec Act became known, the *New-York Gazette* published an advert on August 8th, 1774, in which it is clear that Quebec had become an important part of British America's mercantile networks. A reward of fifty pounds was offered for Joseph Thorp who had absconded with a significant sum he had been entrusted to deliver to Quebec. Thorp had played the

⁵⁰ *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser*, 18 January 1768; *Georgia Gazette* 30 March 1768.

⁵¹ *New-York Mercury*, 5 March, 2 April, 7 May, 4 June, 2 July, 9 July, 16 & 23 July, 27 August 1764.

⁵² *New-York Mercury*, 30 March, 6, 13 & 27 April, 4 May, 13 & 27 July, 10 & 24 August, 7 September, 23 November 1767; *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, 2 & 30 May, 25 July, 8 August, 12 September 1774. This was the first colonial paper to publish the Act in full on 28 August 1774.

⁵³ *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser*, 4 May, 7 August, 7 September 1767

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, e.g. 11 May, 6 & 27 July 1767, 24 May, 6 & 27 September 1773.

part of merchant in both that province, Boston, and New-Castle, Virginia. Whilst Thorp's activities reveal the breadth of opportunity afforded a man on the make by the expansion of trade across the colonies, most revealing is the list of those to whom an application for the reward should be made; 'Apply to Curson and Seton, of New-York, Joseph Wharton, jun. of Philadelphia, Robert Christie, of Baltimore, James Gibson and Co, Virginia, John Boadfield, of Quebec, Malatiah Bourne, or John Rowe, of Boston.' That all were committed to ensuring the payment of the reward suggests that all were equally involved in the venture that had encouraged them to commit the 'considerable sum in Half Johannes, of 9 penny weight' to the untrustworthy Thorp.⁵⁵ In this network, Boadfield, the Canadian in Quebec, was a coequal.

The colonial press reassured readers of the province's integration into the imperial orbit by its reporting of news from London despite an increase in the importance of local news.⁵⁶ Metropolitan newspapers reported the bounties anticipated, and supposedly realised, by the acquisition of Quebec. The 'PREMIUMS offered for the Advantage of the BRITISH AMERICAN DOMINIONS by the Society instituted at London for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce,' in 1764 included Canada.⁵⁷ The inclusion of Quebec must have resonated as testament to a vitalised North America. Other reports followed; encouragement of the iron industry at Trois Rivieres, plans for the manufacture of hats and guns, commencement of the production of millstones and extension of the distillery trade, promotion of a brass foundry at Montreal, and the use of American Oak from Quebec in the construction of British vessels.⁵⁸ Success followed. In 1765, it was reported that the province had generated 50,000 'hard dollars' from the export of ironwork to the Spanish settlements of South

⁵⁵ *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, 8 & 22 August 1774; *Boston Evening Post* 15 August 1774.

⁵⁶ For the importance of local news, see Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers*, 273.

⁵⁷ *Georgia Gazette* 19 April 1764.

⁵⁸ *Boston Evening Post*, 23 July 1764, 15 April, 27 May 1765, 20 October 1766; *New-York Mercury*, 15 October 1764, 8 July 1765; discussion of the development of Quebec trade and manufacture post-1760 can be found in Neatby, *Quebec*, 57-86.

America.⁵⁹ In 1766, 30,000 pigs of iron had been sold to the French and Spanish West Indies.⁶⁰ News from London dated December 1st, 1767, commented on a flourishing industry, particularly in cast iron ware, 'great quantities of which they exported to the southern colonies.'⁶¹ 'Inexhaustible supplies of furs' were reported in the 'upper Lakes of Canada.'⁶² English merchants could rejoice as a chart of 'EXPORTS to the Continent of AMERICA from ENGLAND only, exclusive of SCOTLAND,' noted that the value of exports to Canada had increased from less than £150,000 in 1761 to over £365,000 by 1765.⁶³ The breadth of imperial export and manufacture mirrored the context in which shipping to and from Quebec was recorded. On New York's Custom House lists, the province appeared as another familiar imperial destination alongside Virginia, Halifax, Jamaica and Bristol.⁶⁴ Inbound entries at Quebec's own Custom House recorded a wider world, cargo from Lisbon, Martinique, Madeira, and Halifax.⁶⁵ The arrival and departure of Quebec vessels to and from Deal in Kent were noted.⁶⁶ In short, colonial newspapers captured their new neighbour's emergence as a British American entrepôt in ways that implied it had acquired colonists' own multifaceted identities, provincial, continental, and imperial. This was reassuring while British Americans themselves remained committed to the Mother Country, but boded ill should that commitment come into question.

⁵⁹ *Boston Evening Post* 10 June 1765; *New-York Mercury* 17 June 1765.

⁶⁰ *Boston Evening Post* 21 September 1767.

⁶¹ *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser* 22 February 1768.

⁶² *Boston Evening Post* 29 December 1766.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 6 March 1769. The extent to which Quebec had embraced British imports is highlighted in Stephen Conway, *Britannia's Auxiliaries: Continental Europeans and the British Empire, 1740-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 190-1.

⁶⁴ *New-York Mercury*, 4 June 1764.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 6 July 1767.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 February 1766; *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser*, 22 June 1772.

Much of the press coverage did little to impede roseate impressions. News from Quebec, the sensational and mundane, was sifted into newspaper columns to fascinate colonial readers, often reassuring them of their own superiority as Britons. Identifying a story's point of origin is difficult. Reports primarily fell into two categories; letters to the publisher or extracts of letters between individuals comparable to those that crossed the Atlantic, and brief reports with the simple heading 'Quebec' and a date. The former were especially prevalent in New York, testifying to Canadians' engagement with its press and their involvement in trade with that city.⁶⁷ The extent to which any, other than the few specified, originated in the *Quebec Gazette* is questionable.⁶⁸ The *Gazette* has been characterised as 'of distinct though limited value' as a source, its focus being 'the outside world, its local news being almost entirely confined to the arrival and departure of ships and of prominent persons.'⁶⁹ The latter were of interest to colonial publishers. Reporting these 'prominent persons,' most of whom were involved in Quebec's administration, furnished colonists with the opportunity to gauge the province's progress within the shared empire. The news often originated in London as it focused on government appointments. The confirmation of James Murray as Governor in 1764 and his replacement by Guy Carleton in 1766 were extensively reported, but so too was the progress of others; William Gregory was appointed Chief Justice and George Suckling Attorney General in 1764, and William Hay and Francis Maseres to the same roles in 1766.⁷⁰

Reports of crime intrigued readers. Offences by members of the British military served an important purpose.⁷¹ They affirmed colonial fears of a standing army. John Adams'

⁶⁷ E. g. *New-York Mercury*, 23 January 1764, 30 April 1764, 4 February 1765, 18 November 1765, 14 September 1767; *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, 18 April 1768.

⁶⁸ E.g. *Boston Evening Post*, 25 February, 7 October 1765.

⁶⁹ Burt, *Quebec*, 504.

⁷⁰ *New-York Mercury*, 10 September 1764, 25 August, 27 October 1766; *Boston Evening Post*, 17 September 1764, 21 July, 1 September 1766; *Georgia Gazette*, 31 May, 1 November 1764, 12 November, 10 December 1766.

⁷¹ Reports of civilian lawbreaking included abduction from prison, burglary, murder, and filicide. Many of these crimes involved Canadiens, unsurprising in a colony in which they formed the majority. See *Boston Evening Post*, 18 March 1765, 11 March, 6 May 1771;

journal entry captured the mood when he bemoaned a province ‘awed by an Army.’⁷² Quebec appeared yet another victim of government policy during a decade when colonists’ fears of the British military were at their height. 7,500 British troops were stationed west of the Appalachians, there were garrisons in Quebec, and taxation of the colonies was the imperial solution to their financing. The 1765 Quartering Act was unpopular, insisting that colonial assemblies billet troops in private properties. New York’s opposition was such that the legislature went as far as denying the statute’s existence⁷³ Unsurprisingly, when reporting on crimes involving the armed forces in Quebec, New York was to the fore. Hugh Gaine announced that two officers responsible for flogging a soldier of the 52nd Regiment were arrested for his resulting death, though both were eventually acquitted. Not according to the *New-York Mercury* where it was reported they were found guilty of murder.⁷⁴ On September 21st, 1767, the *Mercury* disclosed three trials involving military personnel; George Norton of the 52nd for manslaughter, John May of grand larceny, and James Jones, late of the 27th Regiment, for stealing calicoes. All three were sentenced to be burnt by the hand.⁷⁵

The conflict between Canadians and the administration that flared with the royal desecration of May 1st, 1775 was minimally reported. That between Governor Murray and the Canadian merchants, who encouraged their agents in London to petition the Board of Trade for his removal, was a source of interest in 1765. Murray was recalled to answer charges the following year.⁷⁶ Commentary on Carleton’s time was relatively

Boston Evening Post Supplement, 21 February 1774; *New-York Mercury*, 25 March 1765; *New-York Gazette*, and *Weekly Mercury*, 28 August 1769, 25 February 1771, 7 February 1774; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, and *Universal Advertiser*, March 4, 1771.

⁷² See p. 56 above.

⁷³ For opposition to British regulars and the Quartering Act, see Draper, *A Struggle for Power*, 291-5; Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years’ War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2000), 647-51; Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 150-1.

⁷⁴ *New-York Mercury*, 6 October 6, 8 December 1766; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, and *Universal Advertiser*, 13 October, 15 December 1766.

⁷⁵ *New-York Mercury*, 21 September 1767.

⁷⁶ *Boston Evening Post*, 7 October, 18 November 1765, 17 March 1766.

mute. Disagreements between Quebec's merchants and His Majesty's Council were reported, but the governor who became the architect of the Quebec Act remained invisible.⁷⁷ Adverts for Quebec wares were recurrent; those for cambrics, oats, Canada parchment (sun-dried beaver pelt), green peas, and a new drug, Canada Balsam.⁷⁸ Jobs were offered; Peter McFarlain of Montreal, for example, sought two tailors to work by the month or year.⁷⁹ Vessels sailing to Quebec advertised for not only freight but also passengers.⁸⁰ In the early years, advertisements for land were not uncommon.⁸¹ A proclamation by Murray himself was published in which he refuted reports that Canada was barren.⁸² But, as has been noted, the hoped-for surge of Anglo-Protestant settlers never materialised. By 1773, Quebec's recognition as part of the colonial sphere was indicated when James Rivington of New York solicited interest in his new 'Weekly News-paper' to be entitled "Rivington's New-York Gazetteer; Or, The CONNECTICUT, NEW-JERSEY, HUDSON'S RIVER and QUEBEC WEEKLY ADVERTISER."⁸³

This litany of colonial coverage illustrates the degree to which Quebec had metamorphosed from conquered territory to membership of the imperial enterprise. The imperial context needs to be stressed as it was the political and cultural space in which British Americans took pride. Within that structure, Quebec's trajectory seemed determined. Catholicism persisted, but its survival was not assumed. Conflicts between

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5 November 1770.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1 & 8 June 1767, 14 March 1774; *New-York Mercury*, 9 & 16 April 1764, 23 July, 17 September, 22 & 29 October 1764; *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser*, 12 & 19 April, 10 May 1773.

⁷⁹ *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, November 7, 1773.

⁸⁰ *Boston Evening Post*, 28 March, 4, 11 & 18 April 1774.

⁸¹ *New-York Mercury*, 2 January 1764, 10 & 17 December 1764, 11 February, 7 & 14 October 1765.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 29 April 1765

⁸³ *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser*, 1 March 1773; *New-York Gazette, and Weekly Mercury*, 15 March 1773.

Canadians and the British regime mirrored those of colonists themselves at odds with their own governments, and British military violence chimed with their concerns. But the image conjured was a sham. Canadiens themselves featured not at all beyond the reports of crime and violence.⁸⁴ The majority in their historic homeland, they were rendered invisible. This was a deception that would prove problematic for the rebellious colonies when it came to assessing Quebec's willingness to engage in rebellion. The protagonists who dominated the press coverage were the minority Canadians. They were fellow Anglo-Protestants, bearing English and Scottish names, their activities and opinions reported in a common, shared language. And it was they who would prove persuasive when it came to convincing their neighbours of Quebec's enthusiasm for an independent continental polity outside of the British system. It is this hinterland that clarifies the explosive impact of the Quebec Act. It was a jolting reminder that the province remained more Canadien than may have been previously thought, and that the imperial government would act innovatively, or threateningly, to ensure the preservation of its system.

3. THE FASHIONABLE TOUR IN AN UNFASHIONABLE LAND – American Tourists in Quebec.

The Quebec Act cast a longer shadow upon the USA than is recognised. Its effects can be seen in the analysis of the province common to guidebooks and other travel writing that blossomed from the early 1820s onwards.⁸⁵ When Saratoga publisher Gideon Minor Davison produced the first American guidebook in 1822, he was not the first writer to feature Lower Canada nor would he be the last. The authors, commentators and essayists in this examination span the 1790s through to the 1850s. As the genre grew, what were once original analyses became repeated motifs.⁸⁶ My focus is how negative

⁸⁴ See n. 71 above.

⁸⁵ For their emergence, see Richard H. Gassan, "The First American Tourist Guidebooks: Authorship and Print Culture of the 1820s," *Book History* 8 (2005), 51-74.

⁸⁶ Travel writers were familiar with each other's works. In the 1825 edition of *The Northern Traveller*, 6, Theodore Dwight Jr. recommended Davison's guidebook to readers. In his *A Yankee in Canada, with Anti-Slavery and Reform Papers*. (Boston MA: Ticknor and Fields,

opinion of Lower Canada and its people helped foster an understanding of the American identity to a growing readership. Davison's multiple editions reflect the voraciousness of that readership. Revolutionary hero Moses Guest visited Lower Canada in 1796, producing the earliest of our accounts, though it was not published until 1823.⁸⁷ When the second edition appeared in 1824, he tells us that, 'in June 1823, had twelve hundred and fifty copies of this work printed. In five months from the time they came from press they were all sold.'⁸⁸ His was a success shared by many.⁸⁹ Travelogues, and specifically guidebooks, helped formulate public opinion as much as newspapers. The traveller was directed what to see and how to think, and their expectations were not disappointed. The publications I examine reported on diverse aspects of Lower Canada, but I focus on three that were typical features; the historicised past, the Canadiens themselves, and the Canadien Catholic Church. All three intersected to assist Americans in understanding themselves by comparison with their neighbours.

While almost all the travel writers who engaged with the Canadas were from the Northern or Middle States, tourism to the provinces was a shared national pastime. In the introduction to his fifth edition, Davison advertised that, 'the oppressive heat of summer in the southern United States, and the consequent exposure to illness, have long induced the wealthy part of the population to seek, at that season of the year, the

1866), Henry David Thoreau referenced 'the published works of 45 other discoverers, explorers, and travellers.' Adam Paul Weisman, 'Postcolonialism in North America: Imaginative Colonization in Henry David Thoreau's "A Yankee in Canada" and Jacques Poulin's "Volkswagen Blues,"' *The Massachusetts Review*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Autumn 1995), 479.

⁸⁷ Moses Guest, *Poems on Several Occasion. To which are annexed Extracts from a Journal kept by the Author while he followed the Sea, and During a Journey from New-Brunswick, in New Jersey, to Montreal and Quebec* (Cincinnati: Looker & Reynolds, 1823). My notes refer to the 1824 second edition. Guest was famous for his capture of Loyalist leader John Simcoe, which he describes in Guest, *Poems*, 144-6. Also see <<http://nbfplarchive.org/henryguesthouse/henryguest.html>> Accessed 12 July 2016.

⁸⁸ Guest, *Poems*, iv.

⁸⁹ For example, 'Davison's *Fashionable Tour* went through ten editions by 1840' and Timothy Dwight Jr's 1825 guidebook, *The Northern Traveller*, "went through seven editions by 1841." Dona Brown, *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995), 28-30.

more salubrious climate of the north,' and went on to provide readers with travel distances from Savannah, Charleston, Norfolk, Washington and Monticello.⁹⁰ The latter's inclusion presumably a nod to the South's premier place of pilgrimage. In 1817, Joseph Sansom noted that amongst the visitors crossing over into Lower Canada were, 'several ladies from Carolina.'⁹¹ A Virginian, J. C. Myers, in 1849 produced his own guidebook.⁹² As late as 1853, twenty per cent of American visitors to Lundy's Lane were Southerners.⁹³ Significantly, no guidebook mentioned Upper Canada's emergence from 1829 onwards as a haven for refugee and fugitive blacks. Whilst detailed biographical information for many writers does not exist, there is evidence that the genre transcended politics. The writer Joseph Sansom was a Federalist member of Pennsylvania's state assembly.⁹⁴ Yet, he corresponded with President James Madison as a friend, and dedicated the first edition of his Canadian travelogue to DeWitt Clinton, Democratic-Republican Governor of New York.⁹⁵ Benjamin Silliman, Yale Professor of Chemistry and author of an 1820 travelogue, was a Federalist, later a Whig, committed to anti-slavery.⁹⁶ Henry Gilpin acknowledged his reliance upon Silliman for his 1825

⁹⁰ G. M. Davison, *The Traveller's Guide: Through the Middle and Northern States, and the Provinces of Canada. Fifth Edition – Enlarged and Improved* (Saratoga Springs: G. M. Davison & G. & C. & H. Carvill, New York, 1833), xvii.

⁹¹ Joseph Sansom, *Travels in Lower Canada, with the Author's Recollections of the Soil, and Aspect; the Morals, Habits, and Religious Institutions of that Country* (London: Sir Richard Phillips and Co., 1820), 12. This was originally published as *Sketches of Lower Canada, Historical and Descriptive; with the Author's Recollections of the Soil and Aspect; the Morals, Habits, and Religious Institutions, of That Isolated Country; during A Tour of Quebec, in the Month of July, 1817* (New York: Kirk & Mercein, 1817).

⁹² J. C. Myers, *Sketches of a Tour through the Northern and Eastern States, the Canadas & Nova Scotia* (Harrisonburg VA: J. H. Wartmann and Brothers, 1849).

⁹³ Thomas A. Chambers, *Memories of War: Visiting Battlefields and Bonefields in the Early American Republic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), 144-5.

⁹⁴ Susan E. Klepp and Karin Wulf (Eds.), *The Diary of Hannah Callender Sansom: Sense and Sensibility in the Age of the American Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 348.

⁹⁵ < <https://www.loc.gov/item/mjm017422/>>, <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/03-07-02-0095>> Accessed 2 June 2018.

⁹⁶ *Remarks made on a Short Tour, between Hartford and Quebec, in the Autumn of 1819: By the Author of a Journal of Travel in England, Holland, and Scotland.* (New Haven: S.

Northern Tour, and was an ardent Democrat and eventually Attorney General under Van Buren.⁹⁷ Both Silliman and Gilpin were drawn to explore Lower Canada. Most striking were the similarities rather than differences in their coverage. Quebec was a place where visitors with different political views could encounter their shared Americanness. Yet, it could be used to score political points. In 1844, New York Whig Orville Holley presented a positive picture of Montreal, ‘now one of the neatest cities on the continent,’ where, ‘not a single potatoe peeling, or dirt of any kind whatever, can be seen in any of the frequented streets – much less a stray pig, or cow, and scarcely a dog.’⁹⁸ For the Whig Holley, this was a dig at Democratic enclaves in New York, not least Five Points, acknowledged as ‘the nation’s first great slum.’⁹⁹

Historian Thomas Chambers states that tourism to historic sites through to the Civil War ‘reflected greater interest in landscape aesthetics than preoccupation with

Converse, 1820). Silliman’s name only appears on the frontispiece of the 1822 London edition. A second US edition appeared in 1824. For Silliman’s politics, see George Park Fisher, *Life of Benjamin Silliman, M. D., LL. D., late professor of chemistry, mineralogy, and geology in Yale college. Chiefly from his manuscript reminiscences, diaries, and correspondence.* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1866). 54.

⁹⁷ Henry Gilpin, *A Northern Tour: Being A Guide to Saratoga, Lake George, Niagara, Canada, Boston, &c. &c. Through The States of Pennsylvania, New-Jersey, New-York, Vermont, New-Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode-Island, and Connecticut; Embracing an Account of the Canals, Colleges, Public Institutions, Natural Curiosities and interesting Objects therein* (Philadelphia: H. C. Carey & I. Lea, 1825), iii-iv; for Gilpin in 1825, see Gassan, ‘The First American Tourist Guidebooks,’ 60-1; for a biography, see Ralph. D. Gray, ‘Henry D. Gilpin: A Pennsylvania Jacksonian,’ *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (October 1970), 340-351.

⁹⁸ O. L. Holley, (Ed.), *The Picturesque Tourist; Being a Guide through the Northern and Eastern States and Canada: Giving an Accurate Description of Cities and Villages, Celebrated Places of Resort, Etc. With Maps and Illustrations.* (New York: J. Disturnell, 1844), 235 & 236. Holley served as New York State Surveyor-General 1838-42. See Franklin B. Hough, *The New York Civil List, containing the Names and Origin of the Civil Divisions, and the Names Dates of Election or Appointment of the Principal State and Country Officers, from the Revolution to the Present Time.* (Albany NY: Weed, Parsons & Co., 1858), 38.

⁹⁹ Hilary Ballon (Ed.), *The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan, 1811-2011* (New York: Museum of the City of New York and Columbia University Press, 2012), 21.

historical knowledge.¹⁰⁰ His focus is the War of 1812 battlefields on the Niagara Peninsula where, other than at Queenstown with its monument to Brock, visitors confronted farmed fields, devoid of memorials. As such, they were not yet national sites of reverence, but, as Chambers acknowledges, for tourists, they were already sites of memory.¹⁰¹ That they could exercise such an emotional pull, even when only empty landscape, attests to memory's potency. It also alerts us to the impact of the War of 1812. This was not yet a 'forgotten war.'¹⁰² For generations of Americans, at least until 1846, theirs was not an antebellum, but a post-war world. Upper Canada was a space in which they could kindle that war's memory. It was also the gateway to Lower Canada where the past had greater potency. There, it assaulted the visitor. Wolfe and Montgomery's sacrifices were inscribed, and, in memory, wrapped in the Quebec Act that had helped propel the Revolution. The persistence of Canadian language, religion and race seemed perverse to American visitors. It reaffirmed their choice to exit the British Empire. Urban spaces, fortifications, and patterns of settlement jarred with those of an expanding, improving USA. The battlefield landscapes of 1812 in the Upper Province were brought into sharp focus in Lower Canada. It is unsurprising that the

¹⁰⁰ Chambers, *Memories of War*, 11. It should be noted that Chambers chooses the end of the Seven Years' War as his starting point so he does not explore Wolfe's victory nor curiously Montgomery's fall beyond referring to the latter's eventual reburial in the USA. See 152.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 12-5. Some entered Canada through the Richelieu Valley, avoiding the Upper Province. Writers who discussed the battlefields include Davison in *The Fashionable Tour, in 1825. An Excursion to the Springs, Niagara, Quebec and Boston*. (Saratoga Springs: G. M. Davison, 1825), 122-4; Gilpin, *Northern Tour* (1825), 151-61; Robert J. Vandewater, *The Tourist, or Pocket Manual for Travellers on the Hudson River, the Western Canal and Stage Road to Niagara Falls down Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec. Comprising the Routes to Lebanon, Ballston, and Saratoga Springs*. 3rd Ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1834), 73-4; Holley (Ed.), *Picturesque Tourist* (1844), 212-6; Samuel de Veaux, *The Falls of Niagara, or Tourist's Guide to the Wonders of Nature, including Notices of the Whirlpool, Islands. &c. and a Complete Guide Thro' the Canadas. Established with Engravings*. (Buffalo: William B. Hayden, 1839), 148-52. This was republished as *The Travellers' Own Book, to Saratoga Springs, Niagara Falls and Canada, containing Routes, Distances, Conveyances, Expenses, Use of Mineral Waters, Baths, Descriptions of Scenery, Etc. A Complete Guide, for the Valetudinarian and for the Tourist, Seeking for Pleasure and Amusement. With Maps and Engravings*. (Buffalo: Paxon & Read, 1841); 240, 242-5. For a biography of de Veaux, see <<http://www.woodvorwerk.com/vorwerk/g5/p5286.htm>> Accessed 17 May 2016.

¹⁰² Donald R. Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 1-3.

latter became popular, so accessible and so attractive to the young nation. Having discarded Britain, the USA had no independent history. It is no accident that the flourishing of guidebooks and tourism to the Canadas kicked off in the early 1820s. The Era of Good Feeling following the Second War of Independence propelled national momentum. Little wonder that Southerners too were drawn to the Fashionable Tour.

Following the Napoleonic Wars, and that of 1812, Americans gazed westward and inward to affirm their national identity. Between 1812 and 1821, seven new states were added to the previous seventeen. Excepting Maine, all were in the previously contested Old Northwest and new Southwest. Access to the Great Lakes, and hence the Canadas, was provided in 1825 by the Erie Canal, promoting both trade and tourism. Travel writers were quick to note its impact.¹⁰³ In 1828, Noah Webster drew the line between American English and its transatlantic parent in his dictionary. And Lower Canada provided Americans with easy access to all that was to be rejected of the Old World. Even Wolfe's revered capture of Quebec could be repackaged for a self-assured American nation. Gazing upon the Plains of Abraham, Silliman captured the zeitgeist.¹⁰⁴ He condemned the conflicts between England and France. 'In which quarter of the world, on what ocean or sea, in what country, on what island, or on what coast, of remotest India or America,' he opined, 'have they not opened each others veins till the earth cries out upon them for blood unrighteously shed!'¹⁰⁵ Silliman erased the role of American colonists in supporting and encouraging those conflicts that had ensured their security. Acceptance of such an Orwellian reconstruction was helped by

¹⁰³ Philip Stansbury, pioneer of the walking tour guide in 1822, foresaw the demise of Montreal as a result. *A Pedestrian Tour of Two Thousand Three Hundred Miles, in North America. To the Lakes, The Canadas, and the New-England States. Performed in the Autumn of 1821.* (New York: J. D. Myers & W. Smith, 1822), 166. In the 1825 edition of his *Fashionable Tour*, Davison noted it was a dull passage but felt that its popularity was assured because of 'convenience, safety, and rapidity.' 117. Also in 1825, Theodore Dwight Jr. included a lengthy appendix on the canal and the opportunities it would provide in *The Northern Traveller; Containing the Routes to Niagara, Quebec, and the Springs; with Descriptions of the Principal Scenes, and Useful Hints to Strangers.* (New York: Wilder & Campbell, 1825), 155-72.

¹⁰⁴ Silliman, *Remarks*, (1820), 93-9 for the battle of the Plains of Abraham.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 270-1.

historicised portrayals of the provinces' urban spaces. The past could be alienated if the present too was shown to be alien. In America, as in Britain, neo-classical architecture was the public building-style of choice. Grey-stone Montreal and Quebec stood in stark contrast. For those who had not visited Europe, writers conjured the Old World. In Montreal, New Yorker Philip Stansbury noted that 'tall warehouses, as strong as castles and as venerable, stand pre-eminent upon the high bank.'¹⁰⁶ In Quebec, the poorly-travelled Henry David Thoreau of 1850 seemed horrified.¹⁰⁷ 'I rubbed my eyes to be sure that I was in the nineteenth century,' and in it he found nothing of worth, 'interesting only as a relic of antiquity and barbarism.'¹⁰⁸ In 1854, the natural historian and Vermont Gazeteer, Zadock Thompson pinned Quebec to a period, its Citadel 'resembling the old castles of Europe in feudal times, with a town built and fortified in the manner of the most strongly fortified towns of Europe in the fifteenth century.'¹⁰⁹ Such specificity, authoritatively stated, meant that fifteenth century fortifications so conjured were what visitors saw. Quebec could be pigeonholed in the past, and Americans could feel confident of their present.

At the same time, the American city was shedding its Old World skin. In 1811, New York embraced a grid plan of twelve avenues and one hundred and fifty-five streets that would cover Manhattan.¹¹⁰ Grid plans with orderly blocks were the norm in burgeoning

¹⁰⁶ Stansbury, *Pedestrian Tour*, 165; for a brief biography, see <http://famousamericans.net/josephstansbury/> Accessed 14 August 2018.

¹⁰⁷ Overall, Thoreau travelled very little. John Aldrich Christie, *Thoreau as World Traveler* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), 7-8.

¹⁰⁸ Thoreau, *A Yankee*, 21 & 73.

¹⁰⁹ Z. Thompson, *Northern Guide. Lake George, Lake Champlain, Montreal and Quebec, Green and White Mountains, and Willoughby Lake, with Maps and Tables of Distances*. (Burlington VT: S. B. Nichols, 1854), 33; for a biography of Thompson, see <https://vermonthistory.org/journal/misc/ZadockThompsonVermont.pdf> Accessed 21 April 2016.

¹¹⁰ Ballon (Ed.), *The Greatest Grid*; John W. Reps, *The Making of Urban America: A History of City Planning in the United States* (Princeton: Princetown University Press, 1965), Ch. 11. 'Gridiron Cities and Checkerboard Plans.'

centres such as Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh.¹¹¹ Canadian cities presented a sad contrast. In 1813, Pennsylvanian Michael Smith reported that the streets of Quebec were, 'irregular and uneven; many of them are narrow, and but a very few are paved.'¹¹² Theodore Dwight Jr, nephew of arch-Federalist President of Yale, Timothy Dwight, provided only a cursory account of Quebec in his 1825 work. It had 'the aspect of a foreign country.'¹¹³ By 1841, he noted that 'the Lower Town is crowded and dirty, and contains no decent public houses.'¹¹⁴ In 1844, America's leading cartographer, Henry Schenck Tanner warned visitors they would find 'narrow and dirty, and, in parts, steep streets.'¹¹⁵ Americans could bask in Canadian squalor, ignoring the fact that most US cities too were squalid. It took a Southerner to note there was little difference between Canadian cities and their American counterparts. In 1849, Virginian J. C. Myers was shocked by the numbers of beggars in the province. He was, 'struck with surprise; I

¹¹¹ Repts, *Making of Urban America*, Ch. 8. 'Pioneer Cities in the Ohio Valley.'

¹¹² Michael Smith, *A Geographical View of the British Possessions in North America: Comprehending Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, New Britain, Lower and Upper Canada, With all the Country to the Frozen Sea on the North, and Pacific Ocean on the West. With an Appendix, containing A Concise History of the War in Canada, to the date of this Volume*. 4th Ed. (Baltimore: P. Mauro, 1813), 165. Smith had emigrated to Upper Canada in 1810, but was forced to leave in 1813, his allegiance in doubt. His book was published in the US and consumed by a public eager for information. It went through five editions. See Fred Landon, *Western Ontario and the American Frontier* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Division of Economic and History, 1941), 21, n.15. For a biography of Smith, see <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith_michael_5E.html> Accessed 21 April 2016.

¹¹³ Dwight Jr., *Northern Traveller* (1925), 145; for a biography of Dwight pre-1825, see Gassan, 'First American Tourist Guidebooks,' 56-7; a more detailed biography is found in Benjamin W. Dwight, *The History of the Descendants of John Dwight of Dedham, Mass.* II Vols. (New York: John F. Trow & Son, 1874), Vol. I, 231-3.

¹¹⁴ Dwight Jr., *Northern Traveller*, (1841), 126.

¹¹⁵ H. S. Tanner, *The Travellers' Hand Book for the State of New York and the Province of Canada containing Brief Accounts of the Towns, Their Public Buildings and Other Objects of Interest – Natural and Artificial Curiosities – Historical Memoranda – Modes of Conveyance – Tables of Distances by Railroad, Canal, Stage, and River Routes in Every Direction: The Whole arranged on a New Plan, by which Every Interesting Object on the Leading Routes is brought into View*. 2nd Ed. (New York: T. R. Tanner at the Geographical Establishment, 1844), 150. There were three editions in total. For a biography of Tanner, see <<https://www.geographicus.com/P/RareMaps/tanner>> Accessed 27 July 2018.

could scarcely believe that I was walking the streets of Quebec, under the control of proud and haughty England.¹¹⁶ But in New York he detected, 'the squalid hut of poverty, of filth, of extreme misery and degradation.'¹¹⁷ It seems Myers' issue was with Northern cities in general. Suggestively, he provided no negative assessments of Washington DC and Baltimore, despite both cities' notoriety for poverty and crime.¹¹⁸ Quebec functioned on a regional as well as national level. Myers' encounters in the North and in Canada East were a means of reaffirming his identity as a Southerner.

A common critique of the province in the age of American westward expansionism focused on settlement along the St Lawrence itself. For many writers, the river and its banks were the sum of their Canadien sojourn, supplemented with visits to beauty spots such as the Chaudière Falls. As early as 1796, Moses Guest wrote of the St Lawrence, 'the banks of the river, from Montreal to Quebec, are judged to be by far the thickest settled of any part of North or South America.'¹¹⁹ This concentrated settlement became crystallised in the phrase 'an almost continued village,' an assessment that became a leitmotif.¹²⁰ It was a Nile-like depiction of broad river and huddled population that confounded Americans. They were struck by the meagre ribbon of Canadien settlement that contrasted so sharply with the thrust of their expansion. War of 1812 veteran Joseph Sanson, visiting in July 1817, as US movement into Trans-Appalachia exploded, noted that by comparison with the Hudson's 'hamlets, or trading towns, of which there

¹¹⁶ Myers, *Sketches*, 205.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹⁸ See Wilbur R. Miller, *The Social History of Crime and Punishment in America: An Encyclopaedia*. V Vols. (London: Sage Publications, 2012), Vol. I, 105; J. D. Dickey, *Empire of Mud: The Secret History of Washington, DC* (Guilford CT: Lyons Press, 2014).

¹¹⁹ Guest, *Poems*, 134.

¹²⁰ John Cosens Ogden, *A Tour through Upper and Lower Canada. By John C. Ogden, of the Episcopal Church; Containing, A View of the present State of Religion, Learning, Commerce, Agriculture, Colonization, Customs and Manners, among the English, French, and Indian Settlements*. 2nd Ed. (Wilmington: Printed by Bonsal and Niles for the Author, 1800), 225; Silliman, *Remarks*, (1820), 211; Stansbury, *Pedestrian Tour*, 171; Davison, *The Traveller's Guide* (1833), 296; Vandewater, *The Tourist*, (1834), 83; Tanner, *Travellers' Hand Book*, 131 & 148; Holley, *Picturesque Tourist* (1844), 243; Myers, *Sketches*, 191.

are fifteen or twenty upon the North River... there are but four in the like space upon the River St. Lawrence, including Quebec and Montreal.'¹²¹ Stansbury in 1822 exposed the Canadien presence as a deception. 'We believe ourselves in one of the most populous countries imaginable... whilst, not above half a mile back, we will be enclosed by uncleared woodlands.'¹²² In 1841, Theodore Dwight Jr, warned his readers not to be fooled. 'Notwithstanding the thickness of the population on the shores, the country is a wilderness only about four miles back'¹²³ Tanner in 1844 characterised the settlement as devoid of enterprise, a failure to realise the potential of expansion, the result being that, 'they have continued within their original limits, subdividing the land more and more, and submitting to a constantly decreasing ratio of comfort.'¹²⁴ The Whiggism of Dwight and Tanner, with its focus on internal improvement, was captured by Thoreau who stated that in settling, the Canadiens had, 'overran a great extent of country... without improving it.'¹²⁵

For most writers, the problem was the Canadiens themselves. It is unsurprising that antipathy to the Catholic French should inform American opinion. It is equally true that Canadien subjection to the Anglo-Saxon British promoted a dismissive assessment of a conquered race. This was a blinkered American analysis of Canadien politics, but both evolving liberal Whig notions of national improvement and Anglo-Saxonism, and white male Jacksonian Democracy could marry in their dismissal of the British American imperial system and its persistent Canadiens. An infantilised characterisation of the Canadiens was sold to visitors. On the Sorel River, Silliman watched women washing their clothes, where they, 'dance on them, dashing the water about like ducks, and seemingly as much for frolic as for work.' He conceded that such descriptions were, 'it is true, trivial, but they still tend to characterise the country and its inhabitants.'¹²⁶ Deftly,

¹²¹ Joseph Sansom, *Travels in Lower Canada*, (1820), 14.

¹²² Stansbury, *Pedestrian Tour*, 208.

¹²³ Dwight Jr., *Northern Traveller*, (1841), 125.

¹²⁴ Tanner, *Traveller's Hand Book*, 130.

¹²⁵ Thoreau, *A Yankee*, 62.

¹²⁶ Silliman, *Remarks*, (1820), 201.

he situated himself and his readers above the bucolic scene he described. The sentiments were repeated so that by the mid 1850s, the romanticised Canadien, labouring in a permanent past, was a fixed image. The passenger company, American Lines, noted in its guidebook that along the St Lawrence, 'the silence of the scene pleasantly broken by the songs of the French "voyageurs," who enliven their toil by singing... the antiquated and foreign air of the villages, rendered these excursions in fine weather, exceedingly delightful.'¹²⁷ Canadiens were thus racialised, comparable to the depictions of slaves in the American South.¹²⁸

Complicating this portrayal is the extent to which American visitors engaged with the Canadiens. Most did not.¹²⁹ In 1825, Democrat Henry Gilpin was shocked by the survival of Francophone culture. To him, it seemed out of kilter with 'this continent, where every thing so rapidly changes and improves.'¹³⁰ He evoked American opposition to the Quebec Act. Culturally separated from their fellow Canadians, it is unsurprising that Canadiens attained in the American imagination a status that reflected their liminality as human beings. Their ethnicity transgressed gender. Michael Smith described Canadien women who were, 'handsome when young,' but following their toil in the fields, 'they soon become of a yellow hue, and of a masculine form.'¹³¹ It was but a small step to their

¹²⁷ American Lines, *The Great Northern Route. American Lines. The Ontario and St. Lawrence Steamboat Company's Hand-Book for Travellers to Niagara Falls, Montreal and Quebec, and through Lake Champlain to Saratoga Springs.* (Buffalo: Jewett, Thomas & Co., 1854), 109.

¹²⁸ Dismissive opinions of Canadiens were also shared by Canadians. John Beverley Robinson, Chief Justice of Upper Canada, described them as 'content to live in no better houses, wear no better clothes, travel over no better roads, and to be no greater men than their fathers.' John Beverley Robinson, *Canada, and the Canada Bill; An Examination of a Proposed Measure for the Future Government of Canada; with an Introductory Chapter, containing Some General Views Respecting the British Provinces in North America.* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1840), 55. The Canadian Correspondent of the Boston *Semi-Weekly Atlas* bemoaned the failure to exploit the full potential of Canada East, blaming 'one of the most inert races that ever existed.' Boston *Semi-Weekly Atlas*, June 22, 1850, 1.

¹²⁹ Some writers did. Sanson, *Lower Canada*, 31-2; Silliman, *Remarks*, (1820), 363-9; Stansbury, *Pedestrian Tour*, 190 & 211-2.

¹³⁰ Gilpin, *Northern Tour*, 184.

¹³¹ Smith, *Geographical View*, 4th Ed., 186 & 187.

racialisation as little better than or comparable to the Indians. Joseph Sansom ended his work with a summary of the habitants 'in a state of ignorance but little exceeding the simplicity of the Indian tribes in their neighbourhood, and of poverty almost as little removed from a state of absolute want.'¹³² Like Smith, Philip Stansbury warned visitors of the Canadiens' appearance. He highlighted, 'their low stature and natural ill shape, accompanied by a tawny skin and coarse black hair, which give them a slight resemblance to the savages,' in some cases, the result of the Indians, 'with whom the French settlers held intercourse from the beginning, and have sometimes intermarried.'¹³³ For Americans who had driven their native populations westwards, the invisibility of the Canadiens was such that in 1844, the Whig Holley merely noted that, 'the obliging French drivers are reasonable in their charges.'¹³⁴ The Canadiens disappeared from later guidebooks, no doubt reflecting America's own uneasy contestation of increasing immigration, and the rise of a Nativist movement.

That movement informed the one aspect of Canadien life with which American visitors engaged most, and they longest disputed. Canadien Catholicism had proven a keystone in the construction of British American Protestant identity, and it remained so for US citizens. Yet, in the Canadien church and its ritual, writers explored their own preconceptions and explained those of fellow Americans. The rise of Nativism from the 1820s through to the 50s focused on anti-immigration sentiment against Roman Catholics, primarily from Ireland, resulted in the founding of the Know Nothing or American party. The complexity of American politics was indicated in 1854, a year in which the party achieved great political success, when the American Lines guidebook described the cathedrals and convents of Lower Canada without rancour. However, equally indicative was its report that in Quebec, 'since the destruction of the Convent at CHARLESTOWN, Mass., Americans are not allowed entrance to the Ursuline Convent.'¹³⁵

¹³² Sansom, *Lower Canada*, 74.

¹³³ Stansbury, *Pedestrian Tour*, 215.

¹³⁴ Holley, *Picturesque Tourist*, 259.

¹³⁵ *Great Northern Route*, 145.

It referred to the destruction of an Ursuline Convent by a Boston mob in 1834, and reflected the extent to which Catholicism was considered a despotic threat to republican values, manifest in the presence of a convent.¹³⁶ The dangers inherent in the Quebec Act seemed to have resurfaced within America itself. Lower Canada became a fertile area in which to probe the role and ramifications of a powerful Catholic Church. Following the Charlestown riot, a new literary genre emerged that seemed to provide the answers. Convent literature is a well-known genre, the most famous example of which was Maria Monk's 1836 *Awful Disclosures*.¹³⁷ Monk's salacious tell-all with its tales of liaisons between nuns and priests, and the strangling of their illegitimate progeny in convent cellars in Montreal, offered readers an exposé of life behind the closed doors of a Canadian convent. Proven fraudulent at the time, it none the less became the USA's most popular pre-Civil War bestseller, second only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.¹³⁸ It was one of a clutch of such works that claimed to debunk Canadian Catholicism.¹³⁹ Despite their popularity, a testimony to the breadth of prejudice and the depth of concern with immigration, these works must be situated alongside travel writing, in which the

¹³⁶ For a detailed account of the destruction, see Nancy Lusignan Schultz, *Fire and Roses: The Burning of the Charlestown Convent, 1834* (New York: Free Press, 2000).

¹³⁷ Maria Monk, *Awful Disclosures of the Hôtel Dieu Nunnery in Montreal*, (Hamden CN: Arcon Books, 1836). Studies include Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), Ch. IV; James Hennessy, S. J. *American Catholics: A History of the Roman Catholic Community in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), Ch. X; Elizabeth Fenton, *Religious Liberties: Anti-Catholicism and Liberal Democracy in Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), Ch. III.

¹³⁸ Monk's fraudulence was proven in William L. Stone, *Maria Monk and the Nunnery of the Hotel Dieu. Being an Account of a Visit to the Convents of Montreal, and Refutation of the "Awful Disclosures."* (New York: Howe & Bates, 1836).

¹³⁹ George Bourne, *Lorette: History of Louise, Daughter of a Canadian Nun*, (New York: Charles Small, 1834); Rebecca Reed, *Six Months in a Convent or, The Narratives of Rebecca Reed, who was under the Influence of the Roman Catholics about Two Years, and an Inmate in Ursuline Convent on Mount Benedict, Charlestown, Mass., nearly Six Months, in the Years 1831-2* (Boston: Russell, Odiorne and Metcalf, 1835); Josephine Bunkley, *The Escaped Nun: or, Disclosures of Convent Life; and the Confessions of a Sister of Charity* (New York: Dewitt and Davenport Publishers, 1855).

response to Canadian Catholics, their church, and rituals, was complex, contradictory and far from consistent.

Lower Canada's churches and cathedrals were impressive by American standards. As early as 1796, even the decidedly anti-Catholic Moses Guest was awestruck. In Montreal, he noted, 'the Cathedral church, which is a magnificent edifice.'¹⁴⁰ In 1834, Robert J. Vandewater asserted that it was, 'undoubtedly the finest religious edifice in America.'¹⁴¹ Whilst the buildings were impressive, the practices within them were less so. During his visit in 1805, Massachusetts-born Timothy Bigelow was horrified by the ritual, 'the mummery, frivolity, and silly ceremonies of the service, exceeded what I expected even from Papists.'¹⁴² Joseph Sansom approached Canadian Catholicism informed by time spent in Europe, and at Montreal's Notre Dame, found it wanting.¹⁴³ 'In this dark cathedral (I speak of spiritual darkness, for this church is as brilliant as a ball-room) the trade of auricular confession is more extensively carried on than in any gothic edifice I was in.'¹⁴⁴ For Sansom, Canadian Catholicism situated the province in an historic cul-de-sac more redolent of a distant past than even that of the Old World. Philip Stansbury was impressed, writing of Montreal's cathedral that, 'the devout votary of religion, may throw himself at the foot of the cross and utter those pious feelings, which the empty glaring walls of a protestant fabric, can seldom excite.'¹⁴⁵ These writers assessed the Canadian church prior to the surge in American anti-Catholicism of the second quarter of the nineteenth century. No reference was made to the Quebec Act,

¹⁴⁰ Guest, *Poems*, 128.

¹⁴¹ Vandewater, *The Tourist*, (1834), 83. Vandewater's name does not appear on the frontispiece. This was the first edition to feature the Canadas. No biography is available.

¹⁴² Timothy Bigelow, *Journal of a Tour to Niagara Falls in the Year 1805 with an Introduction by a Grandson* (Boston: John Wilson and Son, 1876), 87.

¹⁴³ In 1805, he published his *Letters from Europe, during a Tour through Switzerland and Italy, in the Years 1802 and 1803*. For a brief biography of Sansom, see James Doyle (Ed.), *Yankees in Canada: A Collection of 19th Century Travel Narratives* (Toronto: E. C. W. Press, 1980); 44.

¹⁴⁴ Sansom, *Lower Canada*, 71.

¹⁴⁵ Stansbury, *Pedestrian Tour*, 167-8.

though its effect was noted. Benjamin Silliman mused, 'It is a strange fact, not only that the Catholics of Britain and Ireland, but even other sectaries from the established church, do not experience, at home, any thing like the toleration which is enjoyed by the Catholics in Canada... The present Speaker of the House of Commons in Lower Canada, is a Catholic.'¹⁴⁶

Even prior to the anti-Catholic Boston riot of 1834, convents emerged as a source of confusion and revulsion. Guest witnessed the initiation of a new nun, commenting, 'by this unnatural, unreasonable, and superstitious custom, many of the most amiable and most deserving of the female sex are, in some, measure buried alive, and all their useful, and shining qualities, lost to the world.'¹⁴⁷ Bigelow's visit, 'confirmed our aversion to this internment of the living, or rather increased it to abhorrence.'¹⁴⁸ Silliman judged, 'it is certainly wrong, to make the desertion of the most interesting and important social relations a religious duty.'¹⁴⁹ Cloistered abnegation and imprisonment became lodestones of Maria Monk's bestseller which is suggestive of the engagement of the new narrative genre with existing travel accounts. Writing when the condemnation of convents was at its height, avid Whig Theodore Dwight's 1841 edition of *The Northern Traveller* vilified the institution. He concluded a long diatribe with, 'convents have been, and probably always will be, engines for degrading the mind, corrupting the manners, and enslaving the people.'¹⁵⁰ They were rewarding subjects for anti-Catholic polemic as they fused the exercise of faith with the suppression of expected gender roles. The latter was particularly offensive to Americans. Whilst women were increasingly involved in charitable work and the anti-slavery movement, the majority remained confined to the domestic sphere where they fulfilled valued roles as wives and mothers, functions that

¹⁴⁶ Silliman, *Remarks*, (1820), 361. The contrast between the governing and the governed is also highlighted on 301.

¹⁴⁷ Guest, *Poems*, 131.

¹⁴⁸ Bigelow, *Niagara Falls*, 96.

¹⁴⁹ Silliman, *Remarks*, (1820), 340.

¹⁵⁰ Dwight Jr., *Northern Traveller*, (1841), 115.

had increased in importance since the revolution.¹⁵¹ The dangers implicit in Catholic chastity had traction. For some, it explained the failure of the Canadiens to propagate effectively. Sansom rejected Lower Canada's 'flattering estimate of common computation' that its population numbered 250,000, and instead, insisted that it was stagnant.¹⁵² Citing the long-distance involvement of men in the fur trade and the climate as factors, 'another check to population remains to be mentioned... the law of celibacy to which the priests and nuns are prescriptively subjected.'¹⁵³ This attempt to reassure his readers of superior American population growth was the most inaccurate of Sansom's claims. Between 1814 and 1822, the population of Lower Canada increased from 335,000 to over 420,000.¹⁵⁴ The coalition of anti-convent opinion in travel writing and the literary genre was not universally shared, illustrating the diversity of debate involving Catholicism and immigration. Earlier writers applauded the roles of nuns as nurses and educators, and as late as 1853, Bostonian Whig Richard Henry Dana Jr. broke down at the orphanage run by the Sisters of Charity in Quebec, declaiming in his journal, 'I cannot see my way to adopt all your faith, much in it revolts from me, but you are living lives of self-sacrifice, of devoted piety, with your hope in another world.'¹⁵⁵

The centrality of the Quebec Act and the extent to which it was periodically summoned can be seen in two *NAR* articles. That a Boston-based Whig journal should focus

¹⁵¹ For the role of women, see Tiffany K. Wayne, *Women's Roles in Nineteenth-Century America* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), James M. Volo & Dorothy Dennen Volo, *Family Life in 19th-Century America*, (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), Chs. X-XII.

¹⁵² Sansom, *Lower Canada*, 77.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁵⁴ The 1822 population was calculated at 427, 465. See *Censuses of Canada. 1665 to 1871. Recensements du Canada. Statistics of Canada. Statistiques du Canada. Vol. IV.* (Ottawa: I. B. Taylor, 1876), xlv.

¹⁵⁵ Robert F. Lucid (Ed.), *The Journal of Richard Henry Dana Jr.* III Vols. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1968), Vol., II, 587; for a biography of Dana, see Charles Francis Adams, *Richard Henry Dana: A Biography.* II Vols. (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890). Other positive assessments are provided in Ogden, *Upper and Lower Canada*, 256; Davison, *Fashionable Tour*, (1825), 128; Davison, *Traveller's Guide*, 307; Gilpin, *Northern Tour*, 189.

specifically on the Act that ensured the survival of Quebec's Catholic Church is hardly surprising. Equally unsurprising, the New York *DR* avoided the subject. The first article blamed the Canadian Rebellions of 1837-8 in which Lower Canada took the lead, squarely on the 1774 Act.¹⁵⁶ Upper Canada was barely mentioned in an article that provided a rehash of the revolutionary narrative with the Act as its core component. So, in conclusion, readers were reminded that, 'the policy of the English Crown in guarantying their language and institutions to the descendants of the French Canadians whom it conquered, has already been noticed in its connexion with the history of the old colonies, now the United States.'¹⁵⁷ Such opinions cannot have failed to inform tourists as they set off on their Canadian expeditions.

In the year following Whig Orville Holley's *Picturesque Tourist*, the Act was the focus of a second article indicating its importance in fostering readers' memory of the past and their understanding of the present. 1770s Parliamentarian Isaac Barré was summoned, railing against the Quebec Act, and the fate of 'so many thousand men, entitled by birth to the rights of Englishmen settling on the faith of the king's proclamation [of 1763],' whilst the Declaration of Independence 'gave utterance to its indignation at the treatment of the Canadians in no measured words.'¹⁵⁸ That would be the Anglophone Canadian minority of all 450 or so. The extent to which the Act intersected with contemporary American concerns becomes clear at the end of the article. The writers issued a word of warning to Maine where, following the extension of its territory in the 1842 Webster-Ashburton Treaty, there were now Canadiens in its midst. Maine's mission was 'to make them part and parcel of her own citizens without delay,' and teach their children 'the Saxon tongue, and all the branches of education common to her best free schools.'¹⁵⁹ In both articles, the *NAR* examined the political situations in other

¹⁵⁶ "British American Politics," *North American Review (NAR)*, Vol. 49, Iss. 105 (October 1839), 388.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 411. Historians quickly recognised the centrality of the Quebec Act to the Revolution. See David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution. A New Edition. In Two Volumes*. (London: John Stockdale, 1793), Vol. I, 109-11.

¹⁵⁸ "British Colonial Politics," *NAR* (January 1845), 90 & 91.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 125 & 126.

British provinces, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Upper Canada, but the lion's share was allocated to what had been the Province of Quebec. It was not simply tourism or shared history that pricked its interest, but that history itself in Quebec stood still. The Canadien Mistake, as Americans might have termed British policy, was a source of continuing political strife, and it stood in marked contrast to the cultural assimilation or extirpation that they viewed as central to the evolution of their own nation. It allowed readers to ignore the intense partisan struggles of their own system, and it is surely no accident that by 1845, nativist parties were flexing their muscles in the US northeast. They need look no further than Quebec for evidence of the dangers posed by the foreign and the Catholic.

Americans set off well-equipped to their favourite, most accessible destination in search of an Old World experience. The mental baggage was truly Victorian in size, determining how Quebec was to be read and understood. It helped reaffirm their identities as beneficiaries of the New World. In their application of what sociologist John Urry has termed the "tourist gaze," that gaze delivered what they expected, and what was expected of them, thanks to the trench of travelogues and guidebooks at their disposal.¹⁶⁰ What it did not invite was an engagement with the Canadiens themselves beyond observation nor did it stimulate any understanding of the complexities of Canadien politics, culture, and aspirations. Those seemed alien from the outset, a reminder of the Act that had helped splinter the old British America. Persistent Quebec was proven increasingly inconsistent with Americans' own aspirations.

4. INTERNAL HORIZONS – The Americanisation of Louisiana

The Republic confronted its own Quebec with the purchase of Louisiana in 1803, and the problem of incorporating a Francophone population into the Union. As tourism into Lower Canada flourished, comparisons between the British province and the new territory were inevitable. Lauding Louisiana to critique Quebec resulted in

¹⁶⁰ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Theory, Culture and Society* 2nd Ed. (London: Sage Publications, 2002).

misrepresentations of British American policy. Two of the nation's leading journals, the Boston-based *North American Review (NAR)* and New York's *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (better known as the *Democratic Review – DR*), offered analyses of Canadiens that reflected their rivalry as Whig and Democrat-supporting publications. In a review of a French account of Lafayette's 1824-25 tour of the States, the *NAR* writer reported 'the Canadas have been haunting the British parliament, for seventy years, like a wrathful ghost,' whereas Louisiana had 'sprung up at once into an affectionate, congenial member of the confederacy.' The writer saw religious policy at fault. The Pelican State enjoyed 'undisturbed liberty of conscience' whilst the British in their provinces gave preference to the Anglican Church. He reported that Britain only 'tolerates the Catholic faith.'¹⁶¹ Even post-Catholic Emancipation in Britain, this was an inaccurate comparison, made worse by the reviewer's focus on 'the Canadas' that conflated Upper and Lower Canada. Protestantism held sway in the Upper Province, but in the Lower, Catholicism was preeminent, its church funded by the tithe. The emphasis on toleration sought to elevate the American model. The writer considered shifts in British colonial policy from 1763 to the 1791 Canada Act confused experiments. Quebec's legal system was found wanting by comparison with that of Louisiana whose population were in 'enjoyment of all those portions of their old law, which they themselves might to choose to retain.'¹⁶² Nine years later, the *NAR* repeated the same analysis in a broader critique of British America. The writer asked, 'how [in Lower Canada] could the criminal law of England harmonize with the real-estate, commercial, and other laws of a part of France?'¹⁶³ Ironically, it paralleled that of Louisiana. In both cases, French laws were combined with novel introductions by new central governments. On one subject, this writer reflected a shift in British policy and struck a transatlantic chord, reporting that in Louisiana, 'though the French language is not yet wholly superseded, no contest in regard to it, or effort to perpetuate it as a local language, is anywhere maintained.'¹⁶⁴ It is no accident that such sentiments were

¹⁶¹ 'Lafayette in America,' *NAR*, Vol. 30, Iss. 66 (January 1830), 234.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁶³ 'British American Politics,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 49, Iss. 105 (October 1839), 415.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

expressed in 1839. The 1837-8 Canadian Rebellions had resulted in the production the new Governor-General Lord Durham's famous Report in which he identified the separation of Upper and Lower Canada, and the subsequent failure to Anglicise the Canadiens as the source of the trouble. The *NAR* returned to this theme throughout the 1840s. For one writer, the challenge 'to make republican Americans of Frenchmen,' in Louisiana had exceeded even that of uniting thirteen independent colonies into a nation.¹⁶⁵ Both, however, had been successfully achieved whilst British Quebec had proven a failure. 'It took but a single generation to accomplish this fusion of the races on the Mississippi,' commented one.¹⁶⁶ Another, reviewing a history of Louisiana, emphasised the unity of the Pelican State in contrast to the divisions in what was then Canada East, 'though the opportunity for union was open in the latter case half a century earlier than in the former!'¹⁶⁷

The Whig *NAR* presented a political and cultural critique of Quebec that echoed that taking place in Britain. It was part of a shared transatlantic liberal worldview in which the persistence of non-Anglophone communities was considered regressive. The Durham Report was the antithesis of the 1774 Quebec Act, and the nadir of support by the imperial government for Canadian identity. Yet, ironically, its commitment to the unification of the two Canadas into one province and promise of responsible government succeeded in facilitating the political stalemate between Canadians and Canadiens that would ultimately lead to Confederation and the re-emergence of a separate Canadian Quebec. Very different from the *NAR*'s analysis, which at least reflected the accepted motifs of Anglo-American discourse expressing admiration for Durham's policy of Anglo-Saxon preference at the expense of the Canadiens, was that of the *DR*. Writing in 1839, also in response to the Canadian Rebellions of 1837-38, the *DR*'s egalitarian politics and support for the exiled Patriote leader, Louis-Joseph Papineau, represented a more radical critique of the imperial system whilst at the same time toeing the Van Buren administration's neutral line. It too sought to elevate the US'

¹⁶⁵ 'Simcoe's *Military Journal*,' *Ibid.*, (October 1844), 301.

¹⁶⁶ 'British Colonial Politics,' *Ibid.*, (January 1845), 116.

¹⁶⁷ 'Gayarré's *History of Louisiana*,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 65, Iss. 136 (July 1847), 3.

image by comparison of Louisiana with dysfunctional Quebec. However, it was so focused on delivering its radical message that the result was an analysis even more flawed. It homed in on Durham's concern with 'the animosities of race' in Quebec.¹⁶⁸

The writer reported that there were no such conflicts in Louisiana where relations between white Hispanic, Franco- and Anglo-Americans were harmonious for two reasons. Firstly, there was equality before the law. This was a distortion of the truth as British law, whatever its faults, guaranteed legal equality, and that equality did not recognise differences of colour, a position valued by Upper Canada's growing population of black American refugees. This was a clumsy poke at the hierarchical colonial system that had been critiqued in another *DR* article earlier in the year.¹⁶⁹ Secondly, the article stated that in Louisiana, 'the accident of language is no recommendation or disqualification from office.' Again, this was ham-fisted as it demonstrated a confused understanding of tensions in Quebec. There, language was no barrier to membership of the province's Executive Council, if you were a seigneur. The political conflict in Quebec was as much a conflict of class as it was that between a Canadien majority and Canadian minority. In Durham's opinion, it was the failure of government, the struggle between majority Canadien Assembly and British-appointed Council for control, that had exacerbated racial animosities. The writer skirted this issue to stress the US' recognition of a citizen's right to language, and that laws were 'printed in the language with which he is acquainted.' This applied even to Pennsylvanian and Ohioan Germans, 'many of whom do not even speak the English language.'¹⁷⁰ In fact, this highlighted similarity, not difference, between Louisiana and Lower Canada. Essentially, informing this analysis was the old grudge against the 1774 settlement that had not established English majority rule. This became clear as the article concluded with wholehearted approval of Durham's recommendation of the Union of the Canadas, thus establishing 'the fair and legitimate ascendancy of a numerical English majority.'¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ 'Lord Durham's Report,' *Democratic Review (DR)*, Vol. 5, Iss. 13, (June 1839), 554.

¹⁶⁹ See 'The Canada Question,' *Ibid.*, (January 1839), 26.

¹⁷⁰ 'Lord Durham's Report,' *Ibid.*, (June 1839), 555.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 576.

However, it predicted that should that majority overstep the mark, a powerful Canadian minority would 'consolidate all minor divisions of opinion' and hold a "balance of power, "(as is done by the South with us, relatively to the divisions of parties at the North).'¹⁷² Thus the new system proposed for Quebec could be appropriated to justify a Democratic political agenda. This blithe acceptance of such a role for Southerners was unsurprising from a New York-based magazine as it would increasingly provide the glue that held the Democratic Party together. What is striking is its assertion as early as 1839. Yet, even though the South exercised its power broking within the parameters of the Democratic Party, the issue upon which that power was negotiated was primarily slavery. Comparably, the Canadiens' primary concern was the preservation of cultural identity. Both were fissures that could splinter party. This is what happened to the Democratic Party in 1860 with devastating consequences. In his prediction for the Canadian minority, the writer displayed striking confidence in what was essentially a Madisonian model. In Federalist No. 10, Madison had advocated a large republic as conducive to the protection of minorities and limitation of partisanship, but, as Garry Wills put it, "what Madison prevents is not faction but action."¹⁷³ That is exactly what the new united Province of the Canadas experienced from 1840. Politics were in stalemate with an absence of stable government. The impasse was only solved by the foundation of the federative Confederation of the British American provinces in 1867.

Comparisons between Louisiana and Quebec were factually far more complex than either the *NAR* or *DR* acknowledged. Indeed, their clumsy use of the Pelican State as a point of contrast underlines the eagerness with which both journals sought to manipulate French Canada to boost the United States brand. There were similarities between the province and the state that undermined the arguments being presented. The *NAR*'s emphasis on divisions within Quebec and the failure of the Canadiens to integrate ignored the contested politics of Louisiana where 'the local struggle between the French and Anglo-American populations for ethnic supremacy continued to rack the

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 577.

¹⁷³ Garry Wills, *Explaining America: The Federalist* (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), 195.

community' through the 1820s and 30s.¹⁷⁴ This was ignored or downplayed, as in the *NAR* 1839 article that characterised the amalgamation of American and French law as the result of only 'a little legislative bickering, never carried beyond the State.'¹⁷⁵ As early as 1815, New Orleans' failure to adequately support resistance to the British attack testified to 'fissures that would not and could not have existed if Louisiana had truly become part of an organic republican American family.'¹⁷⁶ Eberhard L. Faber has reminded us that in the case of early Louisiana, 'all national unity is fictive and artificially constructed.'¹⁷⁷ Populations determined both internal and external politics in both province and state. Whilst the population of the territory that became the State of Louisiana in 1812 was comparable to that of Quebec's at the time of the Conquest in 1760, both followed different trajectories. Louisiana by the 1830s was far more diverse in its population than its Canadien counterpart, and that diversity strengthened allegiance to the USA so that even those from long settled families 'may have been "Frenchmen at heart," but they were American in their interests and their civic identities.'¹⁷⁸ These families lived alongside other European settlers, Anglo-Americans, and increasing numbers of imported English-speaking slaves. 'White Louisianans found the means to accommodate their own status as American citizens with their sense of themselves as minorities of various forms,' but they also were encouraged by the presence of an ever-increasing, potentially unstable slave population.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Joseph G. Tregle, *Louisiana in the Age of Jackson: A Clash of Cultures and Personalities* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1999), ix. For anti-American sentiment in Louisiana, also see Bennett H. Wall & John C. Rodrigue (Eds.), *Louisiana: A History* 6th Edition (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014), 110.

¹⁷⁵ "British American Politics," *NAR*, Vol. 49, Iss. 105 (October 1839), 414.

¹⁷⁶ Eberhard L. Faber, *Building the Land of Dreams: New Orleans and the Transformation of Early America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 318.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 322.

¹⁷⁹ Peter J. Kastor, *The Nation's Crucible: The Louisiana Purchase and the Creation of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 12-3.

By 1840, Louisianans numbered 352,411, almost half of whom were black slaves. In Lower Canada by 1840, self-perpetuating Canadiens numbered over half a million in a population of around 670,000.¹⁸⁰ American journalists were wrong to characterise the province as unintegrated. A pro-British elite helped ensure the preservation of a cohesive Canadian identity within the British Empire. It was assisted by the loose imperial relationship between colony and metropole. The 1837-8 Rebellions were the exception rather than the rule. The similarities between Louisiana and Quebec struck none more than outsiders. By the 1840s, English lawyer and journalist Alexander Mackay could report that in New Orleans' French Quarter, he was reminded 'in its mixed population, and its diversity of dialect, manners and architecture of the Anglo-French cities of Montreal and Quebec.'¹⁸¹ However, he pointed out that 'everything that is French, as well as everything that is Spanish, is being rapidly submerged by the great Anglo-Saxon inundation,' and 'particularly within the limits of the Union.'¹⁸² The unification of the Canadas in 1840, and Confederation in 1867, posed such challenges to the Canadiens that continue to be debated by today's Québécois, though within Canada.

By situating their critiques of Quebec within a broader analysis of the American experiment, the *NAR* and *DR*'s articles served a dual purpose. Firstly, whilst they were admittedly more periodic than recurrent, appearing at times of political change in British America, when supplemented, as we shall see, by newspaper coverage they gave intellectual cachet to the often-negative depictions peddled in travelogues and guides. Guidebooks mapped tourists' expectations whilst moulding their opinions. Journal articles provided the cultural and political gravitas through which Quebec was to be understood, helping tourists articulate those opinions as informed Americans. Secondly, tourists and armchair travellers were reminded that the shared past they eagerly

¹⁸⁰ < <http://population.us/la/>> & < <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/canada-east/>> Accessed 1 July 2018; Sherle L. Boone, *Meanings Beneath The Skin: The Evolution of African Americans* (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012), 108.

¹⁸¹ Alex Mackay Esq., *The Western World; or, Travels in the United States in 1846-47: Exhibiting Them in Their Latest Development, Social, Political, and Industrial; Including a Chapter on California*. II Vols. (Lea and Blanchard, 1849), Vol. II, 81.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 81-2.

sought was implicitly embittered. The 1774 Act that had enshrined Canadian cultural and religious rights was a knife that had severed the transatlantic cord. This was a theme that unsurprisingly struck a chord with the Whig *NAR*. Its 1839 article ended by calling on the British American provinces to 'join the confederacy of the United States, as the Congress of 1774 had invited them to do,' and thus improve their situation.¹⁸³ In 1852, one commentator noted that the British American provinces survival outside the United States was 'a mere accident of political history.' The blame was laid upon the Canadian majority in 1775-6 for impeding the American rebels' acquisition of Quebec. On the same page, readers were reminded that visits to Toronto, Montreal and Quebec were 'among our most frequented routes of summer travel.'¹⁸⁴ Tourism was all well and good, but Americans should never forget. Periodically, the public were reminded of the folly of the 1774 act, and the disastrous consequences that Americans had escaped.

5. CONCLUSION

The Province of Quebec re-emerged as a member of a Confederated Canada in 1867, but to many Americans, it had never disappeared. The province founded by the British in 1763, and that established by the nascent Canadian nation of 1867, had been a constant. It was protected by the 1774 Quebec Act, which for American citizens, as it had been for their colonial forebears, remained problematic. The Act was a lodestar to Americans in their encounter with the Canadiens. By repudiating the Act and rebelling against its British enforcers, they had embarked upon a path to nationhood and modernity. In their opinion, they had prophesied what British liberals of the 1830s and 40s had come to accept. That adherence to the Act meant perpetual stasis, the preservation of cultures and languages best brushed aside in the cause of progress. Only Canadiens would disagree, and American writers had little interest in their opinions.

¹⁸³ 'Lafayette in America,' *NAR*, (January 1830), 235.

¹⁸⁴ 'Commercial Intercourse with British America,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 74, Iss. 104 (January 1852), 174.

There was an irony. The persistence of Quebec assisted Americans post-Independence in the creation of their own identities. Just as anti-Canadienism had helped define what it meant to be a British American during the colonial period, post-Independence, the province functioned similarly with an added benefit. US citizens could explore their Americanness within Quebec itself. That had helped Walker and his fellow Canadians determine the limits of their identities as Britons within the Empire as other British Americans were determining theirs. Once the dalliance with Canadien entry into the Union had been abandoned and the Constitution established, Americans began a long exploration of Quebec, slow at first, but gaining momentum from the 1820s onwards. It was exploration and not dialogue. Canadien voices remained mute. Writers and commentators guided tourists in their encounters with Quebec. They were told what to discover, and in the process, discover themselves. In the province, Canadien settlement and its limitations reaffirmed the thrust of American expansion and potential. Canadien streets and architecture testified to the dynamism of American urban planning and space. The Canadiens themselves, their culture and religion confirmed the American nation's cohesive trajectory, the dangers of embracing non-conformity, and the glorification of its civic secular space. Quebec was no Louisiana. The province and its past helped Americans bask in their present, and embrace their future.

By the last quarter of the period with which this thesis is concerned, glimmers emerged of a different approach to the province. In 1853, lawyer, author, Free Soiler, and soon to be Republican, Richard Henry Dana Jr of Boston was intrigued. 'How different from everything American is Quebec!' he wrote in his 1853 journal. 'How old & odd, all the houses are! How narrow, steep & crooked the streets!' Dana's journal was only published in 1968, and when assessing his response to the province, we should note that, as its editor Robert Lucid states, 'there remained in his generation more than a touch of the Anglophile-Federalist tradition.' The Bostonian was 'a mint product of the upper-middle class.'¹⁸⁵ Dana was no opponent of the British imperial system. On August 17th, 1853, his first day in Montreal, Dana viewed a military parade and wrote of Colonel Hemphill that he had 'the most elegant military air I ever saw in a commanding officer,

¹⁸⁵ Lucid (Ed.), *The Journal of Richard Henry Dana Jr.*, Vol. I, xxi & xvi.

with a noble voice.¹⁸⁶ Yet, a growth in locally-produced guidebooks in Canada East, and the reinvention of Quebec City's urban environment following fires in the 1840s and 50s, configured it as an historic site worthy of admiration and enjoyment.¹⁸⁷ Dana reflected that shift. He did not mention dirt or the lack of ventilation in the old city. His was the language of fascination. It was a response echoed in an 1871 essay on Quebec by Henry James in *The Nation* magazine, later republished in anthology.¹⁸⁸

James, by then, had travelled extensively in Europe. He was a writer for whom the theme of 'the American expatriate footloose in a foreign country was undoubtedly his favourite.'¹⁸⁹ France, England and Italy were 'James' most important destinations.'¹⁹⁰ His Quebec portrait has attracted little attention.¹⁹¹ His is a valuable contribution as he reflected the growing confidence of the American tourist in judging the alien for what it was, as opposed to what it was not. The work resonated with an American identity increasingly self-assured. Approaching Quebec City, James wrote, 'you will have been reminded at a dozen points that you have come abroad.'¹⁹² The province remained a foreign place in the New World, but one in which an American could take pleasure rather than seek self-validation. For James, the streets exhibited, 'all the pleasant crookedness, narrowness and duskiness, the quaint economised spaces, the multifarious detail,' and he sensed, 'the hint in the air of a slow, accidental accretion, in

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, Vol. II, 572.

¹⁸⁷ Alan Gordon, 'Where Famous Heroes Fell': Tourism, History and Liberalism in Old Quebec' in Phillip Buckner & John G. Reid (Eds.), *Remembering 1759: The Conquest of Canada in Historical Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 73-5.

¹⁸⁸ Henry James, *Portraits of Places* (London: MacMillan & Co., 1883)

¹⁸⁹ Doyle, *Yankees in Canada*, 123.

¹⁹⁰ Eric Haralson & Kendall Johnson, *Critical Companion to Henry James: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (New York: Facts on File Inc., 2009), 354.

¹⁹¹ It is not mentioned in Jonathan Freedman (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); John Carlos Rowe & Eric Haralson (Eds.), *A Historical Guide to Henry James* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁹² James, *Portraits*, 352.

obedience to needs more timidly considered and more sparingly gratified than the pressing necessities of American progress.¹⁹³ As the US hurtled into its Gilded Age, Quebec was a place in which to escape American modernity, and for the first time in American narrative, Quebec emerged as a tourist destination. Guidebooks had promoted the city, but James was the first to pen a postcard.

James detected in the habitants a, 'livelier vitality,' and asserted that, 'these are good Catholics, and I doubt whether anywhere Catholicism wears a brighter face and maintains more docility at the cost of less misery.'¹⁹⁴ Standing on Quebec's Citadel, he gazed upon, 'the villages, the forests, the blue undulations of the imperial province of which it is warden – as it has managed from our scanty annals to squeeze out a past, you pray in the name of all that's majestic that it may have a future.'¹⁹⁵ He admitted to being a 'sentimental tourist,' who recognised the value of Quebec for his own sense of self; 'it is of good profit to us Americans to have near us, and of easy access, an ample something which is not our expansive selves.'¹⁹⁶ In that, he captured the moment, a redolent modern approach to the American sensibility, an idea of the relevance of Quebec as a place in which Americans could ponder an alternate past, a space in which to reflect on things lost and gained. Whilst echoing some of the opinions that encouraged earlier travel writers to assert their American identity, James conjured something new. His was a post-Civil War voice. James saw the war as transformative, writing in 1879 that it had introduced, 'into the national consciousness a certain sense of proportion and relation, of the world being a more complicated place than it had hitherto seemed.'¹⁹⁷ This new perspective was reflected in James' assessment of Quebec. That James recognised the province's inherently Old World character, and its place

¹⁹³ Ibid., 352.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 358 & 359.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 355.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 363. See Ch. 5 for James on annexation.

¹⁹⁷ Mark Wilson & Leon Edel (Eds.), *Henry James Literary Criticism: Volume One, Essays on Literature. American Writers & English Writers* (New York: Library Classics of the United States, 1984), 428.

within a New World space represented a significant advance. He was the first to aspire to Quebec's survival, and judge it beneficial to the American identity, endowing it with a valuable power for perspective. In post-Civil War America, its people more fractured than ever, James was positing Quebec as a prism through which the nation could rediscover its shared identity. The post-war world was one that had recently witnessed an important realignment. James visited and wrote his essay on Quebec in September 1871. Only a few months earlier, in May, the Treaty of Washington ended a longstanding conflict between the United States and Great Britain, establishing an entente. The time was ripe for the Anglophile James to provide a reassessment of the nearby imperial possession.

Both Dana's and James' accounts were merely glimmers. As Dana was scribbling in his diary, the impressions of another Henry appeared in *Putnam's Magazine*.¹⁹⁸ 'I fear that I have not got much to say about Canada, not having seen much; what I got by going to Canada was a cold.'¹⁹⁹ So began Henry David Thoreau's account of his visit to Canada East in 1850. Most students have taken him at his word, for despite the oft-quoted opening sentence, 'posterity has not dealt favourably with "A Yankee": most biographers and critical commentators ignore it, or dismiss it.'²⁰⁰ Those that have not conclude that it is 'the least successful of Thoreau's various "excursions."²⁰¹ The truth is the great Transcendentalist sought the solitude of the Canadian wilderness, but instead, found himself on the bustling St Lawrence and in the cities of Montreal and Quebec. At the end of his journey, Thoreau confided, 'I should like still right well to make a longer excursion on foot through the wilder parts of Canada.'²⁰² The soon-to-be recluse of

¹⁹⁸ Of Thoreau's five chapters, only three were printed in Putnam's. The complete work appeared posthumously in Thoreau, *A Yankee*. See Barbara L. Packer, *The Transcendentalists* (Athens GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2007), 245.

¹⁹⁹ Thoreau, *A Yankee*, 3.

²⁰⁰ Doyle, *Yankees in Canada*, 64.

²⁰¹ Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 283.

²⁰² Thoreau, *A Yankee*, 93.

Walden Pond, produced 'a record of a flawed trip rather than a flawed place.'²⁰³ This assessment fails to recognise the extent to which Thoreau situated his work within the established travel genre. He cited Silliman twice.²⁰⁴ He noted the unbroken rows of white cottages along the St Lawrence, conceding that, 'this is what every traveller tells us.'²⁰⁵ He composed the work upon his return, and in it, referenced other writers forty-five times.²⁰⁶ That Quebec had an impact upon him is undeniable. Despite his frustration, and in contradiction to his opening statement, he had much to say about his experience. Published posthumously, the work probably sold little.²⁰⁷ Its importance lies in its assessments, the extent to which Thoreau imbibed the travel genre. Its neglect by his devotees may perhaps be attributed to a degree of embarrassment that the lionised author of "Civil Disobedience" should produce such a negative appraisal of a near neighbour. Essentially, it was unoriginal.

The extent to which Thoreau and the cadre of American travel writers I have examined trumped James is indicated by the publication in 1876 of one of the earliest journals, Timothy Bigelow's account of his journey through Canada in 1805. Its timing strikes me as notable. Bigelow's motifs both echo the opinions of earlier visitors and anticipate those who were to follow. It seems evident that his grandson was publishing a historic document to coincide with the centenary year of Independence, when the testimony of a Federalist Anglo-Protestant New Englander would have resonated in a vivified New England.²⁰⁸ Bigelow had compared the Canadiens to Indians. 'In general, they are

²⁰³ Ronald Wesley Hoag, 'Thoreau's later natural history writings,' in Joel Myerson (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Henry David Thoreau* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 156.

²⁰⁴ Thoreau, *A Yankee*, 74 & 91.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁰⁶ Weisman, 'Postcolonialism,' 479.

²⁰⁷ Walter Harding, 'Thoreau's reputation,' in Myerson (Ed.), *Henry David Thoreau*, 5.

²⁰⁸ In 1863, Lincoln made New England's version of Thanksgiving a national holiday. John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730-1830* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 408.

ignorant, superstitious, prejudiced, mean-spirited, and slovenly. They are hardly to be distinguished in their complexion from the Indians,' the latter statement echoed by Thoreau.²⁰⁹ Bigelow's readers may have received news of Custer's defeat in the Dakota Black Hills in June, but they were familiar with reports of Indian violence in the west, the government's commitment to taming the remaining indigenous peoples, and, 'making the Indians just like us, just like the white Americans.'²¹⁰

Bigelow's was a voice from the past, the failure of the British imperial system to integrate the Canadiens, and suppress their culture had for too long been the critique of American writers, shared no doubt by thousands of American tourists. The effect of the Quebec Act continued to be felt, providing Americans with assurance of their own achievement and cohesion. It is worth noting that in 1894, historian Victor Coffin stated that 'the Quebec act was founded on misconception and false information, and is one of the most disastrous measures in English colonial history,' and that 'Canada was preserved to Great Britain not through the Quebec act, but in spite of it.'²¹¹ Two years later, he concluded his Revolutionary history, noting that the Act had struck a potentially fatal blow to the recently formed Dominion of Canada. It had instituted 'the obstacles presented to Anglo-Saxon domination and to political unity in modern Canada through the continued and magnified existence there of an alien and hostile nationality, rooted in and bound up with an alien and hostile ecclesiastical domination.'²¹² In late Victorian America, the Quebec Act continued to resonate.

²⁰⁹ Bigelow, *Niagara Falls*, 23 & 103; Thoreau, *A Yankee*, 60-1.

²¹⁰ Josiah Bunting III, *Ulysses S. Grant*, (New York: Times Books, 2004), 117. Based on Grant's First Inaugural. Also see, Charles W. Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 67.

²¹¹ Victor Coffin, 'The Quebec Act and the American Revolution,' in *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1894* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1895), 274 & 279.

²¹² V. Coffin, *The Province of Quebec and the Early American Revolution* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, 1896), 533.

CHAPTER THREE

COMPETING HORIZONS: Gazing North and South.

1. INTRODUCTION

As we have seen, travel writers sometimes promoted their own political agendas. One example is the 1799 travelogue, *A Tour through Upper and Lower Canada*, in which New Englander John Cosens Ogden applauded what he found in the provinces. He focused on the relationship between Catholics and Protestants, reporting that ‘religion is venerated in every quarter.’¹ The province’s English Bishop was ‘a gentleman of great learning, eminently qualified for his office,’ and the Catholic Bishop someone ‘easy of access, affable, and dignified in manner.’² Ogden might strike us as a Federalist, and yet, he was a surprising Jeffersonian Republican, enamoured of the British American system. His Jeffersonianism was to the fore when the Episcopalian Ogden clashed with New England Congregationalism, the continued establishment of which he considered a subversion of the nation’s commitment to religious freedom. But the French Revolution, which Jefferson supported, was anathema to him. He balked at its violent rejection of organised religion and the subsequent social instability. The religious settlement of the Canadas provided succour. Ogden believed social equilibrium could not be achieved without a vitalised religion as its foundation. Making his point involved massaging the evidence. He papered over simmering tensions left by the 1791 Canada Act, which apportioned clergy reserves to the Anglican Church in predominantly Catholic Lower Canada. Ironically, given his long running dispute with Congregationalism, Ogden turned a blind eye to British America’s established Anglican and Catholic churches. He made of Canada what he would, and in so doing, demonstrated a typical method employed by American observers in their analyses of British North America. His was a

¹ *Upper and Lower Canada*, 88 & 43; For brief biographies of Ogden, see ‘Editor’s Preface’ in *The Magazine of History*, Extra Number 56 (William Abbatt, 1917), 209; Robert J. Imholt, ‘Timothy Dwight, Federalist Pope of Connecticut,’ *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (September 2000), 388-90. For Ogden’s commitment to episcopacy, see Alan V. Briceland, ‘The Philadelphia Aurora, the New England Illuminati, and the Election of 1800,’ *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 100. Iss. 1 (January 1976), 5.

² Ogden, *Upper and Lower Canada*, 234.

selective interpretation. Like other writers who explored Quebec, Ogden tells us far more about Americans than the inhabitants of Lower Canada. He not only highlights the extent to which 1790s American politics involved division between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans but also their internal fissures, and the role of the British provinces in their debates.

Chapter Two focused on a shared understanding of Quebec that enabled Americans to explore who they were by confronting who they were not. This chapter casts the net wider to examine how British America functioned within broader American political discourse. It answers the following questions. How did Americans interpret British North America's own political trajectory, and how did that inform their understanding of the republican experiment? As the Union juddered towards dissolution, what was the role of Britain's provinces in the debates between North and South? And how, as the issue of slavery became increasingly contested, did the two sections engage with what by the 1850s had emerged as a pretender to the very liberty to which America laid claim? Answering these, I argue that events in the British provinces were always understood on American terms, and never on their own.

Most common was the belief that British America was fated to follow in America's footsteps. The Canadian Rebellions of 1837-8 were considered rehashes of the old colonial uprising against imperial oppression. The provincial reforms that led to responsible government in the 1840s were mere preliminaries to Canadian independence, and integration into the Union. Such was the American commitment to their political experiment that provincial agency to secure a separate future, different from that of the United States, was never acknowledged. By the 1850s, the possibility, or fear, of Canadian annexation intruded into the sectional crisis dividing North and South. Northern desire for Canada was countered by Southern demands for Cuba. The British threat was a constant so Southerners resorted to explain annexation as a plot by the global superpower to shatter the Union. At the same time, the agency of black American refugees and fugitives who fled for protection to British America was contested. While some white Northerners swallowed their pride, assisting blacks flee to another land of liberty, there were those in both sections, increasingly in the South, who argued that blacks could not thrive in northern climates. I show that British America was unpicked,

applauded, and sometimes ignored as required. The provinces were a rich vein for writers to tap when explaining and extolling America's experiment for the broader public.

My focus is the discourse generated by the nation's leading journals, North and South, where Ogden's method was to the fore. In the North, these were the *North American Review* (NAR) and *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (DR) already explored. In the South were Virginia's *Southern Literary Messenger* (SLM), South Carolina's *Southern Quarterly Review* (SQR), and the influential New Orleans *De Bow's Review* (DBR). DBR boasted a subscription base consisting of 'urban middle-class merchants, large planters who lived in cotton and sugar regions, wealthy entrepreneurs, and professional men,' the southern political elite.³ The DR established a national appeal, an important footprint in the 1850s as the Democratic Party survived as the leading cross-sectional party until rupturing in 1860. These magazines were primarily literary and commercial in character. DBR's interest in Canada focused upon the province's commerce, manufacture, and historic links with Louisiana and other States. This was the lion's share of its coverage through the 1840s and 50s.⁴ The NAR put it bluntly in a January 1845 article, stating that 'we seldom turn our attention to the affairs of our Colonial neighbours.' Accurate as far as politics were concerned, not an issue of it or any contemporary journal did not refer to the British colonies. In Richmond's SLM, founded in 1834, British America was the subject of travelogues, literary and historical reviews through the 1840s. Southern political interest blossomed in the contested debates over expansion that emerged in the 1850s. What all journals shared was not a continuous, engaged analysis with British America, but periodic cherry-picking that served temporary goals. As a result, the provinces were more often misunderstood. Questioning a reader of these journals on British colonial affairs was comparable to asking an informed British reader today to explain French politics or the French constitution. US interest in British American politics was sporadic, though one factor helped ensure an abiding fascination.

³ Kvach, *De Bow's Review*, 5.

⁴ The magazine title is indicative; *De Bow's Review: Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial Progress and Resources*.

In its January 1845 article, the *NAR* spelt out the rationale behind American interest in its northern neighbours. Firstly, the States was ‘the ruling power in this hemisphere.’ Secondly, that role demanded engagement with ‘the political condition of all who inhabit the same continent.’ Thirdly, that was especially true when confronted by ‘those who are still in allegiance to the crown to which we once acknowledged fealty.’⁵ Interest in all the Americas was secondary to the latter. That was understandable in the febrile atmosphere of 1845. When the Western Hemisphere’s ‘ruling power’ gazed north, it confronted the British Empire. The imperial hand had toyed with Texas, and remained a threat in Oregon, both issues that had helped ensure a pro-expansionist Democratic victory in the 1844 presidential election. In early 1845, reminding readers of the US’ preeminent role in the Americas drove home a point. It also highlighted how and why interest in the British provinces could spike. Changes in American foreign policy or shifts in British American politics made events north of the border suddenly relevant, but Americans’ failure to sustain their engagement, to achieve an accurate understanding of their neighbours, had ramifications. When British America became the focus of American reports, it was upon the opinions of reporters that the public relied.

The politics of journals determined such opinions. The *NAR*, founded in 1815, was explicitly Federalist and subsequently pro-Whig, whilst John L. O’Sullivan’s *DR*, established in 1837, was an organ of the Democratic Party. Their politics were reflected in how events in the British America were reported. Support for social cohesion, and British liberalism that increasingly opposed cultural and linguistic diversity captured the *NAR*’s Whig view of British America. The *DR*’s Jacksonian politics blinkered it to political developments that did not involve the broadening of the franchise and the removal of British hierarchy. These two views were to the fore when engaging with the Rebellions of 1837-8 that threatened the imperial system, and the subsequent Durham Report of 1839 that identified the failure to politically and culturally integrate Canadians and Canadiens as at fault. The magazines shared a vision of a continentalist future, fostered by the Revolution, that did not detract from their radically different views as to how that future was to be achieved. These differences can be seen in their

⁵ ‘British Colonial Politics,’ *NAR*, Vol. 60, Iss. 126 (January 1845), 87.

coverage of provincial responsible government in the 1840s. The *DR*, committed to immediate expansion, typified by a foreign policy that resulted in the Oregon Treaty and the conquest of parts of Mexico, ignored the subject. Anglophile Whig opposition to the war, and a commitment to internal improvement as a prerequisite for gradual expansion meant reforms in the provinces demanded the *NAR*'s attention. Significantly, neither magazine saw those reforms as anything other than preliminaries for British American independence, and eventual annexation by the USA.

The politics of Southern journals were more complex than might be thought. The *SLM* 'generally avoided taking sides in the disputes between the Democratic and Whig Parties.'⁶ It succeeded where others failed, becoming 'the most prominent, influential, and long-lived of all southern magazines, with a national reputation and circulation for much of its life.'⁷ Charleston's *SQR*, and New Orleans' *DBR* launched in 1842 and 1846 respectively. These latter were consciously Southern-focused, though the *SQR* boasted 'some in the North' amongst its subscribers.⁸ Given the timing, Southern politics were to the fore. All three were united in support of slavery. The *SQR* was the most Calhounite in its advocacy of slavery as a positive good. By the 1850s, even the *SLM* was forced to become 'more ardently pro-slavery and secessionist.'⁹ It was Southern geography and an increasing interest in expansion into the Caribbean, especially from the early 1850s, that dictated a broader continentalist outlook when assessing British America. Virginian naval officer, Matthew Fontaine Maury, held an editorial role at the *SLM* between 1838

⁶ Jonathan Daniel Wells, 'Introduction,' in Benjamin Blake Minor, *The Southern Literary Messenger, 1834-1864* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2007), xxi.

⁷ Christine Modey, 'The Southern Literary Messenger,' in Kevin J. Hayes (Ed.), *A History of Virginia Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 208.

⁸ Frank W. Ryan, 'Southern Quarterly Review, 1842-1857,' in Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton (Eds.), *The Conservative Press in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century America* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 183. Subscription to Southern journals wildly fluctuated. The *SQR* boasted 2,500 in 1845 that plummeted in 1853 to 800, increasing again to 1,600 the following year. See Michael O'Brien, *Intellectual Life and the American South, 1810-1860: An Abridged Edition of Conjectures of Order* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 127-8.

⁹ Modey, 'The Southern Literary Messenger,' 216.

and 43.¹⁰ As we shall see, he argued for the strengthening of the South and hence, the nation. The magazine published his first two naval articles under his pseudonym 'Harry Bluff.' The third in 1845 turned its gaze upon British North America.

These were the frameworks through which British North America was filtered for a politicised readership. Their opinions were fostered as early as the 1790s.

When the 1791 Canada Act separating Upper and Lower Canada came into effect, Americans, for the first time, saw the new Canadian political system, echoing the one they had so recently rejected, through the lens of their new republican identity. They began clarifying what that identity meant by comparison with the evolving British American system. Monarchy manifested itself in all the ceremony of a parliamentary system. Philip Freneau's pro-Jeffersonian *National Gazette* reported 'a pompous display of *royalty*' when the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec attended the assembly, '*seated on a throne*.'¹¹ The italics were his own. Even a Federalist editor such as George Hough of *Hough's Concord Herald* was horrified.¹² Federalist Francis Child's *Daily Advertiser* sarcastically characterised it as an event 'that must appear new even to that province,' repeating the old canard that Canadiens were adherents of political despotism.¹³

Rational analysis of these developments was impeded by the rejection of monarchy, the act that was a founding tenet of the new Republic, and this would prove a constant in Americans' inability to understand the new colonies. They chose to forget that whilst Loyalists had fled to maintain monarchy, as British Americans they were also committed to their colonial rights. From the outset of the Republic, ideas became fixed, fortified by the Revolutionary experience that provided the tools for assessing the anomalous British presence. Republicanism was vindicated by the retention of

¹⁰ Ibid., 213-4; Richard J. Calhoun, 'Southern Literary Messenger, 1834-1864,' in Lora and Longton (Eds.), *The Conservative Press*, 161-2.

¹¹ *National Gazette* (Philadelphia), February 2, 1793.

¹² *Hough's Concord Herald*, February 25, 1793. Also, printed in the *New-York Journal and Daily Patriotic Register*, January 30, 1793.

¹³ *The Daily Advertiser* (New York), February 1, 1793.

provincial pomp. Yet, British Americans' embrace of their imperial system, their negotiation of their rights within it, and adherence to the liberty to which they clung were subjects that Americans failed to understand. This failure is reflected in the journals this chapter explores, and in failing they informed and helped shape American national and regional identities.

2. NORTHERN HORIZONS – How Northerners Debated the Politics of British North America.

In the 1830s and 40s, it was the northern-based *NAR* and *DR* with national readerships who engaged with political upheaval in the British colonies. These magazines represented northern horizons of national interest that situated events in the provinces within the broader world view of the American experiment. Those events were the Canadian Rebellions of 1837-38 that led to the 1839 Durham Report, and the subsequent move towards responsible government in the 1840s that established the control of colonial appointments by provincial assemblies. As dissension spread to Upper Canada in late 1837, support for the rebels erupted across the states along the border. The Van Buren Administration adopted a policy of neutrality, but citizen support, primarily amongst Democrats, in the form of Hunter Lodges, necessitated government intervention.¹⁴ Winfield Scott was dispatched to restore order. Launched in October 1837, the *DR* could not avoid engaging with these issues. For Democrats, the Rebellions sounded the knell of colonialism. The silence of the Whig *NAR* and its late entry into the debate following the publication of Lord Durham's Report, suggests it supported American non-intervention. To do otherwise could inflame tensions with Britain over Texas and the Maine border. The responses of both publications highlighted their political agendas. The *DR's* reflected its commitment to the spread of Jacksonian Democracy over the continent, and that of the *NAR* represented the Whig

¹⁴ For the Hunters' Lodges, see Andrew Bonthius, 'The Patriot War of 1837-1838: Locofocoism with a Gun?' *Labour/Le Travail*, Vol. 52 (Fall, 2003), 30 f.; Major L. Wilson, *The Presidency of Martin Van Buren* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1984), 160.

espousal of cautious social assimilation and cohesion through negotiation, predicated on internal improvement. British America functioned as a means of promoting both.

Only four months into publication, the *DR* explained how readers were to understand the political upheavals in the Canadas. They were a continuation of the Revolutionary experiment. The turmoil testified to Americans' own good fortune in having pursued their republican destiny. Not only was the conflict between colonies and mother country artificially historicised to highlight the validity of the Revolution, and America's chosen trajectory, but also the irresistible power of democracy. Fulfilling its political remit, the *DR* presented democratic institutions as those against which no other form of government could survive. British North America could only be understood as an imperial aberration, fated to follow in America's footsteps. The writer of 'The Canadian Question' in January 1838 expressed shock that the provinces, despite 'the salutary contagion of democratic institutions and democratic principles' from their neighbour, had remained 'the subject colonies of Great Britain' for so long.¹⁵ The power of democratic forces had been acknowledged by the imperial Parliament where the Opposition had argued that the Canadas could not be restrained, 'being in the vicinity of the United States, imbued with democratic opinions by contact with a democratic people, and sure of being able to draw resources from, and find refuge in, the American republic.'¹⁶ The British Opposition bemoaned American democratic influence, and by that it meant an unrestrained franchise that would undermine colonial governance. The *DR* foresaw such an outcome as inevitable. Parliament itself had clarified what the Canadian Rebellions represented. There, the Opposition argued that the disaffection in Lower Canada in 1834 mirrored that in Massachusetts in 1774, offering an obvious teleological model. For the *DR*, the surviving British provinces had been plunged into the imperial darkness, and now, under their neighbour's influence, were seeing the light.

¹⁵ 'The Canadian Question,' *DR*, Vol. 1, Iss. 2 (January 1838), 205.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 213.

In a two-part feature that followed, the present was historicised to the extent that both past and present seemed concurrent. An article supposedly providing a 'history' of the Canadian Rebellions evoked the Revolutionary past whilst also asserting its continuing dynamism and relevance in the present. This was the American Revolution stripped of its temporal chains and presented as a continuously experienced event. Revolt in the Canadas was the continental apogee of an exported American experiment. Readers in 1838 were thrust into a resurrected revolutionary past in which 'Sons of Liberty' did battle with the 'ferocious' Tories of the establishment.¹⁷ Spectres of Cornwallises seemed to rise in 'a British province,' where, 'a British commander, acting under the authority of his government, witnessed the sad but impressive spectacle of his presence being viewed by the people as if a foreign and sanguinary foe had invaded their homes.'¹⁸ There was no greater evidence of the affinity felt with British America than the pitching of the unsuccessful struggle in the Canadas as a living continuation of America's own past. This analysis was an ahistorical fondant, ignoring the reality that up to the rupture of 1776, many British Americans had desired to remain part of the imperial system. The suppression of that inconvenient truth demonstrated the writer's inability to provide an effective analysis. Its aim was to influence readers, and retard any engagement with colonial realities. For the *DR*, 'the very essence of colonial government,' was flawed as it was based on the indefensible control of a maturing colony by a distant metropole. This was the lesson that 'the colonial history of the United States renders familiar to all.'¹⁹ A colonial future was impossible. 'The breach already existing, and stretching wider every day,' he went on, 'can never again be closed and cemented.'²⁰ The repetition of 1776 was inevitable.

The *DR* took the opportunity to reassert Revolutionary continental claims and argue the US' rightful appropriation of the demonym America. 1838 was a time when support

¹⁷ 'History of the Recent Insurrection in the Canadas – Parts First & Second,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 4, Iss. 3 (March – June 1838), 74.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁹ 'The Canadian Question,' *Ibid.*, (January 1838), 215.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 219.

south of the US-Canadian border was peaking, and the magazine explained what it meant to be an American. Its writer contrasted the support offered by US citizens to the rebel cause, and by that he meant Democrats, with the opposition of conservative Montrealers. The latter clarified who were and who were not true Americans, for the Montrealers were, 'all citizens of "*American Origin*.'" The italicisation was his own. The pro-government Montrealers declared at a meeting, and they were quoted at length, 'that all analogy between the American revolution and the present attempt to resist a "mild and equitable local government" was not only "totally unfounded," but "perversely false.'" Instead, they affirmed their allegiance and support for 'the restoration of the former state of things under the royal government.' Such a statement was contrasted with the vociferous support of Americans along the border who 'forever vindicated the word American from the degradation of even a moment's association with the sentiments thus volunteered in behalf of the country.'²¹ To be American was to be pro-democratic and anti-monarchic. The writer implicitly asserted that the term British American was an absurdity. The Montrealers were only had-been Americans by origin who had shed all claim to the title. The demonym American was inapplicable beyond the nation's borders, and as both the national and continental demonym were congruent in US eyes, nation and continent were one and the same. This claim was driven home by the Rebellions' failure, and 'the lamentable incompetency of its own leaders.' Where American revolutionaries had succeeded, Canadian rebels had not. Even worse, they had failed in the 'cause which cannot be otherwise than sacred in the eyes of every sincere American friend of popular freedom.'²² The Canadian Rebellions bolstered the US appropriation of both national and continental identities. One senses a dig at the *NAR* in this article, and that journal's claims to speak with an American voice, as it too shared with the apostate Montrealers an admiration for the British American system.

By 1839, Van Buren's failure to support the Rebellions and acknowledge Texan independence confronted the *DR* with a dilemma. Both policies were unpopular with a

²¹ 'History of the Recent Insurrection in the Canadas – Parts First & Second,' *DR*, Vol. 4, Iss. 3 (March – June 1838), 81.

²² *Ibid.*, 104.

swathe of Northern Democrats, the response to Texas especially so with Southerners. The *DR*'s answer was an article, couched under the title 'The Canada Question', that deftly defended the administration whilst also supporting Texan independence. Van Buren's critics had accused him of 'a pusillanimous dread of the power of England,' in abandoning the colonial rebels to their fate.²³ Refuting this was the article's primary goal. 'The weak and humble power of Mexico' was barely mentioned nor was that other Democratic temptation, Texas.²⁴ 'The Canada Question' stuck to its title. It disparaged Britain's power and her commitment to her colonies. It emphasised the deteriorating loyalty of the latter towards the mother country. In the writer's critique of Britain's 'expensive, inglorious, and really mutually disadvantageous, colonial dominion over an unwilling people,' it is difficult not to detect a shot across the Rio Grande.²⁵ When readers were reminded that, 'the vicinity of such institutions as those of our Union must serve as a perpetual model and incentive,' to the Canadas, their thoughts were drawn to the situation in the Southwest.²⁶ If 'the chasm of separation between Canada and the mother-country yawns already too widely and fearfully ever to be closed again,' how much greater the chasm between Texas and Mexico?²⁷ 'The Canada Question' was implicitly an engagement with the Texas Question. The writer predicted British colonists' independence, and rejected their annexation as 'neither their prosperity and happiness, nor our own would be promoted by an union.'²⁸ In doing so, he played to conservative Democrats who at the time supported Texan independence, but were wary of its annexation into the Union.

It was not until late 1839, the dust having settled, that the *NAR* provided its take on the Canadian conflict. Missing an opportunity to critique thousands of Northern Democrats

²³ 'The Canada Question,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 5, Iss. 13 (January 1839), 9.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

who had supported the rebels, it also avoided the awkwardness of endorsing the Democrat Van Buren's policy of neutrality, which it evidently supported. Whereas the *DR* had characterised provincial disaffection as part of an American anti-colonial pro-democratic narrative, unsurprisingly for a product of Anglo-oriented anti-Catholic Boston, the *NAR* was positive in its assessment of British American government. As we saw in the previous chapter, its criticism focused upon imperial policy supporting the Canadiens. That it too grappled with the historic parallels with the Revolution indicates that it was responding to the broader debate involving the *DR*. It was not so foolish as to deny that such parallels existed. To do so would be to deny the ongoing validity of the Revolution itself, but it was careful to highlight important differences. The *NAR* recognised parallels between the Spirit of '76 and the Canadian insurgence, but disavowed any specific connection. Colonists in 1776 had revolted in response to 'an attempt to force from these communities certain of the liberties they had always before asserted and enjoyed.'²⁹ In the Canadas, mistakes had been made, but 'the policy of the government has been any thing but one of aggression upon the liberties of the colonists.'³⁰ The latter was the sin of the Britain of the 1770s, not 1830s. The rebellion of British Americans was less defensible than that of American Revolutionaries. Typical Whig promotion of social harmony that would have echoed with colonial conservatives of the old British America, now chimed with the latter's descendants who had not supported rebellion in the new. In what might have been a swipe back at the *DR*, the point was made that liberty was not dependent upon a Jacksonian form of democracy.

In confronting British America, writers in both magazines demonstrated similar elevated opinions, though differing applications, of the American past. Repetition of partisan historical narratives sought not only to reassert that narrative as fact, but in the context of an explanation of contemporary colonial politics, it enabled writers to elaborate a positive continuum between past and present that proved the strength of the American system. Following the collapse of the Canadian Rebellions, both the *DR* and *NAR* examined the Durham Report that sought to cure Canadian ills. The Report

²⁹ 'British American Politics,' *NAR*, Vol. 49, Iss. 105 (October 1839), 383.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 385.

condemned the 1791 separation of Upper and Lower Canada, and advocated their reunification to ensure the Anglicisation and Protestantisation of the Canadiens. Durham's prescription inspired the *DR* to rail against a British system determined to suppress the will of the people, and at the same time attack American Whigs who defended that system. The *NAR* applauded the pro-Protestant binning of the Quebec Act, and reached out to the British in Anglo-Saxon solidarity. These conflicting responses emphasise how British America enabled both magazines to communicate their political agendas. The *DR* waved a broad Jacksonian flag in support of continental-wide democracy, whilst the *NAR* embraced a Whig international agenda, focused on social and cultural cohesion. The *DR* was once more first out the gate. It argued that the Report justified the magazine's unstinting support of rebel grievances. It dismissed the proposed pro-Anglo-Saxon policy of de-Canadienising Quebec as 'a favourite idea of the Government party in Lower Canada,' by whom Durham had been duped.³¹ Citing the example of Ireland, it was a policy to be rejected as further evidence of the failure of the colonial system. The defects of that system even Durham recognised, arguing against the dependence of provincial government upon decisions of the London colonial office. This provided an opportunity to attack Anglophile Whigs full on as it was this defective system 'to which so many of the descendants of the authors of our revolution are now surprised and indignant that the Canadians should be so ungratefully insensible.'³² Evidently the *NAR*'s dismissal of colonial complaints, yet to be published, was already an established opinion amongst Whigs. The *DR* leapt upon every criticism of British policy in Quebec, allowing the writer to apportion all blame for Canadian deficiencies to 'the fearful pyramid of colonial misrule.'³³ In doing so, the *DR* trumpeted democratic principles, and the American success story, 'the independence and republican institutions, of which the contiguity of the United States affords them so constant and stimulating an example.'³⁴

³¹ 'Lord Durham's Report,' *DR*, Vol. 5, Iss. 18 (June 1839), 554.

³² *Ibid.*, 559.

³³ *Ibid.*, 562.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 562.

Assessments of the other British provincial governments followed a similar theme. The flipside was the constant justification of the Rebellions themselves. The *DR*'s commitment to what denoted Americanness was clear in its dismissal of Durham's condemnation of Upper Canadian rebels. Their grievances were testimony, 'at least to every American reader, to the righteousness of that application of the principle that "resistance to tyrants is obedience to God."' ³⁵ At the same time as highlighting the distinctiveness of the American character, this Revolutionary motto situated Canadian events within the broader national narrative as well as providing another jab at Whig quietists. The righteousness of rebels and the criminality of colonialism fused to condemn those Americans who had 'joined in the hue and cry of the British Tory faction of the Canadas,' demanding of them 'a blush of shame for the dishonor they have cast on the memory of the fathers of our own Revolution.'³⁶ Response to the Canadian rebellions was a Democratic test case in which Whigs were proven unpatriotic betrayers of the American Revolution.

Having waited until late 1839 to offer its opinion, the *NAR* made the Durham Report central to its analysis. Where the *DR* failed to acknowledge any attempt at mollification in Durham's work, it sidestepped the Report's fundamental principles to bolster American self-satisfaction, Anglo-American relations, and beat the Protestant drum. The *DR* had only revelled in Durham's recognition of the economic superiority of the States, where 'the young energies of freedom have drawn such splendid results of prosperity, happiness and national greatness.'³⁷ This the *NAR* too embraced. Durham's positive assessments of the United States acknowledged 'the marked superiority, in all that constitutes true prosperity, of these old colonies of Great Britain, now independent of her control, over her newer colonies still subject to it.'³⁸ In a world where British observers usually critiqued Americans, this was a satisfying exception. Durham himself conceded that throughout his report he had contrasted the progressive United States

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 566.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 567.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 572.

³⁸ 'British American Politics,' *NAR* (October 1839), 377-8.

with 'the backwardness of the British Provinces.' But both the *DR* and *NAR* missed, or rather ignored, the point. Durham's purpose was to hold the US up as a worthy economic example to encourage provincial ambition, thereby strengthening an already widely shared 'affection for the Mother Country, and a preference for its institutions.'³⁹

The impact of Catholic immigration to the States can be seen in the *NAR*'s surprisingly muted response to the proposed union of Lower and Upper Canada. Rather than revelling in the planned de-Canadienising of the majority, it asserted that a union would 'throw the French race into a minority; securing them, at the same time, from every thing like oppression at the hands of the new majority.'⁴⁰ This neo-Madisonian solution skirted Durham's actual plan, which as the *NAR* knew, was to Anglicise the Canadiens, as 'the language, the laws, the character of the North American Continent are English; and every race but the English... appears there in a condition of inferiority.'⁴¹ Durham's was pure English Whig colonial policy focused on the cultural suppression of non-Anglophones. Macaulay's 1835 Minute on India was a precedent, to be followed by the 1847 Blue Books Report on Wales.⁴² The *NAR* chose not to highlight this at time when Irish Catholic immigration, identified by many Whigs as a threat to the national identity, was becoming a divisive political issue. Instead, it lauded an Anglo-Saxon solution, Whig addressing Whig across the Atlantic. More importantly, using the Canadas as a test case, the magazine sought to prove to Britain that the United States had been right all along. Shifts in British American politics provided opportunities for American Whigs to extol the achievements of the Republic, particularly when those achievements were recognised by British politicians themselves.

³⁹ *The Report on the Affairs of British North America. Presented to Her Majesty by the Earl of Durham etc.*, (London: J. W. Southgate, 1839), 114.

⁴⁰ 'British American Politics,' *NAR* (October 1839), 429.

⁴¹ *Report on the Affairs of British North America*, 131.

⁴² For the Minute on India, see Catherine Hall, *Macaulay and Son: Architects of Imperial Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 2012), 226-38; For the Blue Books Report, see Gwyneth Tyson Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: Wales and Colonial Prejudice* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), Prys Morgan (Ed.), *Brad Y Llyfrau Gleision: Ysgrifau ar Hanes Cymru* [Trans. The Treachery of the Blue Books: Essays on the History of Wales.] (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1991).

In the 1840s, the journals switched roles as the *DR* ignored political changes taking place in the British provinces that the appeasing *NAR* was required to explain. The *DR*'s only comment was an aside in the article in which it coined the phrase, 'Manifest Destiny.'⁴³ It dismissed the reforms in British America as merely preliminaries to independence, 'soon to be followed by Annexation.'⁴⁴ Admittedly, the magazine was at the forefront of the expansionist policy that dominated the decade, which saw the USA divide Oregon and capture a third of Mexico. But the silence of the Democratic Party's mouthpiece on the most significant shifts in provincial politics since 1791 suggests the difficulties those shifts posed for the *DR*'s democratic republican narrative. The imperial government's decision to step back from the appointment of colonial officials, relegating responsibility to elected assemblies, and its policy of free trade post-1846 were seismic shifts in the imperial system that the Anglophile *NAR* could not ignore. Its analyses demonstrated that Americans' inability to comprehend changes in provincial governing was evident long before Confederation in the 1860s. Adherents of the 1789 Constitution were confronted by the far more elastic uncoded British Constitution of precedent, usage and customs. The paucity of the latter three in the colonial context allowed the British government great flexibility in the policies it pursued from the 1840s onwards. The process was novel and experimental, transferring power from London to the provincial capitals, and then, in 1867, to Ottawa. Republican Americans, both Democrats and Whigs, struggled to grasp its purpose and viability. The United States' political landscape was by now so far apart from that of the neighbouring colonists that even a reforming imperial system could only be explained within the framework of the model Americans had rejected in 1776 as defunct, and that of the independent republic they had set in its place.

Thus hampered, the *NAR* sought to explain British American reforms. Durham's recommendations for the Canadas had chimed with the *NAR*'s Anglo-Saxon Whigishness, and they returned the provinces to their pre-1791 state. But broad reform

⁴³ 'Annexation,' *DR*, Vol. 17, Iss. 85 (July-August 1845), 5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9. Annexation is explored in Ch. 5.

across all provincial administrations of the type proposed was so innovative that the *NAR* was forced to reject it. Instead of an informed exploration of radical change, what the magazine offered was a continuing critique of botched imperial policy, which, ironically, led it to the same conclusion as the *DR*. In its January 1845 article, the writer sought to explain what was termed ‘responsible government,’ but to him, it was a notion ‘so vague and shadowy we may not succeed.’ He was evidently so wedded to colonial notions of the past, and specifically, the American past, that it presented an indefensible paradox. ‘Colonies cannot be subject to a monarchy, and at the same time govern themselves,’ he stated, ‘nor can colonial governments obey their sovereign, and at the same time, satisfy all the desires of the colonists among whom they reside.’⁴⁵ The voice might well have been that of 1775, and not 1845. It displayed no understanding of the changes that had taken place in the relationship between Crown and Parliament in Britain, and their implications for colonial policy, nor did it acknowledge the determination of British Americans to maintain their imperial relationship with both institutions whilst asserting increasing legislative control over internal affairs.

True, in 1845 ‘responsible government’ remained a contested notion across the provinces. The collapse of a coalition government in Nova Scotia in 1843 was cited to show ‘that such a system was unsuited to colonists, and cannot succeed among them.’ The problem involved uniting ‘the royal prerogative and the popular will.’⁴⁶ Here, the writer demonstrated his inability to rationalise the reform that was under way. Firstly, the royal prerogative had already proven itself a spent force when William IV became the last monarch to attempt to remove from government a party with a parliamentary majority. Famously, where George III in 1783 had succeeded, William in 1834 failed.⁴⁷ Secondly, when the writer referred to ‘colonists,’ he was referring to the American past rather than the British American present. He stated that attempts by provincial administrations to control colonial appointments in Nova Scotia was essentially an

⁴⁵ ‘British Colonial Politics,’ *NAR* (January 1845), 104.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁴⁷ For William IV’s failure, see Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People?: England 1783-1846 – The New Oxford History of England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 497-9.

attack upon 'the very foundation of the system under which they live.' In the United States, 'the fountain of patronage was allowed to flow freely,' only when independence had been declared, and 'subjects resolved to become citizens.'⁴⁸ The writer is to be forgiven for failing to grasp a hitherto novel concept, that of a citizen-subject, and one that remains as diffuse and negotiated as the constitution that contrived it. Engagement with changes in North America clarified the limits of the American political imagination. 'Responsible government' was not only a misnomer outside of a republican system. It was an impossibility.

The changes that took place across the British provinces by 1848 sent the *NAR* into shock. It announced, 'the adoption of the system of "responsible government" in Nova Scotia," where the majority party in the Assembly had taken control of government appointments.'⁴⁹ So dramatic was the shift that again the writer could only respond by reminding readers of Americans' own past. He stated that, 'if a single Whig of 1776, in his loftiest mood, even so much as dreamed of obtaining a "concession" like this, we have yet to be informed of it.'⁵⁰ In New Brunswick, the barring of British applicants from colonial posts for not being 'settled inhabitants' caused chagrin as he was reminded, 'where our fathers vainly claimed to enjoy a part, the children of their opponents have successfully contended for the whole.'⁵¹ And the shift to free trade with the passage of the Corn Laws left him agog. 'What would the Whigs of our Revolution have said to a concession like this?' he asked. 'It is fortunate for us that it was not offered, or they and their descendants would have remained British subjects down to the present day.'⁵² This rhetoric was followed by a lengthy account of the commercial limitations and

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁹ 'British Colonial Politics,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 67, Iss. 140 (July 1848), 8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 9. The evocation of Revolutionary Whigs was a feature of the *NAR*, asserting a continuum between their politics and cause, and that of the Whigs of the 1830s and 40s. This was also true of Whigs themselves Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 27-8.

⁵¹ 'British Colonial Politics,' *NAR* (July 1848), 11.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 14.

deprivations inflicted upon Americans from the 1760s through to the opening of the West Indies to US trade in the 1830s. That the writer had to resort to such an exposition suggests this Whig felt regret rather than relief, that not only had Loyalists seventy years on succeeded where Rebels had failed, but that the latter had been robbed of their British identity. He implied as much. Had such concessions been made in the 1770s, 'what calamities would they not have spared to the Saxon race in both hemispheres!'⁵³ Such apparent regret captured the dilemma posed by evolving provincial politics for an evidently Anglophile American observer. That the writer was Anglophile is suggested throughout his work by his often-admiring assessment of Britain and its politicians. Thus, the Governor-General Lord Elgin was 'a cool and sagacious statesman.'⁵⁴ Reassurance could only be provided by situating provincial reforms within the greater arc of the American experience. In the colonies, 'we find an approval of the principles on which the Revolutionary contest hinged,' and their politicians, 'have themselves adopted, and are now acting upon, the principles of Otis, Franklin, and others of the same political school.'⁵⁵

Only in these terms could imperial reform be understood. American arrogance and denial bookended this article. In British America, 'every thing seems to indicate a final and complete separation from the mother country,' as 'colonists who prefer independence or annexation to the United States will soon, if they do not already, form a majority.'⁵⁶ These were the only outcomes the writer could foresee as the institutional revolution that was taking place was a 'delusion,' 'wholly impracticable,' within an imperial system, as, '*a colony cannot be an independent state.*'⁵⁷ The italics were the writer's own. Independence was not the colonial objective, but it was the only explanatory framework for an American to make sense of imperial change. The Revolutionary experience was itself a hindrance. Prejudiced by the outcome of the

⁵³ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 15 & 22.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 2 & 26.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 14.

crises of the 1760s and 70s, Americans could not conceive of an alternative political trajectory. The resulting misunderstanding of their neighbours' objectives, complicated by the devious means colonial politicians employed to achieve them, hampered US engagement in British American political discourse for decades to come.⁵⁸ The *NAR*'s 1845 and 48 articles provide early evidence of this. Thus, when the Colonial Secretary Earl Grey conceded that change within the colonial system was 'a necessary part of representative institutions in a certain stage in their progress!' the writer and Grey's understanding of 'progress' were two very different things.⁵⁹ For the American commentator, it represented a move towards independence whilst for the Colonial Secretary, it was a change of gear to ensure that independence would never come.

Silent for a decade, the *DR* returned its attention to British America in the early 1850s. A Whig Administration elicited the journal's interest in the provinces. Political changes there forced it to acknowledge that 'personal freedom is about as great in the provinces of Canada as in the United States,' but it was not enough. Removal of the British influence remained the *DR*'s goal. Provincial reliance upon Britain and its decision making had resulted in a palsied condition. When requests were sent to London, the provinces 'listlessly await the result, like a farmer, who, after sowing his seed, leaves the issue to Providence.'⁶⁰ This contrasted with states who were free to pursue their own improvements, as in the case of the Erie Canal, without the involvement of the federal government that Whigs advocated. The *DR* recognised that 'the people of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, descended from the same ancestors,' as Americans, but they were a 'snail compared with the whirlwind' that was the United States. This was because 'the steed [British America] has the bit in his mouth and the rider [Britain] on his back,'⁶¹ Fourteen years on, the *DR* persisted in ignoring Durham's intentions, instead regurgitating comforting reassurances of American ascendancy.

⁵⁸ See Ch. 5, Sections 2 & 3.

⁵⁹ 'British Colonial Politics,' *NAR* (July 1848), 9.

⁶⁰ 'The Constitutional Power of Congress over Public Improvements,' *DR.*, Vol. 28, Iss. 152 (February 1851), 149.

⁶¹ 'Brother Jonathan,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 32 Iss. 5 (May 1853), 437.

In 1852, a presidential election year, the *DR* spilt much ink on British America, aimed at both Northerners and Southerners.⁶² The most bizarre coverage consisted of a two-part article entitled 'Who Owns British North America?'⁶³ It was prompted by the arrival in the States in April 1851 of Alexander Humphrys, a dodgy claimant to the defunct Earldom of Stirling, and the ownership of the British American Maritimes attached to it. The claims had been rejected in a publicised legal case in London in 1839, but they offered the *DR* an opportunity to court Northern voters. The *DR* was candid, reminding readers that 'we wish to see the end of the present British colonial system, and the introduction of as much self-government as possible among the people.'⁶⁴ It was a typically patronising statement, asserting the provinces' political backwardness, despite the changes that had taken place there. It went on to state that 'the claim of the crown of England to the absolute ownership of the land in British North America is unfounded,' concluding that Humphrys' claim was valid.

The *DR* had no respect for the Earldom as the second article clarified; '[the Earldom] is not a subject per se, that we care anything about.' More important was the opportunity of removing 'a repulsive set of political and social institutions not adapted to them, nor to us, nor to the world,' thus dismissing the pioneering shifts in the imperial system, both in continental and global terms.⁶⁵ The extent to which American democracy determined the journal's evaluation of British America was indicated by its characterisation as "'the system of despotism" so rampant and so hypocritical.'⁶⁶ 'The English monarchy and aristocracy,' was such a despotism that was able 'to hold to the earth Australia and Canada.'⁶⁷ Support for Humphrys and his already dismissed claims

⁶² For courting the South, see pp. 130-1 below.

⁶³ 'Who Owns British North America?' *DR*, Vol. 31, Iss. 170 (August 1852) & 'Who Owns British North America? Part Two,' *DR*, Vol. 31, Iss. 171 (September 1852).

⁶⁴ 'Who Owns British North America?' *DR* (August 1852), 113.

⁶⁵ 'Who Owns British North America? Part Two,' *DR* (September 1852), 225.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 239.

⁶⁷ 'Ireland and the Holy Alliance,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 31, Iss. 168 (July 1852), 2 & 3.

to the Earldom were merely an opportunity to oust Britain. It was the American example, which had saved the US from the colonial morass, that was repeatedly cited by the *DR* as the future British America refused to accept. American independence had lit the way on 'the path of duty and honour' and by failing to follow it, British North America exhibited neither.⁶⁸ The contrast was stark. It had 'raised us from the probable condition of another Canada to the proud ascendancy of the greatest and most promising nation which the world has ever seen.'⁶⁹ The *DR* maintained a consistent assault upon the British colonial presence in America as an aberrant institution. One must conclude that for it, that presence was always a threat.

3. SOUTHERN HORIZONS – How Southerners Did Not Ignore British North America.

British North America may seem a subject of little interest to the distant American South, a conclusion suggested by an historiography that is more regionally and nationally focused. For example, engagement with the distant provinces, beyond the issue of slavery, is not supported by a view, articulated by Matthew Karp, that from the 1840s, Southern expansion focused Southern sights ever southward. Karp is right, but he ignores the bigger picture. It is equally important to recognise that Southern goals reflected an engagement with the broader continental geopolitics of North America. With one eye on the Caribbean and Central America, the other kept close watch across the northern US border. As Southerners pushed for the annexation of Texas in the first half of the 1840s, fears of military encirclement from the Canadas down the Mississippi were stoked in response to British involvement in the Lone Star State, and in the wake of slave emancipation in Britain's colonies. It is too simplistic to state the obvious, that Southerners were opposed to the annexation of non-slaveholding British America. In fact, they formulated complex arguments against it that accused Britain of a plot to split the Union, questioned the allegiance of Northerners to the Revolutionary heritage, and pointed to a Northern conspiracy to destabilise the delicate sectional balance by

⁶⁸ 'Who Owns British North America?' *Ibid.*, (August 1852), 114.

⁶⁹ 'Our Mission – Diplomacy and Navy,' *Ibid.*, (July 1852), 36.

opposing Cuban annexation whilst advocating that of Canada. As they shifted towards secession, in a striking volte face, Southerners began to argue that British America would veer towards the Confederacy, as King Cotton would determine the economic trajectory of a new realigned North America.

Southerners were particularly attuned to seeing British America as a prism through which to view Britain herself, not least because slave emancipation in 1834 was the triumph of a home-grown movement. The Caribbean to which they turned their gaze was a British lake, polluted by its freed black populations. The impact of Britain's colonies to the north upon Southern expansionist policy was twofold. The first is well-known, that any shift in their status, specifically attempts to incorporate them into the United States, had implications for the Union. What is striking is how early on the link between Southern-driven expansionism and the dangerous possibility of retaliation by the North in the form of annexation of British colonies was recognised. In 1840, following a tour of the States, the Hon. Charles A. Murray, Master of the Queen's Household, wrote to one of his hosts, Benjamin Harrison of Berkley, Virginia, warning that 'if the South should succeed in adding Texas to the Union, the North would add Canada by way of offset and counterpoise.'⁷⁰ The debate continued through the 1850s when Texas was replaced by Cuba. Any attempt to acquire parts of British America was considered a threat to the Union's delicate equilibrium, or rather, the Southern-tilted balance of power that had successfully snaffled Texas with cross-sectional Democratic support. Secondly, in the 1840s there was the continental balance of power between the US and Great Britain that seemed at tipping point. This subject has been well explored.⁷¹ So, when in July 1844, the *DR* reminded readers of Britain's imperial avarice, that 'she keeps Canada to the North of us, and claiming Oregon on the West, is actually negotiating with Texas on the South,' it came to those Southerners who thought in such broad terms as no surprise.⁷² Indeed, the least explored aspect of Southern engagement with British America is the threat the colonies posed to the region's security. Beyond

⁷⁰ 'Hon. C. A. Murray,' *SLM*, Vol. 6, Iss. 7 (July 1840), 572.

⁷¹ Dykstra, *Shifting Balance of Power*, esp. xxx-iv, Ch. 3.

⁷² 'The Re-Annexation of Texas etc.,' *DR* (July 1844), 16.

the Canada versus Texas versus Cuba tit-for-tat that dominated the national expansionist debate, and much of this examination, lay the truth that Southerners, eyeing the Caribbean, constructed their regional future in continental terms.

In February and March 1845, the *Southern Literary Messenger* published two articles focusing on the threat from British America to the West and the Mississippi Valley should war break out with Great Britain. The first, by Virginian naval officer Matthew Fontaine Maury, under his pseudonym Harry Bluff, highlighted Britain's strengthening of her provincial defences following the War of 1812. The Rideau and Welland Canals had been built and improved, along with two naval stations on Lakes Huron and Simcoe. Maury argued that the US should respond by linking the Great Lakes with the Mississippi by what would become the Illinois and Michigan Canal, as 'the Lakes and the Gulf are the two great ventricles of the Western country,' and 'the seat of strength in war.'⁷³ Pro-slavery Maury, 'the central figure in the development of southern navalism,' and his focus on the threat from a post-Emancipation West Indies supported by the Royal Navy, is an important part of Karp's thesis.⁷⁴ Maury's continental vision with its recognition of the important contribution of the provinces to Britain's broader naval strategy is not.

Maury revived eighteenth-century colonists' fears of French encirclement from Quebec down through Louisiana. He argued the continuing military and geopolitical potency of such a tactic, now in the hands of Britain. In his February article, Maury never once mentioned slavery, but though he couched his argument in terms of national defence, his focus was the protection of the Southern Gulf states. In March, another article picked up Maury's theme. Its focus was not only defence, but the commercial elevation of the South. The writer supported Maury's promotion of the Illinois Canal as it would ensure the reorientation of Northern trade, down 'into New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis and

⁷³ 'Another Scrap from the Lucky-Bag of Harry Bluff. Lake Defences and Western Interests.,' *SLM*, Vol. 11, Iss. 2 (February 1845), 90.

⁷⁴ Matthew Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire: Slaveholders at the Helm of American Foreign Policy* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2016), 35.

other places on the Mississippi.⁷⁵ This would diminish the commercial and military potential of British America. For both writers, protection of the South was expressed in national terms. They recognised the provinces' importance to British strategy in the case of war, and they appropriated it to support their own agenda. Naval improvements upon the Mississippi for defence were to the fore at a Convention of Southern and Western States in Memphis on July 4th, 1845, where a string of resolutions was adopted for debate at a further convention to be held on November 12th. Responding to these resolutions in the *SLM* in October, Maury sought to influence attendees at the November 12th Convention, emphasising yet again the strategic importance of linking the continent's primary inland waterways to undermine the British who had displayed 'warlike purposes' by opening 'her ship canals from the sea to the Lakes.' Again, he argued that this was a policy of national importance, but its value was more than simply defence. And here, Maury shifted gear. He presented it as a policy to promote national unity. It was a means of stifling those 'agents both political and religious... whose tendency is to foster sectional jealousies.' By presenting a unified front against the Canadian threat in the form of a canal from the Mississippi to the Lakes, 'the business relations of life, the ties of friendship, blood and commerce,' binding North and South would be strengthened, and the Western states would become 'the conservators of the Union.' From both Southern and Union points of view, Maury's strategy was one of external and internal defence. It is difficult not to detect a stab at Canada in his condemnation of the 'Intolerance, Bigotry and Fanaticism' of those agents threatening American unity.⁷⁶ For a defender of slavery such as Maury, British America was both a military and moral threat. It is not unreasonable to suggest that moral rather than military fears fired Southern enthusiasm.

The British themselves reveal the extent to which Maury's theory was a concoction. They had a very different perception of British America's strength. Soon after Maury's foray into naval policy, the USA and Mexico were at war. Britain balked at the rapidity

⁷⁵ 'The Lakes and the Valley of the Mississippi,' *SLM*, Vol. 11, Iss. 3 (March 1845), 191.

⁷⁶ 'To the Memphis Convention. Ship-Canal and Lake Defences.,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, Iss. 10 (October 1845), 578.

of US success against their neighbour, and became worried for Canada's safety 'if the 'war hatchet is dug up' between the American Union and ourselves.' Contra Maury, British analysts reported 'an extensive and naked frontier, on our side but thinly peopled'" harbours, 'not defended,' and 'no navy, unless two or three worthless steamers can be so considered.'⁷⁷ This article by Sir Francis Head, former Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, published in the *Southern Quarterly Review*, attracted no comment as its focus was criticism of the Mexican War in the British press. Imperial policy in the 1840s further reflected the vulnerability of British America. It pursued an ameliorating approach to the United States in the negotiation of boundaries and border disputes. The *SQR* conceded as much when it acclaimed the peaceful settlement of the Oregon Question, evidence 'that there was too much dependence in one nation upon the other in the great enterprises of civilization, to make any war tolerable or any peace too dear.'⁷⁸ Britain did not want war with America. This supports Karp's thesis of a Southern-oriented foreign policy in which America too did not want a war with Britain that would threaten slavery. But it also highlights the important role played by British America, and not only the Gulf upon which Karp focuses, in formulating that policy. Further, it highlights the opportunism of Maury and others in exploiting that role to strike a blow for Southern morality by weakening the great slave haven of Canada.

By January 1850, the fallout from the Mexican War was proving divisive, agitated further by the autumn 1849 Canadian Annexation Movement that dangled the possibility of Canadian annexation before disconcerted Northerners. In response, the *DR* served up an Olympian confection that combined Maury's fears of Britain, and the threat posed by the Canadians. Such was the appeal of the *DR*'s cross-sectional chutzpah that the article was later republished by *De Bow's Review*.⁷⁹ The *DR* argued that the

⁷⁷ 'British Reviewers and U. States,' *Southern Quarterly Review*, Vol. 13, Iss. 25 (January 1848), 209. It should be noted that Secretary of War William L. Marcy saw the US' defensive position on the Great Lakes in much more positive terms than Maury. 'Report of the Secretary of War, to the President, for 1845, and Accompanying Documents,' *DR*, Vol. 18, Iss. 94 (April 1846), 297.

⁷⁸ 'British Reviewers and U. States,' *SQR*, (January 1848), 207.

⁷⁹ 'Stability of the Union,' *DBR*, Vol. 8, Iss. 4 (April 1850).

Canadian fruit was only one part of a three-pronged British plot to destroy the Union. A second was Free Soilism, 'the party of disunion,' which required the *DR* to turn its back on a previous poster boy, Martin Van Buren. The third involved the separation of North and South, and the latter's incorporation into the British Empire. The catalyst in this imagined scenario was the North's annexation of Canada and the South's of Cuba. Explaining Canada's involvement led the *DR* into a convoluted interpretation of domestic Canadian policy for which the Mother Country was to blame. Britain had 'repulsed' the Canadas. She had alienated Canadians by approving the 1849 Rebellion Losses Bill reimbursing provincials who had rebelled in 1837-8. The result was the Annexation Movement of which she approved. This was a distortion of the facts, but hard-won provincial agency was ignored to accommodate the *DR*'s conspiracy theory. The minority views of pro-annexation Montrealers and Britons were presented as those of the majority. Britain's aim was to foist 'the useless province of Canada' upon the Union, the annexation of which would splinter North and South, driving the latter's cotton producers into British arms.⁸⁰ The slaves of the South would be freed, though how that was to be achieved was not specified. The effect on the North, deprived of Southern staples, would be the destruction of its industry and commerce. The West would be separated as the South would control the Mississippi Valley. Canada and Cuba were conjoined ticking time bombs that would implode the Union. Ironically, the magazine for which Manifest Destiny was a masthead now characterised further expansion as a doomsday scenario conjured in London. Twelve years since it had blazoned the entrance of a rebellious Canada into the American fold, the Mexican cession and its fallout had necessitated a re-evaluation of the nation's geopolitical future to which British America was a threat. Here was Hofstadter's 'paranoid style' at play.⁸¹ A bizarre thesis conjured a fake threat that indicated the lengths to which the *DR* felt it had to go to maintain cross-sectional unity during the 1850 crisis.

By then, military fears of the provinces had faded, but, as the *DR* testified, they were replaced by a growing realisation of the threat posed by their annexation to the Union,

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁸¹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1966), 3-40.

and its political implications for the national compromise. This was the Southern focus from the late 1840s onwards, and yet, initially, what is striking is the extent to which Southern writers' analyses of the political reforms in British America differed not a jot from their Northern colleagues. Even as they opposed Northern pro-annexationists and their threat to slavery, Southerners too saw provincial reforms as testaments to the Republic's superiority. In September 1848, Whig resident of New Orleans, Stephen Franks Miller contended that, 'the influence of the United States is felt all through the British colonies in their amelioration.'⁸² These were words that chimed with those of both the *DR* and *NAR*. In 1850, Georgian writer and publisher Joseph Addison Turner's 'Annexation of Canada' was a wake-up call to the South of the danger those reforms posed, but he too situated their trajectory in the great arc of US history, linking the Rebellions of 1837-8 with the Independence struggle of the "old thirteen."⁸³ Like Miller et al, he saw the presence of the States as decisive. Gazing upon British America, he wrote, 'her Western possessions are in the neighborhood of a republic whose example teaches them what they may do for themselves in the way of self-government.'⁸⁴

It was less the prediction of independence, and more subsequent annexation that frightened both Turner and Miller. Writing even as the nation choked on Emerson's arsenic, the Whig Miller summoned Quincy Adams, stating that, 'if a "manifest destiny" decree all America to us, it is well to wait the falling of the ripe fruit without agency of ours... a better policy would be – "hold, enough!"'⁸⁵ Sensitive to the sectional tightrope he was walking, he never mentioned Canadian annexation. Having commandeered British America into the US narrative, extolling the produce and manufactures of both Canadas en route, Turner held out the possibility to the North that annexation would be a natural conclusion. If, 'we of the South can believe that the North desire, the

⁸² 'British America,' *DBR*, Vol. 6, Iss. 3 (September 1848), 182.

⁸³ 'Annexation of Canada,' *DBR*, Vol. 9, Iss. 4, (October 1850), 408; for J. A. Turner, see <<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/joseph-addison-turner-1826-1868>> Accessed January 8, 2018.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 411.

⁸⁵ "British America," *DBR* (September 1848), 182.

annexation of Canada only as an amplitude of our grand and glorious republic,' he wrote, 'we shall open our arms for a reception of a sister who has cast off the rags of monarchy, and comes to our bosom clad in the heavenly livery of republicanism.' There is a 'but,' that I have extricated from this quote. The additional phrase was, 'but without reference to the question of slavery.' The rub was such that he ended with a reminder to Northerners of Southern strength, and that, like Samson, the South would, 'lay hold upon the pillars of a temple more magnificent than that of the Philistines, and bury in one grand ruin the oppressor along with the oppressed.'⁸⁶

From 1850, that 'grand ruin' became an increasingly commonplace topic as did British America's potential for creating it. Now, Southern writers diverged sharply from their Northern counterparts. Whereas the *DR* concocted nightmares in which Britain recruited the provinces to splinter the nation, increasingly secessionist-oriented voices were heard in Southern magazines that turned their attention to Cuba to evoke a future of sunny uplands. In 1850, Virginian Democrat, Muscoe Russell Hunter Garnett, produced a pro-Southern pamphlet that initiated a debate spanning five years, and posited theories for an independent Southern future that played a key role in the movement towards secession. His central economic argument is familiar.⁸⁷ He asserted that the economic strength of the South, compared to that of the North, was determined by its relationship with Great Britain, and her dependence on King Cotton. The role Garnett predicted for British America in this has been ignored. He started by frightening readers with the prospect of a South deluged by tens of free States in the West, 'not to mention the chances for several more in Canada!'⁸⁸ Such fears would be mitigated by the dissolution of the Union, not least because it would result in the South's acquisition of Cuba. He did not accuse the North of obstructing Cuban annexation, but it was implicit, as only secession would see its fulfilment. Garnett argued that Britain would acquiesce to Southern expansion in the Caribbean because of her special relationship

⁸⁶ 'Annexation of Canada,' *DBR* (October 1850), 412.

⁸⁷ *The Union, Past and Future: How It Works and How to Save It by A Citizen of Virginia*, (Washington DC: Jno T. Towers, 1850), 18-22. Muscoe Russell Hunter Garnett is not mentioned as the author.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

with the Cotton South. Her relations with the North would be hostile, that of a rival manufacturer, and ‘this hostile feeling would be aggravated by [Northern] desire to possess Canada.’ Garnett depicted a future that turned Maury’s fear of a strengthened Canada on its head. He predicted that Canada would succeed where she had failed during the Revolution. The Hudson Valley would be invaded, so ‘the Northern states might be thus completely sundered.’⁸⁹ Whilst Garnett’s depiction of a North severed by the British lion smacked of fantasy, his confidence in the emergence of a South supported by Britain was rooted in the region’s confidence in its staple product. Of more importance in the context of our analysis is that Garnett, following in the footsteps of Maury, attested to a South far from disinterested in British America. Instead, what we see are multiple applications of the British presence to construct geopolitical models that bolstered Southern aims. Maury had argued for a strengthened South and a strengthened Union. Garnett posited the novel idea of a weak, independent North, servant to a strong British America.⁹⁰ The potency of Garnett’s pamphlet was such that when challenged in 1854, *DBR* responded with its further publication in serial form over several months.⁹¹

It was in the North that Garnett’s challenger emerged, testimony to the cross-sectional debate in which British America was involved. The challenger was the anti-slavery economist Henry Charles Carey.⁹² Carey admitted the popularity of Garnett’s thesis, reporting that his ‘ideas have obtained stronger hold on the southern mind, until at

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁹⁰ Scottish poet and journalist Charles Mackay presented an alternate take on Garnett’s thesis when he suggested that “the time may come when the New England States, weary of participating in the slavery which they cannot abolish, may seek to effect a legislative union with Canada.” According to him, the Canadians predicted that ‘Vermont, Maine, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts will claim incorporation with the Canadas’ should the Union fail. Charles Mackay, *Life and Liberty in America: Sketches of a Tour in the United States and Canada in 1857-8* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1859), 191 & 203.

⁹¹ ‘The South and the Union,’ *DBR*, Vol. 18, Iss. 2 – Vol. 19, Iss. 1 (February – July 1855).

⁹² *The North and the South. Reprinted from the New York Tribune* (New York: Office of the Tribune, 1854). Carey is not mentioned as the author. For a brief biography of Carey, see Rodney J. Morrison, *Henry C. Carey and American Economic Development* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1986), 1-7.

length we find them now repeated from every quarter of the slave-holding States.⁹³ The article focused on dismissing Garnett's economic thesis. The Northern economist challenged *DBR* on its own turf, that of the economic viability of a seceded South, and he rejected it as 'the South plainly cannot afford to dissolve the Union.'⁹⁴ The British provinces were at the heart of two of Carey's core criticisms. Firstly, he rejected Garnett's depiction of an expansionist North. Instead, it was the South that was acquisitive; Florida, Texas, the Gadsden Purchase, and now, Cuba. The destabilising element for Carey was the shift that had taken place in the nation's attitude to slavery. Abolition, he stated, had once been a shared national goal. He sought to undermine Garnett's fearful prophesy of a Union dominated by free states. He reminded readers that during the War of 1812, 'Virginia did not then object to the annexation of Canada.' but ever since, it was the North that had acquiesced to Southern demands.⁹⁵ Acquisition of British territories was impossible, 'nor dare any Northern politician hint at the idea, because it would ruin him with the South.'⁹⁶ For Carey, the South was not only explicitly obstructionist, but manipulative. Southerners held the Union to ransom to ensure their continuing dominance. However, Carey too appeared Janus-faced when, having accused Southerners of frustrating Northern aspirations, he changed tack, stating that 'Northern men seek no enlargement of territory.'⁹⁷ It is evident throughout that Carey was appealing to a Northern constituency, dangling Canada as a forbidden fruit whilst at the same time insisting upon Northern disinterest. For him, Canada was a prize with which to bait the North and bludgeon the South.

Secondly, Carey predicted a very different post-dissolution North America. The anti-slavery British provinces would be drawn into the free Northern orbit as 'annexation of those provinces can never take place while we shall continue so busily occupied in

⁹³ *The North and the South* (1854), 4.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

extending the area of slavery.⁹⁸ It was slavery that hampered Northern aspirations, and he concluded that the time had come for its politicians to stand firm against the slave power, and confront its threats of secession for what they were, bluster. The Union could then turn its back on slavery, and establish the type of government the North desired. Carey also blustered but implied that the annexation of British America would prove probable. This was a direct response to Garnett's closing roar of 'EQUALITY or INDEPENDENCE,' secession should the South fail to maintain parity, as Garnett saw it, within the Union. He argued by implication that annexation of British America would prove fatal to that parity.

The debate continued in January 1855. The *SQR* rebutted Carey, and again, British America was central to its argument. It announced that a movement towards Northern supremacy was afoot, and 'the annexation of all the British Provinces of North America' was one of the means of achieving it.⁹⁹ The argument that followed further demonstrated the creativity with which Canada could be co-opted, and applied in support of a different proposition, what it meant to be American. The writer contended that Southern territorial expansion had only predominated because 'there was no territory to be acquired on the North.' Canada had no intention of joining the Union and had repeatedly refused to do so. No mention was made of slavery. Canada's refusal was the result of 'attachment of monarchy and hatred to republicanism.'¹⁰⁰ 'It must be an exalted fanaticism, 'the writer mused, 'or a depraved regard for free institutions which would cause an American to prefer the society of those who fought against his ancestors, to that of those who fought with them.'¹⁰¹ It was pure bravado that reminded readers of Loyalist perfidy during the Revolution, and Canadian monarchism, whilst at the same time, tarring would be Northern annexationists by association.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁹⁹ 'Review of "The North and South," a pamphlet republished from the editorials of the *New York Tribune*.' *SQR*, Vol. 11, Iss. 1 (January 1855), 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 13-4.

Central to the argument was the national and continental demonym that indicted ‘an American’ who could succumb to the blandishments of an anti-republican system. The Constitutional purity of Southern readers and their honour were affirmed by the fact that the traitors to the Union were those who would ally with monarchists and counter-revolutionaries. It was they who were reneging on the national contract, and the Revolutionary generation’s sacrifice. The latter would become a contested theme of debate, famously countered by Lincoln in the shared inheritance he evoked at the end of his first Inaugural. Those ‘mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land.’¹⁰² It is striking that British America was appropriated to counter this unifying vision. Canada was conjoined with Cuba as components in a complex territorial and regional equation. ‘Would Canada come into the federal fold if invited to do so?’ readers were asked, and reminded that ‘like Cuba, she prides herself in being loyal to the monarchy to which she has clung through every vicissitude.’¹⁰³ Yet, the North asserted that Canada repudiated monarchy. If so, surely a similar assertion could be made about loyal Cuba. Carey had been correct that Canadian annexation remained dependent upon Southern approval, and the price was Cuba. The North’s refusal to concede the latter was presented as an assault upon Southern honour. The *SQR* stated that, ‘the Union is to be dissolved to avoid embarrassments to come’ and these would ‘result from the purchase of Cuba.’ Carey had been talking about the expansion of slavery, but, for this Southern writer, what those Northern ‘embarrassments’ might be arose from ‘the political dishonor of Southern association,’ following Cuban annexation¹⁰⁴ The assertion that much-cherished Southern honour would become the North’s dishonour was a calculated blow against the soul of the South. Yet, the latter’s honour could be redeemed, even with Cuba, and even if the price was Canada.

The conundrum is that Canada and Cuba were at the core of expansionist discourse in the 1850s, a decade during which the *DR* became increasingly dough-faced in its

¹⁰² <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25818>> Accessed January 31, 2018.

¹⁰³ ‘Review of “The North and South,”’ *SQR* (January 1855), 17-8.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

opinions. Whilst emphasising the nation's continental future, it couched all references to Canadian annexation within the context of Southern aspirations. "The "manifest destiny" which points to a very proximate occupation of the whole of this vast Continent by our people' remained fervently anti-colonial as the *DR* emphasised, 'that in no Cuban, Mexican or even Canadian question, (should Canada ever come to us, and not we encroach on Canada,) will we tolerate the pretension of Old World interference.'¹⁰⁵ The issue was clearly what was to be annexed, but the territories specified captured the complexity of a continuously debated continentalism. Periodically, annexation was trumpeted, particularly in the context of the Young America movement that the *DR* so vivified. In the wake of Franklin Pierce's victory, it foresaw the rejection of colonialism in North America. 'We hope they will now break their own yokes in Canada as well as Cuba,' it announced, 'and we hope that the citizens of the United States will aid the movement, as we aided Texas,' with obviously an outcome similar to the latter's.¹⁰⁶

Whilst only hoping for Canada, the increasingly doughy *DR* said of Cuba, 'we are for taking possession of the island now.'¹⁰⁷ The tone could be sometimes flippant and dismissive as when one writer wondered if British financial support of Canada was intended to 'prepare it to resist the United States should they ever think it worth their while to acquire that hyperborean region.'¹⁰⁸ Following James Buchanan's victory in 1866, Southern readers were reassured of the Democratic party's expansionist priorities. Their focus was to the South and the equator. What increasingly sounded like dough-fascism was suggested as the *DR* planted a No-Go sign, stating that 'further towards the North we seem to have no inclination to go.' This was an explicit repudiation of Northern aspirations, though it recognised that Canada would probably

¹⁰⁵ 'Our Mission – Diplomacy and Navy,' *DR*, Vol. 31, Iss. 168 (July 1852), 38.

¹⁰⁶ 'The Cuban Debate – Postscript,' *Ibid*, Vol. 31, Iss. 173 (November – December 1852), 625.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 627.

¹⁰⁸ 'The United States and the United Kingdom,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 32 Iss. 5 (May 1853), 398. Though the magazine title is now 'The United States Review' with the subtitle "Democracy."

seek annexation but only 'as early as we shall be ready to receive her.'¹⁰⁹ It was a reiteration of the whenever-future, and implicitly dependent upon Southern approval. That by 1859, the latter was the goal was clarified in an article on continental policy whose focus was Cuba with no mention of Canada.¹¹⁰ The magazine folded seven months later.

Canada and Cuba were intimately linked, though the connection has not always been acknowledged. As Karp has noted, in two articles in *DBR* in January and May 1853, the writer W. J. Sykes 'argued that U. S. and southern interests were best served by an independent slaveholding Cuba.'¹¹¹ What Karp does not report is that Sykes concluded that 'one of the principal objections to the acquisition of Cuba' was the North's desire for Canada, the annexation of the latter renewing 'in all its fierceness the slavery agitation which came so near destroying this confederacy.'¹¹² Sykes referred to the debates following the Mexican cessions. He was clearly aware that expansion had hit a brick wall. He was also attuned to the dangers that Canada posed for Southerners. In his May article, he spelt out at length that any attempt on Cuba would involve parallel attempts on Canada. He foresaw that both upon attaining independence would be drawn into the American orbit. He encouraged Southerners, to think twice about touching what had evidently become a Third Rail; 'let the South, then, unless it desires the annexation of Canada, oppose also the acquisition of Cuba.'¹¹³ Sykes was attuned to the dangers involved in pushing for slave Cuba to which the North would respond by pushing for non-slave Canada, and what the implications were for the preservation of the Union. By the early 1850s, expansion had become a Damoclean sword. When Reciprocity intruded

¹⁰⁹ 'The Policy of the Democratic Party at Home and Abroad,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 40 (December 1857), 484. No issue number is provided.

¹¹⁰ 'Continental Policy of the United States – The Acquisition of Cuba,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 43 (April 1859). No issue number is provided.

¹¹¹ Karp, *This Vast Southern Empire*, 322 n. 42.

¹¹² 'Cuba and the United States. The Policy of Annexation Discussed.,' *DBR*, Vol. 14, Iss. 1 (January 1853), 65.

¹¹³ 'Independence of Cuba,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, Iss. 5 (May 1853), 422.

into this debate, the South continued to apply a national and continental analysis of its ramifications. *DBR* captured the divisiveness in a June 1853 article where the magazine's editor emphasised his support for 'Canadian reciprocity,' whilst the article's writer argued that reciprocity with British America and not with 'the West Indians and South American dependencies' was 'a most pernicious proceeding and fraught with social mischief.'¹¹⁴ He clarified how any negotiation with British America was a sectional issue as Canadian reciprocity would 'confer benefits on one section of the Union at the expense of the other.'¹¹⁵ Reciprocity was yet another attempt by the North to ensure Southern dependence.

The role of the British provinces in economics and expansion remained Southern concerns as late as early 1861. Even as it asserted a new found national identity, the South continued to define itself and its territorial potential in broad continental terms, though now it would be free trade that would draw British America into the orbit of a Cotton Confederacy and away from the Union. As the Union splintered, pro-secessionist William Henry Chase conjured a rosy future for the Cotton South, freed from the tyranny of tariffs. In a lengthy paean to cotton's economic clout, he wrote that the embrace of free trade would reconfigure the North American map. 'To this political and commercial condition,' he said, 'Canada and the British province must come at last; and to this condition Cuba and Mexico would willingly assimilate.' In the case of both, he posited two options, their independence or 'annexation to the Southern and Western confederacy.'¹¹⁶ Pie in the sky it may have been, but in early 1861 those who supported secession saw it as the pathway to many possibilities. The South was also replete with far more volatile prognoses at odds with Chase's pacific vision.

In Virginia, racist social theorist George Fitzhugh extolled free trade as a means of consolidating the Southern economy by splintering the Union further. He recommended

¹¹⁴ 'Reciprocal Treaties of Commerce,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 14, Iss. 6 (June 1853), 525 & 526.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 526.

¹¹⁶ 'The Secession of the Cotton States: Its Status, Its Advantages, and Its Power,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 30, Iss. 1 (January 1861), 101.

the reinvention of New York as a city state Republic, freed to ensure the survival of her important commercial ties with the South. It was a debate in which New Yorkers themselves were engaged.¹¹⁷ For Fitzhugh, a New York within the Union faced a future in which 'she will sink to rise no more,' under the control of 'Yankees or Low Germans or Canadians.' In intemperate language, he condemned 'the vile, sensual, animal, brutal, infidel, superstitious democracy of Canada and the Yankee States.'¹¹⁸ He predicted the British province and the North would coalesce. It was less analysis and more confused diatribe, and a caricature that reflected the culmination of a decade of Southern frustration with the fugitive's destination of choice. In contrast to Chase, Fitzhugh revealed the rancour and aggression of some secessionists, though his aim was to stoke support amongst pro-Southerners in New York. The city would prove problematic to the Union during the Civil War, but even by 1861, Fitzhugh was too late.

To conclude this section, in exploring the role of British America in the debates between North and South, it is striking the extent to which Southerners engaged with the British provinces. Far from neglecting the nation's continental destiny that aspired to their acquisition, Southerners were keenly aware of its implications. They sought security within their region and imagined Caribbean and Central American possibilities, but they never ignored their implications. They recognised that Southern expansion meant the North would look to the British provinces. The importance of this realisation to those who dreamt of 'a vast Southern empire' should not be ignored. Though advertised and disputed on national and local levels, the truth is the South never realised its ambitions in Cuba or Central America. British America's role in ensuring that failure is worth consideration. What is striking about the debates I have examined is the extent to which the Union was to the fore. From the early 1850s, there were threats of secession, but debates focused on Cuba and Canada, or Canada and Reciprocity continued to frame the Southern future within the context of the Union. Preservation of the sectional balance that ensured its survival were to the fore. Finally, unlike the North that responded to the

¹¹⁷ Philip S. Foner, *Business & Slavery: The New York Merchants & the Irrepressible Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), Ch. XIV, 'The Republic of New York.'

¹¹⁸ 'The Republic of New-York,' *DBR*, Vol. 30, Iss. 2 (February 1861), 186.

changes taking place in the provinces following the Rebellions of 1837-8, the South remained focused on British America as an extension of Britain itself. The imperial parent loomed much larger in the Southern imagination. This was the result of 1834 emancipation across the British American colonies that posed a significant challenge to Americans, both North and South from the 1830s onwards.

4. WHITE HORIZONS – How White Americans Debated the Black American Presence in British North America.

On October 1st, 1853, the Reverend Samuel Joseph May, Pastor of the local Unitarian Church of the Messiah and abolitionist, took to the stage at Syracuse Town Hall in upper New York State.¹¹⁹ There, before dignitaries and citizens, he evoked the events of a day two years earlier, a day May characterised as, ‘sacred to liberty.’¹²⁰ In autumn 1851, 40-year-old local cooper William Henry had been arrested and lay in jail awaiting his fate. Henry, known locally as ‘Jerry,’ was an escaped slave from Missouri. Tracked to Syracuse by federal enforcers of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, he now faced being returned to his master.¹²¹ As Jerry lingered in jail, the citizens of Syracuse announced that, ‘here in the centre of the free state of New York, his inalienable right to liberty should be maintained.’ Syracuse was an established destination on the Underground Railroad where earlier, in spring 1851, the American Anti-Slavery Society meeting had faced a similar choice.¹²² Confronted by five fugitives, May had asked, ‘shall these

¹¹⁹ May was a friend and supporter of William Lloyd Garrison. For a brief biography see Walter M. Merrill & Louis Ruchames (Eds.), *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison* VI Vols. (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), Vol. I, 116.

¹²⁰ The Rescue of Jerry, Mss 1 R5453 a 2, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

¹²¹ This is a familiar episode, the most recent examination of which is Angela F. Murphy, *The Jerry Rescue: The Fugitive Slave Law, Northern Rights, and the American Sectional Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

¹²² William Still, *The Underground Rail Road. A Record of Facts, Authentic Narratives, Letters, &c., Narrating the Hardships, Hair-breadth Escapes and Death Struggles of the Slaves in their efforts for Freedom, as Related by Themselves and Others, or Witnessed by the Author; Together with Sketches of Some of the Largest Stockholders, and Most Liberal Aiders and Advisers, of the Road.* (Philadelphia: Ports & Coates, 1872; Reprinted New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1968), 154, 158,

fugitives from slavery find an asylum here in Central New York, or must they flee to the dominions of a monarch for liberty?' The society's members roared in response, 'let them abide with us.'¹²³ On both occasions, abolitionists and concerned citizens were united in preserving their state's commitment to their concept of liberty. In both cases, New York failed. A freed Jerry fled, until 'he was in due time safely conveyed to the province of the British Queen.'¹²⁴ The ironies abound, and whilst May never confronted them, his 1853 message was implicitly a critique of the state of the Union.

From the 1820s onwards, North and South confronted a British America that was not only willing to protect black refugees and fugitive slaves from both sections, but also advertise the fact. Americans faced the awkward challenge that in doing so, the British provinces laid claim to that liberty of which the United States saw itself as the sole arbiter. Liberty, as May recognised, was to the fore in debates that not only increasingly divided the Union, but highlighted stark contrasts between Americans and their British American neighbours. Celebrated during the Revolution, liberty, contested as early as 1793 when the States passed an Act to enforce slavery whilst the Assembly of Upper Canada passed one that ensured its extinction, came back to bite the Republic in its most vulnerable parts. Yet, liberty is surprisingly absent from the articles I will examine.¹²⁵ Instead, it runs like an unspoken thread through the words of white men who disputed the suitability of the provinces as a space for black Americans, negating their agency, and the suitability of their choices. Some Northern pro-colonisers who were dismissive of the founding of black communities in Upper Canada in the early 1830s, were forced to swallow their words in the 40s as the province attracted more and more black Americans while the US debate over slavery became increasingly acrimonious. Both the national journals, the *NAR* and *DR* were silent on Canada's blacks. The *DR* worked hard from 1850 to disparage annexation as both destructive

¹²³ The Rescue of Jerry, 4.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 12-3.

¹²⁵ This thesis does not engage with abolition newspapers that have been the focus of extensive study. E. g. Ford Risley, *Abolition and the Press: The Moral Struggle Against Slavery* (Evanston IL: Northwestern University Press, 2008).

economically and politically. However, a subject on which it and the Southern journals in this study could unite was their advocacy of the theory that blacks could not thrive in the Canadian climate. Popular, it was eventually superseded by the more reassuring belief that slavery was the natural state for black Americans, bringing into sharp focus the realities of Jacksonian America.

It would be wrong to pinpoint Britain's 1834 Slavery Abolition Act as the moment of division between the United States and British America. That division had effectively taken place much earlier. On February 12th, 1793, when the US passed the Fugitive Slave Act, titled, 'An Act respecting fugitives from justice, and persons escaping from the service of their masters,' the British Province of Upper Canada grappled with the question of slavery. A bill, sponsored by Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, was introduced in the provincial Parliament on May 31st, entitled, 'An Act to prevent the further introduction of Slaves and to limit the term of contracts for servitude within this Province,' known as the Act against Slavery.¹²⁶ It was unanimously passed, and that despite a significant number of slave owners in the legislature. No existing slaves were freed because of it, but slave importation from the United States and other parts of the British Empire was made illegal, and manumission was ensured for all slaves born after its passage on reaching the age of twenty-five. This, alongside judicial decisions in other provinces, ensured that across British America, by the 1820s, slavery was a dead letter.¹²⁷

In the USA, it also declined, at least in the Northern States. Indeed, the Fugitive Slave Act that brought into effect Article IV of the Constitution was primarily a Southern initiative to which Northerners acquiesced. Striking is the obvious disparity in terminology between the American and Canadian legislation. It is 'fugitives' and 'persons' in the American bill contra 'slaves' and 'servitude' in the Upper Canadian. The aspects of

¹²⁶ Fugitive Slave Act < http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a4_2_3s6.html>, Act Against Slavery <http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/alvin_mccurdy/big/big_03_anti_slavery_act.aspx> Accessed January 18, 2018.

¹²⁷ Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 96-113.

slavery with which they dealt were very different, highlighted by the fact that the American legislation was federal and national in scope, the British provincial and regional. The Upper Canadian Bill was not reported in American newspapers nor was it mentioned in Congress, and yet, it signified an important shift in provincial policy, even as American settlers were flooding into Upper Canada. Ironically, at the same time, Eli Whitney was busy on his cotton gin. The invention of the latter by boosting both cotton production and the value of slaves, aggravated sectional differences, ensuring Northern non-cooperation with the Fugitive Slave Act. In the broader continental context, events in British America were already rendering that Act null and void. 1793 was a crossroads in not only the US, but North America. What was required was black agency to exploit the opportunities the British provinces provided.

The *NAR* turned its attention to black settlement in Upper Canada in a lengthy article on colonisation in 1832. From the 1790s on, even abolitionists had characterised free blacks in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, as ‘drunken, dishonest and degraded.’¹²⁸ This view, expressed in various forms, became a cornerstone of the justification of colonisation to Africa where blacks, free from irredeemable white prejudice, would flourish.¹²⁹ America was imagined as ‘a permanently prejudiced nation.’¹³⁰ Unable to concede the moral and political high ground to the provinces in recognising black liberty, it was prejudice upon which the *NAR* seized to construct a shared white North America in which blacks had no place. In his discussion of the settlement in Upper Canada, the writer focused on ‘the government which now suffers it to exist.’¹³¹ He reported concerns regarding the number of black arrivals fleeing the

¹²⁸ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), 4-5. This opinion was expressed as late as 1855. Nehemiah Adams applauded the curfew imposed upon slaves at night in Savannah. The result was that, ‘the slaves are generally free as to street brawls and open drunkenness,’ unlike in the North. *A South-Side View*, 25.

¹²⁹ Ousmane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide: The African American Struggle against the Colonization Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 12-3.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹³¹ ‘American Colonization Society,’ *NAR*, Vol. 35, Iss. 76 (July 1832), 129.

States debated in the provincial legislature. It was these concerns that evidently chimed with his own pro-colonisation views. He disregarded the fact that the Upper Canadians, despite misgivings about the presence of ‘a mass of black population,’ had committed to providing a haven for fugitives and refugees.¹³² Yet, comparing Upper Canadian policy with that of the American Colonization Society, the writer concluded that ‘there is not the slightest occasion for jealousy between the friends of that [the Canadian] project and those of the African one,’ though he thought ‘that the former promises to be of more detriment than benefit to every party concerned.’¹³³ Ultimately, the objectives of both were the same; ‘God speed them to make a freeman of the slave and a citizen of the freeman,’ he extolled, ‘and to send him back to the shores of his own radiant and verdurous land.’¹³⁴ Advocation of colonisation required this writer to dismiss both Canadian and black agency.

Upper Canada’s commitment was a significant concession, further strengthened by the passage of the imperial Abolition Bill the following year. There was prejudice in the provinces, but British Americans were keen to assert their own identities, separate from those of their neighbours, and requisitioning liberty was a potent way to achieve that. For the *NAR* writer, black agency was non-existent. This article saw the establishment of free black communities as simply pit stops en route to their inevitable destination, Africa. Anti-slavery though he was, this pro-coloniser foresaw no citizenship for free blacks in America or subjecthood in the British provinces. Only thirteen years later, reflecting shifts in Northern opinion, the *NAR* gazed with envy upon the British neighbours. Discussing the possible independence of the provinces, it lamented that ‘they will have no servile race to weaken their strength.’¹³⁵ A new Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 forced one writer to concede the superior succour offered by the colonies. He advised the Act’s opponents to use their monies, ‘for the purpose of helping the poor

¹³² *Ibid.*, 130.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 130-1.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹³⁵ ‘British Colonial Politics,’ *NAR* (January 1845), 121.

fugitive forward on his way to Canada, where no law or claimant from the United States can touch him.’¹³⁶ Such an admission highlighted the extent of the sectional maelstrom.

It was this that drew the *DR* into the fray, having only previously touched upon the place of blacks in North America during the debates over Texas.¹³⁷ As we saw in the previous section, in January 1850, the magazine had characterised the Canadian Annexation Movement as a British plot. In April, it returned to the fray to further sour the province’s appeal. Its focus throughout was the preservation of the Union. It was a pro-Calhoun article that argued for the Constitutional status quo. Canadian annexation would prove ruinous as the North’s wealth derived from its economic bonds with the slave South. As important as what it said was what remained unsaid. The *DR* identified those attracted to Canada as Northerners for whom economic considerations trumped slavery. This is suggested in two ways. Firstly, the writer emphasised the Southern materiel upon which much of the Northern economy relied, and the positive contribution of slavery to its production. Secondly, not once was Canada’s by then long-established role as a haven for black fugitives and refugees mentioned. Instead, the hypocrisy of the Annexation Movement was highlighted, Canada’s desire ‘to become a participator in slave-produced wealth, while, with fanatical fury, many of those who seek to profit by the institution, denounce it as a curse.’ It seems the magazine was preaching to portions of its cross-sectional choir.

The article’s primary audience was Northern Democrats who were Constitutional conservatives and saw annexation as the fulfilment of a continental dream and acquisition of a valuable economic partner. At the same time, it sought to reassure equally conservative Southerners who were pro-slavery, committed to preserving the Union, but who feared Canada. This explains the article’s focus upon bolstering the North-South relationship by stressing the reliance of the former upon the produce of the latter, and disparaging Canada’s present and future economic potential. The latter was presented as an illusion. Canadians’ desire for annexation was explained by the fact

¹³⁶ ‘The Action of Congress on the California and Territorial Question,’ *NAR*, Vol. 71, Iss. 148 (July 1850), 254.

¹³⁷ See below p. 144.

‘they have no part or lot in the wealth drawn by the North from the prolific South.’¹³⁸ The result would be the break-up of the Union, the impoverishment of the North and war. Though dealing with Canadian annexation in different ways, the overarching themes of this article and January’s ‘Stability of the Union’ were the same, the preservation of the Union and the Constitution on conservative terms. The choice Northern pro-annexationists faced was between the prosperous slave South and a defunct colony. Conservative adherence to the status quo was drummed home again by the *DR* in February 1851. Readers were reminded of the economic vitality of the Union, and that ‘the only difference between the retrograde condition of Canada with the provinces, and the prosperity of New-England, grew out of the connection of the latter with the Southern States.’¹³⁹ As the *DR* paraded its doughface credentials with pride, continuing parallels with Southern discourse were striking. In February 1851, *DBR* reported that it was Northern access to the produce of slave labour that differentiated its economic success from that of Canada, where enterprise was ‘impoverished, idle and retrograding.’¹⁴⁰

Only once did the *DR* engage directly with abolitionism as a North American phenomenon, and then in an 1855 article disparaging New England. Opposition to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act was anathema to the constitutionally conservative magazine. ‘Puritanism and Abolitionism,’ as the title suggests, turned its fire on Massachusetts where the state legislature’s rejection of the Act was characterised as a return to Puritan extremism. New York and Pennsylvania seemed set to follow the Bay State’s example, and the writer predicted disunion as a result. Canada was central to the argument, evidence of Boston’s rampant Anglophilia. The city leaders’ love for the English was said to be ‘in preference to the natives of any other country, or even their own countrymen,’ evidence of which was the ‘visits of the late Governor-General of Canada.’¹⁴¹ The

¹³⁸ ‘Centralization,’ *DR*, Vol. 26, Iss. 142 (April 1850), 297.

¹³⁹ ‘The South,’ *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, Iss. 152 (February 1851), 139.

¹⁴⁰ ‘The Future of the South,’ *DBR*, Vol. 10, Iss. 2 (February 1851), 139. Republished in Vol. 21, Iss. 3 (September 1856).

¹⁴¹ ‘Puritanism and Abolitionism,’ *DR*, Vol. 36 (July 1855), 83.

reference was to the September 1851 opening of the Boston-Montreal railroad. The jubilee or celebration was attended by not only Governor-General Lord Elgin, but also President Fillmore and his Cabinet.¹⁴² This the article failed to mention as its purpose was to denigrate Boston and the Northeast's contribution to the American narrative.

Readers were warned that 'the New-England hive is always full and always swarming,' that 'they have no national feelings,' their revolutionary credentials were mere pride and signified no commitment to the nation.¹⁴³ These are uncanny echoes of the *SQR*'s January 1855 article that lambasted pro-annexationists as betrayers of the Revolutionary inheritance.¹⁴⁴ The *DR* reported a plot to reunite with England, and this was 'not the least improbable, not to say highly probable, as the views of the Abolition-Puritan party are unquestionably identical with British policy.'¹⁴⁵ Noting the willingness of the Colonial Office to acknowledge Canadian independence if sought, the *DR* predicted that 'unless the remaining New-England and adjoining Middle States' join her, Massachusetts, at least, was likely to unite with the independent province. The attitude of its people and legislature indicated 'there can not be the slightest doubt that a separation of the union is inevitable.'¹⁴⁶ This overheated attack reflected a shift in the *DR*'s policy predicated on events. Ever doughface, the magazine's focus on Massachusetts' outspoken condemnation of the 1850 Compromise is understandable, but to widen its net to include all the Northeast and Middle States indicated an attempt at a broader wake-up call to the North of what was at stake. If so, it was a gamble, as likely to aggravate as to invigorate the region's conservatives. Pushing the affiliations between Canada and the Northern and Middle States provided further fodder for an increasingly discomfited South.

¹⁴² *The Railroad Jubilee. An Account of the Celebration Commemorative of the Opening of Railroad Communication between Boston and Canada, September 17th, 18th, and 19th, 1851.* (Boston: J. H. Eastburn, 1852), 81-190.

¹⁴³ 'Puritanism and Abolitionism,' *DR* (July 1855), 82.

¹⁴⁴ See p 129 above.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.

While Southern discourse sometimes dovetailed with that in the North, its engagement with Canada's role as a haven for blacks followed its own trajectory. Whereas the *DR* avoided the subject to sustain its national readership, Southern journals confronted the issue head on. Slave owners were aware of the threat posed by the British province.¹⁴⁷ Shades of Maury can be discerned when the *SLM* suggested in 1843 that Canadian admission of blacks into their militias was part of a British plot to create a military resource that could 'be made a dangerous instrument in the South.' It was said the provincial support of abolitionists aimed to foment 'a spirit which imminently threatens a dissolution of the Union.'¹⁴⁸ The debate exploded in the 1850s as sectional unity became ever more frayed. Slavery and Canada first appeared in *DBR* in a September 1850 article in which the writer bemoaned the fact that 'our slaves are persuaded to go to Canada.'¹⁴⁹ Published in New Orleans, the phrasing testifies to the way in which a broad Southern consensus was fostered, despite most fugitives being from the border South. The role of Canada as protector was also disparaged. The reception of fugitives and refugees in Canada East was presented to readers in the negative. 'Even Canada, that house of refuge to the runaway,' it was stated, 'is growing restive under the irruption of a horde of the most worthless and degraded of our negro population.'¹⁵⁰ It was the latter that Northern abolitionists were eager to disprove in the published testimonies of blacks settled in Canada that flourished in the early 1850s.¹⁵¹

In 1844, the *DR* had reported that in Canada and the Northern States, 'the negro cannot live; the climate destroys him.'¹⁵² It was one of the first expressions of what proved to

¹⁴⁷ E.g. 'Reflections on the Census of 1840,' *SLM*, Vol. 9, Iss. 6 (June 1843), 343-44.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 351.

¹⁴⁹ 'Slavery and the Bible,' *DBR*, Vol. 9, Iss. 3 (September 1850), 284.

¹⁵⁰ 'Equality of the Races – Negro Mania,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 11, Iss. 6 (December 1851), 632.

¹⁵¹ See Ch. 4.

¹⁵² 'The Re-Annexation of Texas, in its Influence on the Duration of Slavery,' *DR*, Vol. 15, Iss. 73 (July 1844), 14.

be a popular argument. With this foray into the debate over the place of blacks in North America, the *DR* was typically addressing its cross-sectional white readership. The writer, having struck a consensual Northern note by predicting the eventual demise of slavery based on a swollen population of blacks, further appealed to the Democratic Party base when he argued that, once emancipated, free blacks would be sent to Texas. 'Re-annexation' of the latter was the article's primary purpose. Such an argument would have resonated with white Northern Democrats indifferent to or antagonistic towards blacks, wishing them as far away as possible. It provided solace for pro-annexation Southerners for whom, in this instance, slavery's demise was, for some, useful blarney. But climate was a tenuous premise on which to construct a national argument, particularly one that could convince the North where blacks were far from moribund. It proved far more potent in the South, though it took time to find its legs as an April 1845 article demonstrated.

Responding to the theory of Alabama surgeon and scientific racist Josiah C. Nott, the *SQR* expressed indignation at suggestions that a tropical climate was more advantageous to blacks than whites, with its implications that the South was unsuitable for white settlement. Challenging Nott's thesis that cold climates were not suited to blacks, readers were reminded that blacks 'are a hardy race in New-England' and that of those South Carolinian fugitives from the Revolutionary War, 'very old Negroes are still living in Nova Scotia.'¹⁵³ Contradictory though this may seem to the *DR*'s position a year earlier, the *SQR* was simply defending a white supremacist South, not least because Texas was by now in the bag. Nott himself responded by letter published in January 1846. He conceded that 'with regard to the Negroes in Nova Scotia and Canada, I have been able to get no satisfactory information,' but he testified to greater mortality amongst blacks than whites in the Northern states, and cited other medical experts, maintaining that they were more susceptible to 'winter diseases.'¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ 'Unity of the Races,' *SQR*, Vol. 7, Iss. 14 (April 1845), 419.

¹⁵⁴ 'Unity of the Human Race,' *Ibid.*, Vol. 9, Iss. 17 (January 1846), 17.

By the early 1850s, the explosion in fugitives to Canada East gave Nott, the upper hand. New York-based physician, Dr John H. Van Evrie went even further. For him, it was not Canadians who rejected blacks but bizarrely blacks who rejected Canada as a naturally unsuitable climate. This was a distortion of the truth and of blacks' own testimonies. In Evrie's famous phrase, blacks were 'as much a product of the tropics as the orange or banana,' and it was this that explained their limited numbers in the Northern states.¹⁵⁵ For Evrie, their natural climate trumped blacks' desire for liberty and citizenship. He provided a long analysis of the varying numbers of free black populations in the Northern states, where there were few, and those of the Upper South, where there were many. He concluded that in Maryland and Virginia, even the threat to the free blacks of a return to slavery could not encourage them to leave their natural habitat; 'they will not go to Canada, and Vermont, and Massachusetts, and become "men", and "citizens."' ¹⁵⁶ Evrie presented readers with a distorted prognosis of the black diaspora in which movement ever south and not north would prove the norm. More interestingly, he disparaged "British liberty," which he pointedly dressed in inverted commas, as merely 'the right of moving from one place to another without a passport.' It was a curious definition as he conceded that in both Vermont and Canada, blacks enjoyed 'the rights of the superior race,' and in Vermont, they had 'all the rights of citizenship.'¹⁵⁷ This interpretation of the liberties blacks enjoyed in Canada, by an educated New Yorker, was clearly confused, yet it was a purposeful distortion of the truth.

Earlier in the article, Evrie refuted any national origins for the anti-slavery movement, characterising abolitionists as 'that small portion of the northern people poisoned by Britishism.'¹⁵⁸ His aim was evidently the denigration of the liberal claims of Britain, dressing them as hypocrisy. Others presented the liberty blacks enjoyed in Canada and the Northern states as the failure of white slaveholders to fulfil their duties. Slavery was

¹⁵⁵ 'Slavery Extension,' *DBR*, Vol. 15, Iss. 1 (July 1853), 6.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 7. Masculinisation and political rights were both to the fore in the testimonies of blacks settled in Canada as we shall see in the next chapter.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

‘a moral and political necessity to the South,’ wrote one author.¹⁵⁹ For him, a white master who freed blacks, ‘retards the completion of the task assigned to his race.’ This task was not the preparation of blacks for American citizenship but their colonisation outside the States. Contemporary removal ‘to the free States, or to Canada’ was destructive to the realisation of this goal, degenerating them further and placing them ‘at a distance from their ultimate place of destination,’ which was outside North America. Again, an unsuitable climate was cited, as well as ‘a state of hopeless social and political inferiority.’¹⁶⁰ The writer was right to the extent that Canadian prejudices impinged upon social mobility but, like others, he ignored emigrants access to legal and political rights in the British provinces.

Canada’s role as a haven for fugitive and refugee blacks was disparaged throughout the 1850s. *DBR* highlighted the hypocrisy of Northern abolitionists who condemned slavery and yet turned a blind eye to the ‘white slave of the factory.’¹⁶¹ Such industry, it argued, reduced the escaped slave to a pauper. A fugitive could be ‘hustled off to Canada, where the agitators hope he will be forgotten,’ though many of those in the British province would happily return to the South were it not for ‘their hollow-hearted friends, who act the part of jailer in controlling their movements.’¹⁶² Canada was thus a place of imprisonment, in which the detainees were kept against their will, providing readers with a reassuring image with which to foster slave loyalties. ‘Vegetates in poverty and misery,’ was the diagnosis of a black American in Canada in an 1855 article. It restated the now well-established theory that ‘the free dominion of the north’ was ‘possibly an unfavourable climate for the development of the negro,’ and included a description of

¹⁵⁹ ‘The Black Race in North America: Why Was Their Introduction Permitted? Concluded.,’ *Ibid.*, Vol. 20, Iss. 4 (April 1856), 447. This was reprinted from the *SLM*, Vol. 21, Iss. 11 (November 1855), 641-81.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 453.

¹⁶¹ ‘Modern Philanthropy and Negro Slavery,’ *Ibid.*, Vol. 16, Iss. 3(March 1854), 270.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 273.

the collapse of the white missionary movement there.¹⁶³ For many Southerners, slavery was the only way to avoid free blacks' natural slippage into indigence.

Freedom became more destructive than climate. The result was further falsified assessments of Canada. Fire-Eating Virginian Edmund Ruffin condemned the American Colonization Society, presenting a damning portrait of agriculture in Liberia. But it was unexceptional, and it was 'to be seen wherever negroes are free from control, and able to live in idleness, whether it be in Africa, Virginia, Massachusetts, or Canada.'¹⁶⁴ Fellow Virginian, social theorist George Fitzhugh concurred to the extent that climate offered no possibility of black uplift. 'If the climate of Canada will not make the negro provident,' he stated, 'how hopeless must be his case in Africa without a master.'¹⁶⁵ That such assessments had become commonplace is indicated in a celebrated pamphlet by Virginian Dr William Holcombe, published in the *SLM* in February 1861. Holcombe dismissed all possibility of black uplift, citing 'feeble and precarious' Liberia, the 'bloody teachings' of St Domingue, and the 'pauperism and decay' of Jamaica. For Holcombe, having proven his point, 'the free negro settlements in the North and in Canada' could be dismissed as 'social experiments for our analysis and instruction' whilst he provided no analysis whatsoever.¹⁶⁶ He assumed his readers knew of what he spoke. Later that year, he appropriated climate as a racial barometer, writing that the enticement of blacks to 'the bleak and inhospitable shores of Canada' was a cruelty that 'enfeebles, depresses, and finally destroys' the emigrant.¹⁶⁷ For Southern slaveholders, the free

¹⁶³ "'Cotton' is King. Free-Negrodome." Ibid., Vol. 19, Iss. 3 (September 1855), 265 & 266. In the same year, white Nehemiah Adams argued that slavery was often better than freedom. He reminded fellow Bostonians that "it is not certain that he [the slave] has fled from a bad to a better condition; that freedom in Boston is invariably preferable to slavery in Charleston." *A South-Side View*, 131.

¹⁶⁴ "Liberia and the Colonization Society," Ibid., Vol. 27, Iss. 3 (September 1859), 344.

¹⁶⁵ "Missionary Failures," Ibid., Vol. 27, Iss. 4 (October 1859), 385.

¹⁶⁶ "The Alternative: A Separate Nationality, of the Africanization of the South," *SLM*, Vol. 32, Iss. 2 (February 1861), 82.

¹⁶⁷ "Characteristics and Capabilities of the Negro Race," Ibid., Vol. 33, Iss. 6 (December 1861), 402.

blacks of Canada were easily written off. That Holcombe should continue to press his point to a Confederate South as late as December 1861 suggests the extent to which it had yet to be proven. Subsequently, Canada slipped out of the pages of the magazine.

To support such assertions, writers gleaned from Canadian newspapers and visitors' accounts any criticism of black emigrants to the British provinces. It is striking the extent to which reporting was not only unbalanced, but false. An article on 'The Free Black Population, North and South,' quoted Canadian Colonel John Prince damning the black community. He concluded, 'I pronounce them to be as such the greatest curse ever inflicted upon the two magnificent western counties which I have the honor to represent in the Legislative Council of this Province!'¹⁶⁸ What the writer did not admit was that Prince was responding to a report in the *Toronto Colonist* of 'an indignation meeting of "the colored citizens" of Toronto, held for the purpose of censuring me.'¹⁶⁹ The black community, the *Colonist*, and other Toronto papers, had all critiqued Prince for racist remarks that were generally condemned, not least because Toronto's blacks had supported him in his recent election campaign. John Prince's opinion was personal and far from universally shared.¹⁷⁰

W. W. Wright filched material from The Hon. Amelia M. Murray's pro-slavery 1856 *Letters from the United States, Cuba, and Canada*, to assure readers that fugitive slaves in Canada endured 'a cold and inhospitable clime, where they lead unhappy lives and often wish themselves back in the sunny, merry South, the homes of their childhood.'¹⁷¹ So trapped, the free black emerged as, 'a sensual, immoral, and bad man,' and his children, 'vicious and full of bad habits.'¹⁷² What Wright failed to mention was that Murray's

¹⁶⁸ "The Free Black Population, North and South," *DBR*, Vol. 23, Iss. 2 (August 1857), 218.

¹⁶⁹ "Prince to the Editor of the *Toronto Colonist*," Sandwich and Amherstburg *Maple Leaf*, July 9, 1857 quoted in R. Alan Douglas (Ed.), *John Prince: A Collection of Documents* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1980), 157.

¹⁷⁰ Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada* (Agincourt, Ontario: The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1981), 106.

¹⁷¹ "Free Negro Rule," *DBR*, Vol. 28, Iss. 4 (October 1860), 453.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 454.

publication had been badly received, leading to her resignation as Queen Victoria's woman of the bedchamber.¹⁷³ In a later article, Wright went on to clarify the impact of freed blacks upon hitherto philanthropic white Canadians. Such was their 'idle and abandoned character' he stated, that, 'in proportion to the number of free negroes living in any given community, and the consequent knowledge of their character, so is the hostility entertained toward them by the whites.'¹⁷⁴ It is evident that British America, deftly handled, proved fertile ground for the engineering of Southern opinion.

Such biased reporting, and the arguments of the Ruffins and Fitzhughs, cast a long shadow. Their influence was such that Reconstruction could never prove acceptable to a white Southern majority for whom an elevated status for blacks had already been made an anathema. For them, Reconstruction was simply regression. Appearing in the late 1850s, it is difficult to ascertain whether such reporting was in direct response to the accounts of fugitives and refugees themselves, the publications of which were banned in the South. During the first half of the 1850s, many blacks in the British provinces provided white abolitionists with testimonies to refute existing prejudices.¹⁷⁵ What is clear is that both Southern whites and blacks in the north, with the aid of white abolitionists, were in competition for the high ground in the debate over the limits of liberty for black Americans. The extent to which Canada proved willing to protect its black immigrants was shown at a Southern Commercial Convention held in Savannah on December 8th, 1856. Delegates resolved not only to lobby Congress to resume the transatlantic slave trade but also to ensure a treaty, 'which will secure the delivery of fugitive slaves from the authorities of Canada.'¹⁷⁶ It was a resolution that truly captured Southern ignorance of British America.

¹⁷³ <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19589>> Accessed January 22, 2018.

¹⁷⁴ "Free Negroes in the Northern United States," *Ibid.*, Vol. 28, Iss. 5 (November 1860), 575.

¹⁷⁵ See Ch. 4.

¹⁷⁶ "Southern Convention at Savannah," *DBR*, Vol. 22, Iss. 1 (January 1857), 89.

It is clear from this examination of white America's engagement with Canada as a chosen haven by black Americans that the latter's voices were mute. From the appearance of *The Liberator* in 1831, slavery and its challenge to national presumptions were addressed, with an increasing role for British America from 1850 onwards, in the white abolitionist press. The virtual silence on that role in the two leading Northern-based journals, the *NAR* and *DR* with their cross-sectional readerships, speaks volumes for the threat it posed to the national narrative and the Union's integrity. A British America that recognised black agency constituted an embarrassing challenge as the 'Jerry Rescue' illustrated. Though ignored, liberty's contested place in the United States underpinned both the *NAR* and *DR*'s avoidance of the subject. The Anglophile *NAR* may have winced, but even it could not bring itself to engage in any meaningful way with liberty's flight to the provinces. Indeed, like the *DR*, it too acquiesced to Jacksonian America's white-based liberty. That liberty was a given in a South that could not avoid confronting the province to which slaves were fleeing. In combatting it, it resorted to climate, race, and real fake news to drive the message home.

5. CONCLUSION

Silence and ignorance, feigned or appropriated, were themes running through American engagement with the British provinces in the journals examined. In the cases of the two national publications, politics were to the fore, impeding any understanding of shifts taking place within the provinces. The *NAR* skirted the Canadian Rebellions of 1837-8 and their assault on the imperial system. The *DR* ignored political reform in the 1840s that strengthened provincial allegiance to the British system. Both dodged bullets posed by black American refugee and fugitive communities in Canada. Southern journals, sometimes in collusion with the *DR*, never shirked the challenge of British America, but their analyses focused on dangers from Britain itself, the threat of Canadian annexation to the Union, or opposing any evidence of black agency. Accuracy of information and testimony was not required from Ogden's 1799 account through to the 1850s, strikingly even by publications that addressed a literate public beyond that of newspapers. British Americans' endeavour in securing their own identity were brushed aside, too inconvenient and too destabilising for Americans troubled by navigating their own

future. Provincial evolution within the British Empire was too complex to be understood. The *DR* and *NAR* could only report it as a repetition of the Revolution. True provincial aspirations were ignored by the US. Americanness was appropriated as the singular claim of American citizens even as provincials determined an identity being both British and American. Even the *NAR* opposed this appropriation of the United States' national and continental identity.

In a world in which Britain was dominant, British America was a challenge to what had been appropriated as a keystone of the American narrative. For the *DR*, the British American system was an alien system to be rejected. But was it a case of the lady protesting too much? The US was so committed to confirming its own novel identity that refutation of the British American model was a necessary requisite for survival. In the 1790s, opposition to British America enforced the Jeffersonian orthodoxy, at a time when significant numbers of US citizens were settling in Upper Canada. The 1791 Whisky Rebellion against taxation enhanced the attraction of the non-taxing British provincial government for American settlers. The American identity was fragile, and its Republicanism an unproven model. Reminding the public of what the new USA had rejected, and why it had been rejected, was a potent tool. Hence, the continued undermining of the imperial experiment and the term experiment is apt because it was never static. Yet, the interpretation of that process within the context of the great American narrative was an impediment to the US' informed engagement with their neighbours. British Americans recognised that flaw, as we shall see in Chapter 5, and they manipulated American expectations to their own advantage in negotiating their future with the imperial metropole.

Both North and South played British America as it suited them. Their engagement was not permanent, but piecemeal. It was not objective. The provinces were appropriated when useful, and often ignored when obstructive. None of the journals examined provided consistent coverage, but from the 1840s, the danger of annexation was their focus. For the South, this was initially a fantasy threat from Britain that evolved into an argument about North-South economic relations, supported by the *DR*. The *NAR* remained silent, only astounded by the political reforms taking place. The economic debate was to the fore in the *DR* and Southern publications, not least because it

denigrated a federal government attracted to Reciprocity and drew attention away from the elephant in the room, that was slavery. It was this that transformed the provinces into North America's Third Rail.

From the late 1820s through the 50s, thousands of fugitives and refugee free blacks exercised their agency, turning Upper Canada into a sour remonstrance to Northerners increasingly concerned by the Slave Power's ascendance and its assault upon their concept of liberty. Southerners wrapped themselves in the comfort of climatic theses, though disproven by realities. The strategies employed by all magazines indicated that the fate of black Americans themselves were not a primary concern. For the *NAR*, British America's embarkation on a trajectory parallel to that of Revolution, that mirrored Northerners' own political and moral claims needed. Hence, liberty was a term rarely employed, and yet, it was ever present, an irritant subtext through all critiques of the British American experiment. It was there when the *NAR* weighed the Revolutionary past against that of the Canadian Rebellions of 1837-8, and found the latter wanting. New Yorker John H. Van Evrie denied its relevance to the black American experience. It is noteworthy that his climate thesis was not reported in either of the leading Northern-based magazines. It was left to black American settlers in Upper Canada to prove him wrong.

CHAPTER FOUR

FREEDOM OVER THE HORIZON: How Black Americans Constructed American Identities in British North America.

1. INTRODUCTION

So far, I have focused on Americans' engagement with British North America as outsiders looking in. Central to this chapter is the experience of Americans within the provinces as insiders gazing out, though their country did not acknowledge them as Americans at all. From the late 1820s, thousands of refugee free blacks and fugitive slaves from the States fled to British America. The free, denied citizenship at home, embraced subjecthood within the imperial system. So too did the enslaved, and both embraced legal and political rights denied them by the Republic. Peaking in the 1850s, their exodus has been described as the "largest expatriate movement in American history."¹ At the end of the Civil War, many returned to their old homes, but others remained in their new.² The question that confronts us is how their experiences in British America changed their understanding of the USA, and equally importantly, how by becoming British Americans, it changed America's understanding of them. The answer is to be found in the voices of black Americans themselves, rejoinders to those of white Americans examined previously. Their testimonies to the transformation of black American identities are the focus of this chapter.

¹ 'Introduction' in C. Peter Ripley (Ed.), *The Black Abolitionist Papers. V Vols.* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), Vol. III, 55. Henceforth, *BAP*.

² Black emigration back to the States, captured in phrases such as, 'by the end of the war, most Blacks had returned to the United States,' is misleading. Joseph Mensch, *Black Canadians: History, Experiences, Social Conditions* (Halifax NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2002), 50. It is true that many 'had never intended to be more than sojourners on Canadian soil.' Frost, *I've Got A Home In Glory Land*, 328. But in Canada West alone, 25,000 left but 15,000 stayed. Of those who settled in British Columbia, some removed, but 'hundreds of others... remained in Victoria.' Rudolph M. Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 252. Prior to the late twentieth century immigration of blacks, primarily from the West Indies, 'virtually all Canadian Blacks had entered Canada from the United States.' Joseph F. Krauter & Morris Davis, *Minority Canadians: Ethnic Groups* (Toronto: Methuen Publications, 1978), 41. Amongst these were those who had settled during the antebellum period.

The transformation was powered by black agency and facilitated by British North America, but it was always informed by black experiences in the United States. It was the latter that determined the topics upon which testimonies focused. Freedom, enshrined in imperial legislation in 1834 but by then already defunct in the British American provinces, predominated, not only for its liberties, but also as an ideological swipe at the libertarian foundations of the Republic. The benefits of subjecthood were stressed. The social hierarchies that prevailed in the provinces mattered not a jot to blacks who had long been the lowest of society. Subjecthood was embraced for the equality it provided before the law, and political rights at elections to those who met the criteria regardless of race. These factors in conjunction proved game changers, enabling black Americans to challenge white American assumptions. They could choose to work for others or themselves, setting up businesses. They built communities, some separate, others where worship and education were integrated with whites. Most importantly, especially for fugitives, family frameworks were strengthened, gender roles were normalised. Black fathers and mothers rejected “boy” and “child,” the infantilised identities white Americans thrust upon them. They proclaimed their contentment in British America, needling Southerners who argued the climate was unsuitable, and Northerners who winced at their embrace of monarchy. Some even attained political office. As we shall see, the changes blacks initiated involved either a rejection of America, or preparation for a time when the States would embrace its free black citizens. All, including the writers of biographies, letters, and interviewees this chapter examines, were concerned with reshaping white America’s understanding of them, and hence, its understanding of itself.

It is important that the notion prevalent amongst blacks that Canada was a Canaan, a Promised Land, does not obscure the realities. By comparison with the States, it was a haven, but prejudice and discrimination confronted them across the provinces, though restrained by a legal and political system that provided protection.³ In November 1860,

³ The historiography of Canadian prejudice against black immigrants is extensive. Examples include Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers*; Jason H. Silverman, *UNWELCOME GUESTS: Canada West’s Response to American Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1865* (New York: Associated Faculty Press, Inc., 1985); Karolyn Smardz Frost & Veta Smith Tucker (Eds.), *A Fluid*

when blacks in protest entered the “parquet” or more expensive white seating area of the Colonial Theatre in Victoria, British Columbia, whites erupted. The four blacks accused of causing a riot were treated no differently from two whites. All were acquitted.⁴ In his autobiography, refugee Thomas Smallwood of Maryland, described his arrival in Canada West in 1843. He lauded, ‘Toronto, QUEEN CITY OF THE WEST,’ but quickly added that ‘even here, I have met prejudice equal to anything experienced in the south.’⁵ There were many such examples. This evidence might seem to undermine positive accounts of the British American experience. But the possibilities made available to black Americans are captured in fugitive Josiah Henson’s visit to the 1851 Great Exhibition.

Though Henson’s experience was far from typical, it is a useful entry point to our examination. It enabled him to advertise his status as a Canadian citizen, his role as a black man, and to challenge theories that black Americans could not thrive in British America. He crossed the Atlantic to advertise his Canadian achievements at the Crystal Palace, but the black walnut boards he exported ended up in the Exhibition’s American section. Henson was upset, as he explained in the 1858 edition of his memoir. ‘To this I objected. I was a citizen of Canada, and my boards were from Canada.’⁶ When the American organiser refused, he hatched a plan. ‘Thought I, if this Yankee wants to retain

Frontier: Slavery, Resistance, and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2016).

⁴ ‘Document II: Riot at the Theatre,’ *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 56. No. 2 (April 1971), 145-7; Christopher Herbert, *Gold Rush Manliness: Race and Gender on the Pacific Slope* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2018), 96; <<https://bcblackhistory.ca/information-sources/legal-issues/>> Accessed 21 October 2018.

⁵ Thomas Smallwood, *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood, (Coloured Man:) Giving an Account of life – Birth-The Period He Was held In Slavery-His Release-And Removal To Canada, Etc. Together with an Account of the Underground Railroad. Written By Himself* (Toronto: James Stephens, 1851), vi & vii.

⁶ *Truth Stranger Than Fiction. Father Henson’s Story of His Own Life. With an Introduction by Mrs. H. B. Stowe* (Boston: John P. Jewett and Company, 1858), 188. The Canada to which Henson refers is the Province of Canada, created in 1840, and consisting of Canada West (modern-day Ontario) and Canada East (modern-day Quebec).

my furniture, the world shall know who it belongs to.’⁷ Later that day, a sign appeared above the exhibit that read, ‘THIS IS THE PRODUCT OF A FUGITIVE SLAVE FROM THE UNITED STATES, WHOSE RESIDENCE IS DAWN, CANADA.’ Dawn was a black settlement in Canada West that Henson had founded twenty years previously. The contrast between the former slave who could never hope for American citizenship, and the black British American who had embraced subjecthood was striking. That he asserted Canadian citizenship reminds us that the provinces were colonies attached to the Mother Country, and not one another. The boundaries between citizen and subject in the British system were liminal, still negotiated as British democracy and its franchise continued to evolve. There was no such liminality for white republican Americans, for whom the rejection of citizenship in a republic for subjecthood in a monarchy involved a wholesale transition from a political system of rights to one of service. In the last chapter, we explored their inability to understand the changes taking place in British America. Henson had no such problems. For him, citizenship and subjecthood co-existed easily as he clarified later in his memoir. Towards its end, reflecting on the progress of the Dawn settlement, he anticipated a positive future for its black community. ‘I believe the day is not far distant,’ he wrote, ‘when we shall take a very respectable rank among the subjects of her majesty, the excellent and most gracious Queen of England and the Canadas.’⁸ Henson was both citizen and subject. As a black British American, within the Empire, both were available to him.

Swiping at the libertarian claims of the United States before a global audience, the sign infuriated the American organiser. The confrontation highlighted Henson, the fugitive’s, masculinised status. He reported that, ‘the English gentlemen began to gather around, chuckling with half-suppressed delight, to see the wrath of the Yankee.’⁹ The confrontation between Henson, the black man, and the white American organiser was remarkable. Henson was no Fredrick Douglass, but his British American identity elevated him to a Douglass-like status. In a public arena, he confronted a white male

⁷ Ibid., 189.

⁸ Ibid., 211.

⁹ Ibid. 189-90.

American on an equal footing, subverting the infantile role typically enforced upon American black males. The fused identities of citizen and subject masculinised Henson. Not only did he stand his ground against the American organiser, but he had the confidence to ridicule him. Finally, there were the walnut boards that remained silent through much of Henson's narrative. The day following his tussle, he tells us, they mysteriously appeared in 'their proper place,' in the Canadian Department.¹⁰ Their presence delivered a powerful message. These products of the black British American community allowed Henson to explode the fallacy of the American proslavery lobby that limited blacks to a tropical climate. At the same time as Jerry's enforced flight from Syracuse was demonstrating that the Northern States were unsafe, black success and security in chilly Canada struck blows at the increasingly-repeated Southern mantra that the black race was only suited to labour in tropical climes. Climate was political, and black Americans were aware of it. In insisting upon exhibiting his boards in the Canadian section for a global audience, Henson staked a claim that black Americans could thrive anywhere under the right political conditions.

These themes of citizen-subjecthood, gender, and climate were reiterated throughout the testimonies examined here. Black Americans in becoming British Americans were never disengaged from their experiences in the USA. These were central to the messages they conveyed. As they affirmed their identities, they remoulded America to the extent that some would remain in the British provinces and others would leave. Throughout, they engaged in a debate that included blacks who remained on the American side of the border, arriving at very different conclusions. For Josiah Henson, and thousands like him, British America proved to be both a Promised Land and a paradise - of sorts. Henson remained in Canada West until his death in 1883. For those who stayed, and even for those who did not, the impact of their British American sojourn proved transformative.

¹⁰ Ibid., 190.

2. SUBJECT VS. CITIZEN – Explaining Black American Choices of Identity.

On July 4th, 1830, the Reverend Peter Williams addressed his black congregation at St Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church, New York. He bemoaned recent policies that had driven their fellow 'coloured citizens' in Ohio and New Orleans from their homes. Williams reminded America's whites that, 'we are natives of this country, we ask only to be treated as well as foreigners.'¹¹ That Williams' claim to equal rights of citizenship would quickly become a clarion call has long been recognised.¹² Its irony, however, less so. It is possible that Williams himself was aware of it, for those Ohioans who had fled Cincinnati to found new homes as 'foreigners' in the British province of Upper Canada had done so on the promise of the attainment of those rights as subjects. 'Should you come to us you will be entitled to all the privileges of the rest of His Majesty's subjects.'¹³ So promised Sir John Coleborne, Lieutenant Governor of the province. He followed in the footsteps of colonial predecessors, recognising the political and propaganda benefits provided by weaning the disaffected from the USA onto British soil.¹⁴ Black Cincinnatians had taken him at his word. The policies mooted by Cincinnati's city council to disempower blacks drove home what has been characterised as the 'contest between civic nationalism – which demanded the extension of the Declaration's principles to all – and racial nationalism – which sequestered those principles for a chosen few.'¹⁵ The growth of the latter increasingly limited blacks' access to US citizenship. Conversely, the appeal of black subjecthood as offered by British America increased.

¹¹ Rev. Peter Williams, Jr., 'This Is Our Country, July 4, 1830' in Josh Gottheimer (Ed.), *Ripples of Hope: Great American Civil Rights Speeches* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2003), 12 & 13.

¹² Manish Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 208.

¹³ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 155-6.

¹⁴ Hannah Weiss Muller, 'Bonds of Belonging: Subjecthood and the British Empire,' *Journal of British Studies*, 53 (January 2014), 54-5.

¹⁵ Ira Berlin, 'Foreword' in Cassandra Pybus, *Epic Journeys of Freedom: Runaway Slaves of the American Revolution and their Global Quest for Liberty* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), x.

That appeal highlighted the depth of divergence in libertarian principles between the British provinces and the United States that had developed since the end of the American Revolution. At the end of the Seven Years War, British North America shared a cohesive black identity, the product of a system of transportation and exploitation. During the Revolution, a vitalised black agency manifested itself, initiating what became a contested process of migration.¹⁶ It is true that post-1783 relocation to surviving British America was not the choice of blacks who had supported the British during the war, but the real choice was between remaining American slaves or free British subjects. The rights of imperial subjecthood had become increasingly flexible since the incorporation of new subjects such as French Catholics in the 1760s.¹⁷ The result was the 1774 Quebec Act, but American rejection of this process highlighted a racialised shift so that following Independence, the choices available to black Americans became increasingly contested. During the Revolution, 'blacks, whether they served with the American or the British forces, fought for their own freedom,' but the decades that followed witnessed the diminution of black liberty in the American context, and its reinforcement in the British.¹⁸

Diminution and reinforcement were achieved by a series of measures on either side of the border. In British America, the 1793 Act Against Slavery and Imperial Emancipation Act of 1833 affirmed an ever-strengthening commitment to non-racialised liberty and black rights. In the USA, the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act, and, more intrusively, the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law seemed to exemplify republican hypocrisy. Not only that, for blacks, the 1850 legislation revealed an adherence at the national level to what was increasingly perceived to be an abandoned commitment to a broken Revolutionary

¹⁶ Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*; Simon Schama, *Rough Crossings: Britain, the Slaves, and the American Revolution* (London: BBC Books, 2005); Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011).

¹⁷ For the contestation of British subjecthood post-1763, see Weiss Muller, 'Bonds of Belonging,' 29-58.

¹⁸ James Oliver Horton, *Free People of Color; Inside the African American Community* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 149.

promise as enshrined in the Declaration of Independence. Black Americans were highly attuned to the hypocrisy. At the 1843 National Negro Convention in Buffalo, New York, Henry Highland Garnet, a militant black abolitionist, reminded his audience of it in fiery terms. When the federal government was formed, 'did they emancipate the slaves?' he asked. 'No; they rather added new links to our chains.'¹⁹ By the 1840s, many blacks viewed the Constitution itself as a shrine to the perpetuation of slavery. Growing violence against black Americans and the limitation of rights and access to the franchise led to the increasing permeability of the border between the surviving British provinces and the USA.²⁰ It was the *longue durée* of their betrayal that informed the construction of black identity in the North America they inhabited.

When examining the black transit to subjecthood, although the 1850 law was significant, it is wrong to downplay its predecessor, the 1793 Fugitive Slave Act. To dismiss it as simply, 'an ineffectual law,' is to miss the point, and panders to the very Southern complaints that led to its stringent reapplication in 1850.²¹ The 1793 Act confirmed and reaffirmed the Constitution's embrace of slavery, and its recognition of the 'extraterritoriality' of Southern slave laws that made possible the kidnapping of free blacks.²² Black Americans were far from insensible to its repeated application, not least those who were its victims. In *Prigg vs. Pennsylvania* 1842, Justice Story's majority Supreme Court decision left 'a wide loophole for northern non-cooperation' with the Act, but it signalled the increasingly fragile status of blacks, free and fugitive, in the

¹⁹ Henry Highland Garnet, *An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America (Rejected by the National Convention, 1843)* in *Walker's Appeal, With a Brief Sketch of His Life. By Henry Highland Garnet. And also Garnet's Address to the Slaves of the United States of America.* (New-York: J. H. Tobitt, 1848; Reprinted New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969), 92.

²⁰ James Brewer Stewart, *Abolitionist Politics and the Coming of the Civil War* (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 11.

²¹ Karolyn Smardz Frost, Bryan Walls, Hillary Bates Neary, & Frederick H. Armstrong (Eds.), *Ontario's African-Canadian Heritage: Collected Writings by Fred Landon, 1918-1967* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2009), 35.

²² Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 382.

North.²³ That loophole was plugged by the 1850 law. Unsurprisingly, flight to the British was an antebellum constant. When Henson himself fled slavery in 1830, it was to British America he turned. In his words, 'I felt that I should be safer under an entirely foreign jurisdiction.'²⁴ 'David Rawley, a class leader in the Methodist Church at St. Albans, Licking county, Ohio,' testified that as early as 1825, 'a slave had escaped for Canada, but was arrested in Hardin county.'²⁵ The reader of fugitive Henry Bibb's autobiography is struck repeatedly by his insistence that it is in Canada he will find freedom. In 1837, his first attempt at escape took him to the free state of Ohio, where less than a year later, he was apprehended by slave catchers. 'In vain,' he tells us, 'did I look for the infamous laws of the Commonwealth of Ohio, for that protection against violence and outrage, that even the vilest criminal with a white skin might enjoy.'²⁶ In his narrative, his yearning for Canada became a leitmotif.²⁷ Danger in the Republic and safety in British America were real experiences for many blacks prior to 1850. In the decade that followed, the contrast grew starker as blacks were banned from entering Indiana in 1851, and Illinois in 1853.²⁸ At a national and state level, black Americans were under attack. It is estimated that, 'between 1850 and 1860, perhaps twenty thousand Blacks entered Canada.'²⁹ The estimated total number of black refugees and fugitives to Canada pre-1860 is around forty thousand.³⁰

²³ Ibid., 390.

²⁴ *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave. Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (Boston: Arthur D. Phelps, 1849), 48.

²⁵ *AMERICAN SLAVERY AS IT IS: TESTIMONY OF A THOUSAND WITNESSES*. (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), 91-2. No author is mentioned but this is recognised to be the work of white abolitionist Theodore Weld.

²⁶ Henry Bibb, *Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Henry Bibb, An American Slave Written by Himself*. With a New Introduction by Charles J. Heglar (1850; Reprinted in Madison WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), 62.

²⁷ Ibid. Never does Bibb consider escape to a free Northern state. His focus is always Canada. E.g. 26, 38, 79, 80, 82, 86, 88, 95, 107 et al.

²⁸ Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind*, 133.

²⁹ Mensch, *Black Canadians*, 50.

³⁰ Sinha, *The Slave's Cause*, 332; Tilden G. Edelstein, 'Introduction' in Benjamin Drew, *The Refugee* (1969), xviii; Horton & Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 210.

Ironically, the black exodus to subjecthood transgressed a fundamental principle of the white American experiment, that of the irreconcilable opposites of citizen and subject. For white Americans, a testimony, such as Josiah Henson's, that both could co-exist would have seemed nonsensical. In his *Opinion on the Suability of a State* given in February 1793, Chief Justice John Jay clarified the changes the previous twenty years had wrought, between 'the political situation we were in prior to the Revolution, and to the political rights which emerged from the Revolution.'³¹ But in so doing, he suggested a definition of subjecthood that to both refugees and fugitives would have seemed nonsensical and false. Jay characterised American citizens as, 'sovereigns without subjects (unless the African slaves among us may be so called) ... the citizens of America are equal as fellow-citizens.'³² That to be a subject was to be a slave had become a Revolutionary truism for white American Patriots, to the extent that at the end of the War of Independence, 'virtually all who stayed believed that Americans should never again be subjects instead of citizens.'³³ This was the verdict in the Revolutionary debate, that to be a subject was to concede rights to another. In this, it was conceptually underpinned by a definition of subject introduced by colonial legislatures during the seventeenth century, 'a new kind of subjectship - a subjectship to an individual master' that was the condition of the slave, with no rights.³⁴ The emerging American Republic thus stripped subjecthood of any claim to inherent rights.

That was not the understanding of black Americans. At its most basic level, converting to the British during the Revolution offered freedom for the slave, and in the following decades, the value of that freedom was enhanced by additional political and legal guarantees in British America even as black rights in the USA were eroded, Jay's

³¹ Henry P. Johnston (Ed.), *The Correspondence and Papers of John Jay*, IV Vols. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1891), Vol. III 1782-1793, 454.

³² *Ibid.*, 457.

³³ Rogers M. Smith, *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 83.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 63.

assertion of citizen equality had a hollow ring to it. Denial of rights to free blacks increased in states, both North and South, especially in the latter. Rights in one state were no guarantee of their recognition in another. The Negro Seamen's Statutes passed by several southern states from 1822 onwards proved this point, insisting on the imprisonment of black sailors on their arrival in port for no other reason than being free and black.³⁵ In 1844, the New York Court of Chancery in *Lynch vs. Clark* asserted that, 'a citizen of a state was also a "citizen of the United States" as a "national right or condition."³⁶ Though a Jacksonian reaffirmation of white Americans' shared national identity, this equation of increasingly insecure regional status with a non-existent national one for black Americans only highlighted the lack of validity of their claims to either. At the same time, they were increasingly disenfranchised. On the eve of the Civil War, the black vote existed only in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New York, the latter with prohibitive property requirements.³⁷ Indeed, black citizenship became moot in 1857 when the Dred Scott decision ruled that no black American could be a citizen. Little wonder that the assertion of being both American and citizen became leitmotifs for black American activists at home, whilst those who saw no prospect of either migrated to the British provinces.

Emerging racial scientific theory also had a debilitating impact upon black claims to citizenship. In a burgeoning South, ever fearful of slave uprisings and progressively more reliant upon slave labour, black Americans became the subjects of racial mummification, their faculties of intelligence denied, body parts scientifically and physically branded, reduced to hollowed souls encouraged to focus on the afterlife. Nor were the so-called free States to the North exempt from the new scientific theory that emphasised the permanence of black racial inferiority and the subsequent incapacity of shared citizenship. Even in New England, by the 1820s, the embrace of a biologically affirmed racial difference meant that for most whites, 'people of color could never

³⁵ William M. Wiecek, *The Sources of Antislavery Constitutionalism in America, 1760-1848* (London: Cornell University Press, 1977), 132-40; Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 103 & 181.

³⁶ Wiecek, *Sources of Antislavery Constitutionalism*, 166.

³⁷ Smith, *Civic Ideals*, 215.

become citizens; they were not equipped by nature for the role.’³⁸ Little wonder that many extolled the role of subject in British America with its commitment to equal voting rights and judicial recourse that many black Americans embraced while enthusiastically asserting their roles as citizen-subjects. The first National Convention of Colored People meeting in Philadelphia in 1830 drew attention to the fact that in Upper Canada blacks were, ‘entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities of other citizens.’³⁹ Central to the conversion of citizen to citizen-subject was the pledge of allegiance to the monarch. The act whereby would-be black British Americans renounced the USA, and embraced the very sovereignty that America had rejected, had a two-fold effect. Firstly, for those for whom it was a sincere moment of transition, it secured their new status as black British Americans and citizens of the broader British Empire. Secondly, for those for whom the oath was a pragmatic, temporary exercise, the iteration of loyalty to the monarch was a potent tool for propaganda in the war against slavery. The sensitivity of US readers to discussion of the once-shared sovereign is indicated as early as the 1810s when black American émigré Prince Saunders published two editions of his “Haytian Papers,” one in Britain (1816) and one in America (1818), the latter omitting the chapter on monarchy.⁴⁰

Possibly none of the barbs employed by blacks to goad white Americans was more provocative than the consistent iteration of their embrace of monarchy. As refugees prepared to leave San Francisco in 1858 for British Columbia, Priscilla Stewart, ‘one of the suffering class,’ captured in poetry the transit from ‘native land’ to ‘foreign land.’ The contrast might suggest regret, but that was not the case.

“God bless the Queen’s majesty,

³⁸ Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and “Race” in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), 161.

³⁹ *Constitution of the American Society of Free Persons of Colour, for Improving their Condition in the United States; for Purchasing Lands; and for the Establishment of a Settlement in Upper Canada, Also, The Proceedings of the Convention with Their Address to Free Persons of Colour in the United States.* (Philadelphia: J. W. Allen, 1831), 10.

⁴⁰ Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 96.

Her sceptre and her throne,
She looked on us with sympathy
And offered us a home.”⁴¹

Priscilla’s transition was eased by the promise of a ‘home,’ something her ‘native land’ could not provide, and that home was the gift of a Queen. That monarchy persisted in North America was painful enough for republican, continent-claiming America, but that it should be trumpeted as a superior guardian of liberty proved a powerful means of indicting the American experiment. Of course, white Southerners were oblivious to the barbs, but for white pro –and anti-slavery men in the North, their impact was heightened by the popularity of Queen Victoria and her family who manifested the moral aspirations of the Protestant American middle class.⁴² For many of the refugees and fugitives the monarch was also totemic. It was she who was invoked by some upon arrival in the promised Canaan. ‘God save the Queen!’ cried John Little, a fugitive from North Carolina.⁴³ The land of liberty itself was hers. Little spoke of ‘Queen Victoria’s dominions.’⁴⁴ Writing from Toronto on March 18, 1854 to William Still, chairman of Philadelphia’s Vigilance Committee, fugitive John Henry Hill casually ended his letter with ‘God Save the Queen.’⁴⁵ For many fugitives and refugees, monarchy became part of the fabric of their adopted identities.

One for whom it was a device, and not an emotional commitment, was black journalist and abolitionist Mary Ann Shadd who published *A Plea for Emigration Or, Notes on Canada West* in 1852⁴⁶ As the title suggested, it was a promotional booklet, advocating

⁴¹ Delilah L. Beasley, *The Negro Trail Blazers of California* (Los Angeles: Times Mirror Printing and Binding House, 1919), 263.

⁴² For the popularity of Victoria in the USA, see Frank Prochaska, *The Eagle and the Crown: Americans and the British Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), Ch. 3.

⁴³ Drew, *Refugee*, 215.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 219.

⁴⁵ Still, *The Underground Rail Road*, 197.

⁴⁶ In 1856, Mary Ann Shadd married Thomas Cary, changing her name to Mary Ann Shadd Cary. It is as Shadd Cary that historians refer to her. For the marriage, see Jane Rhodes, *Mary*

black migration to the British province. Her brochure provides an example of the methods employed by a black refugee in sustaining the assault upon the USA. It also illustrates the ambivalence of black loyalty to either the British provinces or America, and its agency in communicating a specifically black agenda. In Shadd Cary's detailed guide for republican blacks to British American electoral rights and the Oath of Allegiance, she did not promote monarchy.⁴⁷ The only specific reference to Queen Victoria appeared in the oath itself. Her aim became apparent towards the end of the book when she stated that 'the coloured subjects of Her Majesty in the Canadas are, in the general, in good circumstance,'⁴⁸ This was a pointed salvo contrasting the secure black subjects of British America with the insecure black quasi-citizens of the USA. As the full title of her work shows, whilst promoting British America, Shadd Cary examined the alternatives for black emigration that would prove increasingly attractive in the 1850s.

She dismissed South America as unreliable. For her, the only safeguard was the 'government of Great Britain; her dependencies form a secure home for the American slave, and the disgraced free man.'⁴⁹ Her phrasing and focus on fugitives and refugees clarify that her enthusiasm for emigration was determined by the politics of the 1850s. In the Caribbean, she feared US designs on Cuba and Haiti, and she drew the reader's attention to the only power capable of frustrating them. 'What government so powerful and so thoroughly impartial as Her Majesty's; so practically anti-slavery, and so protective?' she asked, and trumpeted in reply, 'None.'⁵⁰ That she was not only purposefully seeking to provoke an American readership, but also broaden the

Ann Shadd Cary: The Black Press and Protest in the Nineteenth Century (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), 112-113.

⁴⁷ Mary A. Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration: or, Notes of Canada West, in its Moral, Social, and Political Aspect: with Suggestions Respecting Mexico, West Indies, and Vancouver Island. For the Information of Colored Emigrants.* (Detroit: George W. Pattison, 1852), 26-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

opportunities for black uplift is clear. In her examination of the British West Indies, she made her most explicit advocacy of subjecthood as a preferred choice for black Americans. The islands' proximity to the Southern States rendered it imperative that they 'should be peopled by colored men, and under British protection; in short, that they should be British subjects.'⁵¹ Her logic was that such proximity necessitated the creation of a black cordon of the South, supported by Great Britain. She also feared the USA's annexation of Mexico against which black emigration to the British Caribbean would function as a counterweight. Despite her focus on Canada West, Shadd Cary cast her net wide across Britain's North American colonies to identify those destinations suitable for her proposed black American diaspora.

Her overarching purpose becomes clear in her closing examination of Britain's newest colony, Vancouver Island. Two reasons were presented as to why this far Western outpost should too be a focus for black settlers. Firstly, that blacks 'would become more fully involved in the destiny of this Continent' and secondly, that their presence would forestall 'the encroachments of slavery on free soil... in the event of a contemplated annexation of that delightful Western country.'⁵² Shadd Cary's engagement with a broader British North America, and her anchoring of the black future within its territories, sought to ensure a black continental presence. Other than British protection, black educational opportunities, the acquisition of land, and the franchise, Shadd Cary exhibited no sympathy with the affection and loyalty fostered by subjecthood and monarchy. Her goals were frustrating the USA, and protecting fellow black Americans. Her final sentence warned them of the choice they faced, choose Great Britain or 'a little folding of the hands, and there may be no retreat from the clutches of the slave power.'⁵³ Fundamentally, it is the frustration of the latter that energises her 'plea.' Jane Rhodes underlines the disappointment felt by Shadd Cary and other blacks in Canada West by the 1860s as hopes of black uplift, their ability to secure acceptance and improvement, fell foul of increasing segregation, encouraging a return to the US at the

⁵¹ Ibid., 36-7.

⁵² Ibid., 43. For American annexation of British America, see Ch. 5.

⁵³ Ibid., 44.

end of the Civil War.⁵⁴ Shadd Cary left Canada West in 1865 but, most striking is the ambivalence of her loyalties. She moved to and fro, between the British province and the States. In 1862, she became a naturalised British subject. Only the promises of Reconstruction urged her departure. Shadd Cary testifies to the choices freedom allowed blacks to exercise.

For many black Americans becoming subjects, it was not monarchy that struck them, but the exhilaration of security and freedom that accentuated the disconnect between the realities of the republican states they had left and the elevated aspirations to which those states laid claim. Thomas Smallwood arrived in Toronto on July 4, 1843 and, writing his autobiography seven years later, he remembered, 'how different were my feelings that day to what they would have been had I been in the States.' Contact with a society that was both hierarchical and prejudiced did not detract from the impact of arrival in 'a land of true freedom, and equal laws.' It proved an epiphany, as Smallwood was awakened to the 'hypocritical demonstrations' of the American anniversary. Nine years before Frederick Douglass' famous *What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?* speech, Smallwood already characterised it as a day that had reduced him and other blacks to, 'the most degrading, tyrannical, and soul-withering bondage that ever disgraced the world or a nation.'⁵⁵ For Smallwood, the words of the Declaration of Independence were more than a dead letter. In Canada West, they were rendered invidious. Freedom having been attained, the primary attraction of British American subjecthood was equality of rights, legal and political, for whites and blacks. This is seen in the testimonies of those such as Little collected by Bostonian abolitionist Benjamin Drew for his 1854 publication *A North-Side View of Slavery. The Refugee* discussed in Chapter One.

The broader implications of subjecthood and its benefits for disenfranchised black Americans was recognised by Drew. He provocatively asked his readers, 'should a

⁵⁴ Rhodes, *Mary Ann Shadd Cary*, Ch. 6.

⁵⁵ Smallwood, *Narrative*, 53. Frederick Douglass, *What to a Slave is the Fourth of July?* speech delivered at Rochester, New York, 5 July 1852.
<<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/what-to-the-slave-is-the-fourth-of-july/>> Accessed 4 September 2018.

contest with England arise, would they enlist under the cross of St. George, or under our stars – and stripes?’⁵⁶ The answers he received from interviewees demonstrate the complex factors involved in the decisions black Americans were forced to make. Drew summoned dormant spectres of black enlistment with the British during the Revolution, and War of 1812, and echoed more recent militant suggestions such as that of Judge Jabez Delano Hammond of Otsego County, New York, to Gerrit Smith in 1839 that the black refugees of Upper Canada should be militarily trained and let loose on the South.⁵⁷ Drew’s testimonies were more ambiguous, and reveal the complex processes that determined both the strength of black British American identity and its ambivalence. The Reverend Alexander Hemsley, a fugitive from Maryland, and many years a Methodist minister in the British provinces, seems decisive in his newfound allegiance. ‘Now I am a regular Britisher,’ he insisted, ‘my American blood has been scourged out of me; I have lost my American tastes; I am an enemy to tyranny.’ Hemsley’s focus on tyranny suggests that its end would have drawn him home. His was a complicated conversion. Canada West was not his destination of choice. Having fled originally to New Jersey, Hemsley had been imprisoned by slave catchers in November 1836, endured a fraught court case that resulted in his freedom in spring 1837, at which point, he, his wife and family fled to British America. But, ‘for years, after I came here, my mind was continually reverting to my native land,’ and for ten years, he had dreamt of change, ‘whereby I might safely return to my old home in New Jersey.’⁵⁸ The minister Drew interviewed was almost sixty, bedridden and in poverty. When he talked of his Britishness, the aging Hemsley was in fact talking about the Americanness of which he had been robbed. The acquisition of one identity had only been achieved by the enforced elimination of the other, a process in which Hemsley had no choice.

⁵⁶ Drew, *Refugee*, 14.

⁵⁷ For Delano Hammond, see Merton L. Dillon, *Slavery Attacked: Southern Slaves and their Allies, 1619-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 205-6. This was a Southern fear. See p. 129 above.

⁵⁸ Drew, *Refugee*, 39.

Age also seemed to decide fifty-five-year-old Gilbert Dickey of Chatham. Six weeks in Canada, he liked everything about the States, 'but one thing – slavery was there.'⁵⁹ Isaac Williams 'would rather live in a southern State,' if it weren't for slavery, but he too had only arrived in Canada the day after Christmas 1854.⁶⁰ Alexander Hamilton, a fugitive from St Louis, Missouri, and resident of Canada West for twenty-one years, seems as conflicted as the sickly Hemsley. He states, 'I am naturalized here, and have all the rights and privileges of a British subject,' in addition to being the owner of several lots of land and three houses.⁶¹ And yet, his frustrated Americanness is evident in his admission that 'we would many of us like to live in the United States were it not for slavery,' a sentiment he repeated.⁶² Some such as Aaron Sidles, a slave who had bought his freedom but had moved to Canada, was explicit. 'Excepting for the oppressive laws, I would rather have remained in Indiana.'⁶³ William A. Hall, on the other hand, a fugitive from Tennessee, having weighed the options, stated, 'I like Canada. If the United States were as free as Canada, I would still prefer to live here.'⁶⁴ And this despite the pain he felt at missing his mother, brothers and sisters who were, as far as he knew, in Mississippi. For some, identities remained fraught and contested, evident sites of sorrow, and unalleviated by the duration of time spent in Canada or the success and affluence attained there.

For others, the privileges of subjecthood involving legal status and enfranchisement were transformative, fuelling new invigorated identities. William Grose, a fugitive from Virginia, provided a glowing testimony of life in Canada, to which he removed in 1851 having spent twenty-five years in slavery at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. 'I am a true British subject,' he declared, adding, 'and I have a vote every year as much as any other man.'

⁵⁹ Ibid., 254.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 67.

⁶¹ Ibid., 179.

⁶² Ibid., 178 & 178-9.

⁶³ Ibid., 273

⁶⁴ Ibid., 320.

He contrasted this with his American life. He used to wonder, 'when I saw the carriages going round for voters, why they never asked me to vote.' In Canada, he had discovered the answer, 'they were using my vote instead of my using it.'⁶⁵ Even as a slave, Grose had the measure of the political community from which he was excluded, and the key importance of the role of citizen within it. In British America, both slavery and citizenship have been trumped by subjecthood, which enabled Grose to enter that community. It is also evident that voting has contributed to Grose's masculinisation. In the US, 'politics was clearly a masculine world,' to which black males were increasingly denied access.⁶⁶ Such was not the case in British America where, despite opposition, black males were able to fulfil their masculine roles in the public sphere at elections. The extent of that involvement in the public sphere, and the empowerment it provided, is demonstrated in the case of fugitive Alfred T. Jones from Kentucky. In Canada West, Jones was involved in a court case concerning his title to a \$45,000 property. Having gone through the provincial court process, he had 'now appealed to the House of Lords. I am winding up my business preparatory to leaving.'⁶⁷ Blacks like Jones were able to exercise their equality on the imperial stage. 'In Canada, all are free and equal,' stated fugitive Henry Gowens, resident of Galt, 'color is not recognized in the laws of the land.'⁶⁸ For Gowens, all states, both slave and free, were to be dismissed because of discrimination against blacks. He implicitly dismissed the whole of the American experiment in favour of monarchy with his closing plea, 'how much longer, in the name of God, shall my people remain in their state of degradation under the American republic?'⁶⁹

The plug was pulled on black citizenship by the 1857 Dred Scott decision, leaving blacks in the free states, whether freeborn or fugitive, in an opaque no-man's land, where

⁶⁵ Ibid., 86.

⁶⁶ E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 219.

⁶⁷ Drew, *Refugee*, 153.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 143.

status long achieved and rights acquired were under threat. This was the case in San Francisco in 1858 that led to a migration of free blacks, many the financially successful leaders of their community, to British Columbia. Their departure highlighted not only the strength of black agency, but also its breadth and potential. It demonstrated the eagerness with which those who were effectively refugees shed contested citizenship for an affirmative and inclusive subjecthood. More importantly, the social and political environment in which they found themselves proved life transforming for many, enabling those who wished to do so, to return to the States when a new citizenship was made available to them, their agency further empowered. It is important to note at the outset that the Californian emigrants were not typical of the black fugitives and refugees of the 1850s, nor was their experience without its challenges. British Columbia was not representative of the rest of British America, and just as importantly, the distinctive characteristics of California's black communities, and that of San Francisco in particular, should not be overlaid.

The proposition that these communities were detached, isolated from the North-South fugitive networks of the East, and thus uninvolved in the broader political movements of the 1850s, is no longer tenable. Indeed, they were politically active. While successfully combating repeated attempts to limit black immigration into the state, San Franciscan blacks such as Mary Ellen Pleasant 'participated in an abolitionist network that spanned the United States and abroad.'⁷⁰ In the City on the Bay, they formed a burgeoning, industrious community that was varied both economically and in terms of social status. California's blacks enjoyed greater levels of freedom and affluence, facilitated by the demographic and economic requirements of a growing state. But in 1858, that communal security was threatened, Blacks were forced to remove their children from public schools.⁷¹ A proscriptive anti-black immigration law was once

⁷⁰ Lynn M. Hudson, *The Making of "Mammy Pleasant: " A Black Entrepreneur in Nineteenth-Century San Francisco* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 35. Such involvement refutes Horton, *Free People of Color*, 71-3.

⁷¹ Tom W. Dillard, 'Introduction' in Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, *Shadow and Light: An Autobiography with Reminiscences of the Last and Present Century* (Washington DC: Self-Published, 1902; Reprinted Lincoln NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), ix.

more debated by the legislature.⁷² The community sought refuge elsewhere, and were attracted to an alternative polity in British America that fortuitously exhibited a similar demographic mix. The result was ‘approximately four hundred blacks, about 10 percent of the state’s black population, left San Francisco bound for Victoria, British Columbia, and freedom.’⁷³ The displacement of many of San Francisco’s leading black citizens, and their eventual acceptance by British Columbia’s whites resulted in what has been described as ‘the closest approximation to equality for Canadian Blacks in the nineteenth century.’⁷⁴

Thirty-five-year old Mifflin Wistar Gibbs was one of those black community leaders. He was a publisher and political activist, and his autobiography provides an insight into that community’s experience. It also testifies to the complex factors involved in the renunciation of the seemingly lost-cause of black American citizenship and assumption of British subjecthood. Gibbs would return to the States on the offer of the new citizenship provided under Reconstruction. In his autobiography, he emphasises that for him and fellow black San Franciscans in 1858, there was ‘no complaint as to business patronage in the State of California.’ It was the ‘spectre of oath denial and disfranchisement’ that haunted them, and the harsh reality that ‘we were powerless to appeal to law for the protection of life or property when assailed.’⁷⁵ Gibbs’ fear of losing the vote is puzzling as blacks had no voting rights in California. Indeed, as a black man, born and raised in Pennsylvania, and resident in California, the franchise would have been alien to Gibbs.⁷⁶ That his flight, and that of others, was related to fear of the loss of

⁷² Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, Ch. 10.

⁷³ Hudson, Lynn M., ‘Mining a Mythic Past: The History of Mary Ellen Pleasant’ in Quintard Taylor and Shirley Ann Wilson Moore (Eds.), *African American Women Confront the West* (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003), 71.

⁷⁴ Krauter & Davis, *Minority Canadians*, 45.

⁷⁵ Mifflin Wistar Gibbs, *Shadow and Light: An Autobiography with Reminiscences of the Last and Present Century* (Washington DC: Self Published 1902), 63.

⁷⁶ Pennsylvania withdrew the black franchise in 1838. See Nicholas Wood, ‘“A Sacrifice on the Altar of Slavery”: Doughface Politics and Black Disenfranchisement in Pennsylvania, 1837—1838,’ *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 31, No.1 (Spring 2011), 75-106.

a citizen right they enjoyed is misleading. His testimony becomes more confusing as, later, on his return to the USA in 1869, he reminisces that he had 'left California disfranchised and my oath denied in a "court of justice."' ⁷⁷ The contradictions testify to the problematic nature of Gibbs' autobiography.

Published in 1902, what he provides is the sometime confused testimony of a septuagenarian writing more than forty years after the events described. In truth, on leaving California, Gibbs and other San Franciscan refugees had no citizen rights, certainly they were unable to vote, and they were afraid of the loss of the few rights they had. The latter seem to have been primarily economic. Again, Gibbs informs us earlier in the work that for black San Franciscans, 'with thrift and a wise circumspection financially, their opportunities were good.'⁷⁸ Physical suffering features little or not at all. His concern was the legal and political limitations of a non-existent American citizenship. British Columbia promised, 'equality of political privileges,' and 'the assurance of enjoying impartially the benefits of constitutional liberty.'⁷⁹ With the latter statement, he fires a shot across the bows of a fundamental tenet of American constitutionalism, though the parameters of that 'liberty' afforded to black Americans were defunct post Dred Scott. Equally important is economic opportunity. Gibbs draws our attention to the discovery of gold in British Columbia, and that, as a result, Victoria, on Vancouver Island, their chosen destination, was a boom town. For these black Californians, both political and economic opportunities were lures to this corner of British America. The former came quickly to Gibbs who voted for the first time as a property owner in 1860. In 1861, he became a British subject, and in 1866 experienced his 'first entry to political life,' when he was elected to the 'Common Council of the City of Victoria, Vancouver Island'⁸⁰ Such was the degree to which a black American émigré

⁷⁷ Gibbs, *Shadow and Light*, 109.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-6.

⁷⁹ Gibbs, *Shadow and Light*, 63.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 85. The first black to be elected to public office in British America, however, was Abraham Shadd, father of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, to the Raleigh Township Council, Canada West, in 1858. See 'Introduction' in Richard Almonte (Ed.), *A Plea for Emigration By Mary A. Shadd* (Toronto: The Mercury Press, 1998), 23.

could be incorporated into the political life of this British province that in 1868 he was a delegate at the Yale Convention to discuss the union of British Columbia with the newly-formed Dominion of Canada.⁸¹

And yet, in 1869 he returned to the United States. Describing his feelings, he acknowledged the benefits that British Columbia had provided, amongst them, 'social and political recognition.' But, in addition to his asserted longing for 'my native land,' the main impetus for Gibbs' departure for the US were the changes Reconstruction had wrought. In his words, 'I had left politically ignoble; I was returning panoplied with the nobility of an American citizen.'⁸² The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments transformed Gibbs' status as an American, but equally transformative were the experiences and opportunities made available to him during his residence in British Columbia. During his time in Victoria, he tells us that he studied 'the English Common Law, the basis of our country's jurisprudence, under Mr. Ring, an English barrister.' On his return, he continued his studies at Oberlin College, Ohio but his intent was 'to locate in some part of the South for the purpose of practising law.'⁸³ In 1873, Gibbs became a Republican City Judge in Little Rock, Arkansas, America's first elected black judge. There is no denying that Gibbs was already a force to be reckoned with in 1850s California. He was an established community leader, a successful businessman, and founder of the state's first African-American newspaper, but it attests to his acumen, and ambition, that in July 1865, he met with Schuyler Colfax, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and 'afterward Vice President,' on a visit to Victoria whilst the latter was 'swinging around the circle.'⁸⁴

Gibbs' trajectory provides an insight into a far from typical refugee experience but, like Henson's, it draws our attention to the variety of possibilities offered black Americans by British America, and the agency exercised in maximising those possibilities. It also

⁸¹ <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gibbs_mifflin_wistar_14E.html> Accessed 3 April 2017.

⁸² Gibbs, *Shadow and Light*, 109.

⁸³ Ibid., 110; Beasley, *Negro Trail Blazers*, 113.

⁸⁴ Gibbs, *Shadow and Light*, 88.

testifies as much to the man as the moment. The Gold Rush had drawn Gibbs to California. It drew him to Victoria. It was the South he chose as his home, the region that would provide America's two first black senators in 1870 and 1875. Little wonder that Gibbs settled in Arkansas. Having embraced subjecthood in British Columbia, he seized the opportunities available to him. He was one of an estimated 150 refugees who pledged their allegiance, but whilst many 'sank deeper and deeper roots into the Vancouver Island community,' forming the basis of surviving black communities, Gibbs and others made the most of a professional pit stop.⁸⁵ Subjecthood provided a springboard to an elevated enjoyment of America's new citizenship. There is no evidence to suggest that white British American prejudice played any part in Gibbs' decision to leave. Instead, it seems that, for him, British Americanness was never more than a pragmatic gloss to what was evidently a deeply felt American opportunity. After all, the English Law he had studied was always the basis of 'our jurisprudence,' and by that he meant America's. He would revisit Victoria only once, in 1907.

For many, recognition of black citizenship by the United States remained the goal. British America was presented within the black American community as an optional choice, its subjecthood never to detract from the true grail. Citizenship was considered a longstanding aspiration tied to an established black American identity. Black New York activists, a year following the first National Convention, famously asserted, 'this is our home, and this is our country.'⁸⁶ The second annual Convention for the Improvement of the Free People of Color, held in Philadelphia in June 1832, supported settlement in Upper Canada for those forced to seek a haven, and recognised 'the benevolent feelings of a rival government in its liberal protection to strangers.'⁸⁷ But it was careful not to advocate wholesale emigration and the abandonment of what was, 'our own, Our native land.'⁸⁸ The third convention went further, predicting that there would never be 'actual

⁸⁵ Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, 249.

⁸⁶ P. J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement, 1816-1865* (1961; Reprint New York: Octagon Books, 1980), 193.

⁸⁷ Ripley (Ed.), *BAP Vol III*, 110.

⁸⁸ *Minutes and Proceedings of the Second Annual Convention for the Improvement of the Free People of Color in these United States, held by Adjournments in the City of*

necessity for a large emigration' of black Americans.⁸⁹ The convention's primary goal remained their support in 'this their native land,' though Upper Canada was approved as the primary option for those driven away by 'legislative enactments.' This was summed up in the policy 'improvement, but without emigration, except it be voluntary.'⁹⁰ The more militant such as Henry Highland Garnet rejected emigration, voluntary or not. For him, speaking in 1843, British America offered no succour. Grinding the promise of Canaan beneath his feet, he exclaimed to his audience at the 1843 Buffalo Convention that it was 'impossible like the children of Israel, to make a grand exodus from the land of bondage.' He went on. 'The Pharaohs are on both sides of the blood red waters! You cannot move en masse, to the dominions of the British Queen.'⁹¹ Garnet, like others, was focused on American citizenship, though for him that was to be gained through liberty seized. He called upon the slaves of the south to rise against their masters, reminding them, 'forget not that you are native born American citizens.'⁹² The extent to which his fixation on American identity and rejection of alleviatory emigration to the British provinces resonated with other delegates is indicated by the failure of his speech to receive endorsement by only one vote. It was a view of emigration that would become atypical post-1850.

Conventions' repetitions of an identity, whether tied to the USA or a broader North America, reflected a shift away from an earlier construct that had focused on Africa. African had been an identifier used to describe churches and societies, reflecting the significant presence of many black members who, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, still remembered an African space from which they had been

Philadelphia, from the 4th to the 13th of June inclusive, 1832. (Philadelphia: Benj. Paschal, Thos. Butler, and Jas. C. Matthews, Publishing Com., 1832), 17-18, quote on 33.

⁸⁹ *Minutes and Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention, for the Improvement of the Free People of Colour in these United States, held by Adjournments in the City of Philadelphia, from the 3d to the 13th of June inclusive, 1833.* (New York: By Order of the Convention, 1833), 22.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 23 & 32.

⁹¹ Garnet, *Address*, 95.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 94.

torn.⁹³ This identity became increasingly contested. For new generations of black Americans, 'Africa was more their heritage than their home.'⁹⁴ Africanness itself was severely problematized by the founding of the American Colonization Society (ACS) in 1816. It was to the work of the ACS that the third annual convention referred when it stressed voluntary emigration. Predominantly white, this was a society that more than any black masonic lodge or school was deserving of the title African as its purpose was to delegitimise any black claim to an American identity or continental American space by shipping free blacks back to their land of origin. Its appeal to blacks was limited to those freemen of the Upper South who felt under threat, 1400 of whom migrated to Liberia in the 1820s.⁹⁵ Black Americans soon dropped 'African', which eventually became a historic moniker, testifying to an antique black past, and it was replaced in contemporary parlance by 'colored.'⁹⁶ Rejecting Africa and clinging to their American claims, blacks not only had the ACS in mind, but also the warning of the Cherokee. The latter's enforced removal informed the rhetoric of the emerging national and state conventions as it seemed to point to a potential future should blacks turn their backs on American citizenship.⁹⁷ So, even post-1850, as hundreds fled to Canada West, at the 1853 National Convention, Frederick Douglass addressed all Americans, turning the black assertion, 'we are American citizens,' by repetition into a mantra.⁹⁸ Similar iterations of black citizenship were integral at state conventions.⁹⁹ Pre-1850, such

⁹³ Horton, *Free People of Color*, 42-3 & 153; Horton & Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 178-9.

⁹⁴ Horton & Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 191.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 189.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 202; Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 251-2.

⁹⁷ Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 14.

⁹⁸ *Proceedings of the Colored National Convention, held in Rochester, July 6th, 7th, and 8th, 1853.* (Rochester: Office of Frederick Douglass' Paper, 1853), 8, 9, 11.

⁹⁹ E.g. *Minutes of the State Convention of Colored Citizens held at Albany, on the 18th, 19th, and 20th of August, 1840, for the Purpose of Considering their Political Condition.* (New York: Piercy & Reed, 1840), 32; *Report of the Meeting of the Colored Citizens of Indiana, January 17, 1842. Indiana State Sentinel*, 4 March 1842; *Proceedings of the First Convention of the Colored Citizens of the State of Illinois, Convened at the City of Chicago, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, October 6th, 7th and 8th, 1853. Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 28 October 1853.

statements proved potent in ensuring that migration north of the border remained the favoured choice of the select few, and even afterwards, they continued to energise those who remained in the northern states.¹⁰⁰ Underpinning this strength of commitment, was continuing opposition to the ACS. For black Americans, such opposition was 'central to their quest for citizenship.'¹⁰¹

Such attachment to America did not go unchallenged. In the year of Garnet's call to arms, free black Thomas Smallwood fled Washington DC with his family to Toronto. The arguments of Garnet and others would provide grist for Smallwood's political mill in his autobiography, where he spent much time producing a panegyric to emigration to British America, and a denunciation of American abolitionists' advocacy of remaining in the United States. For Smallwood, like others, the appeal of Canada West hinged upon the acquisition of rights. He was called to 'the British dominions, where the laws are equal, and know of no difference between man and man on account of colour.'¹⁰² The reasons for his opposition to those abolitionists who persisted in encouraging black settlement in the free states was twofold. Firstly, it was their very attachment to the US that he saw at fault. Not all abolitionists were guilty of it, but, he stated, 'I believe that national prejudice may be attributed to a very large portion of them.'¹⁰³ Despite the evidence provided by the annexation of Texas and US attempts to extradite fugitives from the British, it was 'national prejudice' that had blinded abolitionists throughout the 1840s to the truth that, 'the slave power would finally triumph through the whole union.'¹⁰⁴ 'National prejudice' was 'part of the principles ingrafted into their national compact... that the African race should never ascend to an equality with the whites.'¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Horton & Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 211.

¹⁰¹ Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 3.

¹⁰² Smallwood, *Narrative*, 53.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

Writing in 1851, Smallwood remained convinced of abolitionists' bias. How else to explain their attempts to persuade blacks, fugitive and free, to remain in the northern states despite the clear dangers posed by the 1850 Fugitive Act. They 'must have been actuated by national prejudices in persuading the fugitives to stop in the States.'¹⁰⁶ It was American abolitionists' adherence to the United States that rendered any attempts on their part on behalf of blacks void, as that adherence was premised on a fundamental flaw, a national compact that would never recognise the rights of blacks. Indeed, for Smallwood, those abolitionists, that he accused but never identified, were complicit in the national betrayal as they themselves dangled before blacks 'a day when the coloured race in the United States would be admitted to equal rights with the whites,' a day that could never come.¹⁰⁷ Implicitly, they promised a citizenship that could never be realised.

Secondly, it was 'national prejudice' that fostered Smallwood's opposition to their blandishments. They had cheated blacks of enjoying a true equality. If they had been encouraged to enter Canada, they would 'be now secure in their persons and property as British subjects.'¹⁰⁸ It was subjecthood that Smallwood asserted was the great objection for republican abolitionists. He went further, and suggested deception on their part, for 'notwithstanding that they knew that every coloured person going to Canada, and conducting themselves right, would enjoy as perfect freedom as they themselves, yet they would strenuously persuade and insist on them to settle in the so-called free states.'¹⁰⁹ Republican abolitionists had been complicit in the denial of freedom by the promotion of un-free states. This was Smallwood's most damning indictment. For him, Americans, both pro and anti-slavery, were culpable of the same sin, a faith in 'the most hypocritical, guileful, and arrogant nation on the face of the earth.' And lest the reader forget the quality of the black citizenship therein, Smallwood reminded them that, 'it is far preferable for coloured people to be subjects of any other

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 65.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 64.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 63 & 64.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 64-5.

nation on earth than that.¹¹⁰ He himself exercised that preference, and remained in Ontario until his death in 1883.

Writing one year after Smallwood and five before Dred Scott signalled the demise of his citizenship, black abolitionist Martin Delany launched a book which provocatively opened with a dedication to the 'AMERICAN PEOPLE, NORTH AND SOUTH. BY THEIR MOST DEVOUT, AND PATRIOTIC FELLOW-CITIZEN, THE AUTHOR.'¹¹¹ It was provocative because the thrust of Delany's argument was that black American citizenship was essentially a sham, evident in the manifest lack of equality between black and white citizens. For Delany, free black citizenship was only equal in status to that of enslaved blacks in the South. He wrote, 'the bondman is disfranchised, and for the most part so are we. He is denied all civil, religious, and social privileges, and so are we.'¹¹² It becomes clear that for the freeborn Delany, it was the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, which he cited in full, that effected the contraction of black rights, so now even free blacks were 'slaves in the midst of freedom.'¹¹³ Delany's anger at the extirpation of any claim to citizen equality would seem to make him a primary candidate for conversion to the British American alternative, but such was not the case. He insisted upon a shared American identity. Like most other black Americans, he rejected the blandishments of the ACS. 'We must not leave this continent; America is our destination and our home,' he told his black readers, 'we are Americans, having a birthright citizenship,' and 'claims common to all our fellow citizens.'¹¹⁴ Aware of the refugee exodus to Canada that was taking place around him, Delany provided his black readers with ample reasons to

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 65.

¹¹¹ Martin Robison Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States. Politically Considered* (Philadelphia: Published by the Author, 1852; Reprinted New York: Arno Press, 1968), 3.

¹¹² Ibid., 14.

¹¹³ Ibid., 155.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 171 & 48-9.

beware the allure of the British Canaan.¹¹⁵ Ironically, he himself would relocate to Canada West between 1856 and 59, and go onto advocate black emigration to Africa.

The latter would never tempt black abolitionist and moral reformer William Whipper who, like Delany, acknowledged the defunct status of black citizenship in the USA, but who, unlike him, saw its rejuvenation to the north. Writing to New York state politician and white abolitionist Gerrit Smith in April 1856, Whipper critiqued a recent speech in which Smith had opposed emigration. Agreeing that colonization to Africa was to be opposed, Whipper lauded the opportunities afforded blacks in Canada West. Black Canadians were 'so far from being refugee's from duty, or crime,' Whipper wrote. They were, 'aiding the progress of Civilization in their new home, and demonstrating the Capacity of the "blackman" to enter into and pursue the arts of Civilized life (when removed from the precincts of republican despotism) which creates a nations resources, augments her power and embellishes her name and character.' Thus, Whipper presented Smith, who himself had stood for President as leader of the antislavery Liberty Party, with a blistering denunciation of the American experiment. As if taking Delany at his word, Whipper's blacks had not left the 'continent' but they had abandoned 'America.' The latter for Whipper was an autocratic republic in which they had been deprived of civilization and citizenship. In British America, Whipper stated they 'enjoy an equality of rights and privileges under a government whose principles, policy and practical Justice is more pure than our own,' as subjects.¹¹⁶ Whipper's assertion of monarchic purity struck a blow at republican religious avowals of moral superiority. America's experiment was ridiculed by its squandering of national potential. British America was augmented and embellished at a cost to the USA. Superficially, it may seem that Whipper was presenting the black British American experience as purely one-sided, involving the civilising of the "blackman." Instead, it was one of mutuality, in which escape from a debilitating republicanism had enabled the "blackman" to prove both his civilising potential and to become a civiliser himself. In short, fulfil his citizen potential but as a subject.

¹¹⁵ Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 142.

¹¹⁶ Ripley (Ed.), *BAP Vol IV*, 336.

The benefits of subjecthood were debated between those who embraced it, and those who simply observed it whilst continuing to strive for citizenship within the USA. That striving nor its attraction were totally absent in the new black British America as is evidenced by the return of many to the States during Reconstruction. Some, like Shadd Cary, envisioned a subjecthood that extended across Britain's North American colonies forming a cordon to stifle the Slave Power. The reality was that the promise of protection and freedom that subjecthood, delivered effectively countered a federal policy that pre-1860 struck the unprotected, persecuted and enslaved. For thousands who made it across the Jordan into British America, monarchy trumped republicanism, subjecthood revealed the limitations of semi- or non-citizenship. The deficiencies of the American experiment were laid bare, and black Americans happily shed nascent American national identities to embrace British imperial ones.

3. GENDERED HORIZONS – How British America Helped Reinvent the Black American Family.

Black editor and abolitionist Henry Bibb was born a slave in Kentucky. Like many who escaped to freedom, he wrote a narrative of his life. At the outset, when describing his burgeoning sense of what it meant to be free, it was Canada that called him. He would not be satisfied until he was in Canada, 'where I was regarded as a man, and not as a thing.'¹¹⁷ In his yearning, Bibb differentiated not only between humanity and property, but his claim to the gender role denied him as a slave. As in Josiah Henson's confrontation at the Great Exhibition, our attention is drawn to the masculinisation of black male Americans in their freed condition from bondage, and specifically, as free men in British America. This had broader implications for those in family units. For the mid-century white middle class American, family was central. The uplift of the black American family was key to both white and black abolitionists. Becoming a man meant becoming a husband and father, a woman became wife and mother, girl became daughter, and so on. Slavery stifled this process. E. Anthony Rotundo has posited that

¹¹⁷ Bibb, *Narrative*, 16.

for white American males in the nineteenth century, 'if a man was not a man, he must be like a boy.'¹¹⁸ In the States, black males were always 'boys.' The British American experience countered this, undermining white America's ability to deliver on the centrality of the family as a social unit.

Bibb strove repeatedly to escape to Canada with his family. The repetition of his trials forms the core of his narrative, and, in the words of Charles J. Heglar, 'dramatizes Bibb's inability to successfully pursue freedom with his wife and daughter.'¹¹⁹ But it represents more than dramatic storytelling. Bibb attested to his efforts, and frustrations, to effectively realise and fulfil his role as a man, husband, and father. The result was a fractured family, a reflection of the unnaturally sundered family units for which the slave system was often responsible. That his personal experience, which featured so vividly in his narrative, continued to inform him was suggested by an editorial published in Bibb's Windsor-based newspaper *Voice of the Fugitive*, (*VOF*) in June 1851, where he cited the sufferings of slaves when 'the most sacred ties of the human family are frequently and wickedly broken up by selling husbands from wives and children from parents.'¹²⁰ The subsequent de-masculinisation of black males was reversed in British America. Countless refugees and fugitives testified to their newly affirmed gender status. Pro-Canadian William Grose was clear in his transformation. 'I feel now like a man, while before I felt more as though I were a brute.'¹²¹ Implicit is the sense here of Grose as not only a 'brute' because of the diminution of his masculinity but also, his devolved racial status. Physical opposition to whites, has been recognised as a double-edged sword for black males. For them, it could be an assertion of masculinity, but through the lens of white America, it could function as an affirmation of the racial evaluation of blacks as brutish inferiors.¹²² That Grose was sensitive to this assessment

¹¹⁸ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 20.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

¹²⁰ *Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851, Vol. I, No. 13.

¹²¹ Drew, *Refugee*, 86.

¹²² Horton, *Free People of Color*, 84.

is indicated by the fact that he immediately went on to define the difference between 'man' and 'brute.' Mirroring Henson's experience at the Great Exhibition, he told Drew, 'if a white man speaks to me, I can look him right in the eyes —if he were to insult me, I could give him an answer.'¹²³ Evidently, to be a man is to assert strength, whilst setting aside the violence of the brute.

In this, black British Americans were exercising their masculinity in ways recognisable and acceptable to white Americans. There was a caveat. Drew's testimonies seem to be implicitly directed at a white male audience in the Northern states. It is a specific form of masculinity that is being communicated and promoted as suitable for black males, and it is a form Yankee middle class men would have found appropriate. In fact, our attention is drawn to the much broader, complex shifts taking place in what was considered acceptable masculine behaviour in the mid-nineteenth century, and the formative influence of the British American experience in the black masculinising process is being highlighted. That these shifts entailed a dislocation of what were once considered masculine norms was clearly reflected two years later in the most notorious male-to-male encounter of the 1850s, the caning of Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts by Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina on the Senate floor on May 22, 1856.¹²⁴ The violent aggressive masculinity of Brooks was lauded in the South and excoriated in the North, whilst Sumner's resolute bravery in standing his ground without resort to physical violence was applauded by fellow Northerners and reviled by Southerners.¹²⁵ Grose, and Henson at the Great Exhibition, were situated within the breach. Both in the North and the South, black males were denied recourse to aggression, both physical and non-physical. Recourse to either against whites, even as a means of defence, endangered their lives at the hands of the community, the mob, or the law. The one aspect of the Brooks-Sumner confrontation that would have resonated with black males' own experience was the abolitionist Sumner's reinvention as a

¹²³ Drew, *Refugee*, 86.

¹²⁴ David Herbert Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* 1989 Edition (Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009), 239-41.

¹²⁵ Michael E. Woods '“The indignation of Freedom-Loving People”: The Caning of Charles Sumner and Emotion in Antebellum Politics,' *Journal of Social History* 44 (2011) 689-705.

martyr, the difference being that in the black case, it was a role that normally proved fatal, much to the exaltation of the white abolitionist cause. Seen in this context, both Henson's stand against his white American opponent, and Grose's assertion of strength says much of the empowering influence of British American identity, and the force of British law. Black British Americans emerged on a par with white male Northerners. They are Sumners. Relinquished to the brutish sidelines are Southerners like Brooks, whose violence set them below the status of even a black British American.

For those who embraced the masculinising potential of British America, a sense of manliness was a subject to which many drew attention. It was expressed with less force than Grose, but no less pride by seventy-two-year-old Philip Younger. A fugitive, who having endured fifty-five years of slavery, Younger was forced to seek refuge in Canada West by the 1850 Fugitive Law. He testified that, 'it was a hardship at first; but I feel better here – more like a man – I know I am – than in the States.'¹²⁶ Freedom itself empowered masculinity. 'Liberty is the true and proper state for the colored man, and for every man,' asserted newly arrived fugitive, James W. Sumler.¹²⁷ But it seems it was only British freedom that could ensure this transition. Aby B. Jones of Kentucky, despite being a free man in his state, came to Canada to find 'some place where I could really be a FREE MAN.'¹²⁸ A key element in enabling this corrective assertion of gender was subjecthood. 'A man was a man by law' asserted the bedridden Reverend Hemsley.¹²⁹ Grose now enjoyed 'the rights and privileges of any other man... Now I feel like a man'¹³⁰ Like Grose, John D. Moore, a free black who over a period of twenty years suffered from discrimination in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey, situated his newfound masculinity and the equality he enjoyed within the protection afforded by British law. 'The law here is stronger than the mob.' Moore affirmed, 'if a man insults me

¹²⁶ Drew, *Refugee*, 250-1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 150.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

here, he is glad to get out of the way for fear of the law,' whereas in the States, 'I found no law on my side.'¹³¹ British subjecthood, its ensuring of rights, and emergent masculinity were mutually affirming. Others of Drew's interviewees attested to similar experiences.¹³²

The acquisition of masculinity was paralleled and empowered by another leitmotif shared by many of Drew's testifiers, the importance of family and the roles of family members. It was his failure to protect his family that haunted Bibb. However, it should be noted that of the 113 blacks that Drew interviewed, most were young men from the border states. Of the 16 women interviewed, 14 were married.¹³³ For his abolitionist readers, the images Drew presented were potent affirmations of the potential of freed blacks to effectively deliver those functioning family units that middle class whites expected as key denominators of black uplift. 'My family are with me,' declared James Adams, a fugitive from Virginia who had been in Canada for thirty years, now resident at St Catherines. 'We live well and enjoy ourselves. I worship in the Methodist church.' The fusing of familial fulfilment and community worship would have resonated with Drew's audience. Adams had been resident in Canada since 1824, but unlike those discussed earlier who yearned for a United States that recognised racial equality, the Adamses, father and wife, seemed content. 'I am buying this place,' the father told Drew.¹³⁴ Similarly, the wrenching away of family members by slave masters continued to prove painful for those who had fled. 'The hardest thing in slavery is not the work,' Dan Josiah Lockart confided, 'it is the abuse of a man, and, in my case, of a man's wife and children.'¹³⁵ Implicitly, Lockhart concedes that he had been robbed of his masculinity by his inability to fulfil his role as husband and father. He had fled Frederick County,

¹³¹ Ibid., 174.

¹³² Ibid., Aaron Sidles 273; Thomas Hedgebeth 279; William Street 290; Ben Blackburn 333; John Hatfield 364.

¹³³ Edelstein, 'Introduction' in Drew, *Refugee*, xiv.

¹³⁴ Drew, *Refugee*, 28.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 49.

Virginia, in 1847 leaving behind his children while his wife had been sold to another master.

Long recognised, the accusation that slavery destabilised family norms as cruel masters divided families, and abused wives and mothers was a theme of the abolitionist argument. Here, the accusation is even more pointed as it is to the British that black Americans were forced to turn to realise and stabilise their familial aspirations. While few of the small number of women interviewed commented on the impact of Canada upon their everyday lives, those who did painted a complex picture. Mrs John Little, wife of a successful husband, was keen to note that her newly acquired status was acknowledged by her husband's business associates. They 'pay me as much attention as though I were a white woman: I am as politely accosted as any woman could wish to be.'¹³⁶ Mrs Little's evident pride highlighted the advantages provided by British America's hierarchical society in which wealth and position were empowering. It contrasted sharply with the derision afforded blacks who tried to improve their social positions in America.

In their ability to sustain family connections, for parents, it was the possibilities enjoyed by their children that was central to their embrace of the British American experience. Though often inadequate and never fully realised, the education of blacks had long been recognised by white Americans, both North and South, as key to their improvement. Mrs Isaac Riley of the Elgin Settlement at Buxton talked proudly of her children's schooling in Latin and Greek, and of the future they might enjoy on the one hundred acres her husband had purchased. She herself found Canada difficult, missing particularly the lack of communion between whites and blacks that had been part of her Missouri upbringing.¹³⁷ Such was her initial disaffection that she admitted had her old master 'come for me I would have gone back willingly.'¹³⁸ But now she saw her situation

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 233.

¹³⁷ Drew's female interviewees testify to stronger attachment to their home states for reasons of community and family. Mrs Francis Henderson of London affirmed she would like to return to Washington DC, if it were free, as "my parents were there." Drew, *Refugee*, 161.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 300.

much improved; 'we were in darkness – here we are in light.' It is evident that it was the future of her children that had been fundamental to this shift.¹³⁹ 'If I do not live to see it, perhaps my children will, that this will one day be a great place.'¹⁴⁰ She was referring to Elgin itself, founded in 1849, and she would prove prescient as it would become Canada West's most successful black settlement. Of interest is the fact that she sees no future for herself there. Instead, it had become a focus for the opportunities available to her children. Her testimony suggests the extent to which fugitives anticipated little change to their situation in the USA.

A similar focus on the younger generation as an engine in preparation for the uplift of blacks was provided by J. C. Brown of Chatham. For Brown, this moment of transition was definitively charged by being in British America. He and his wife were among those who had fled Cincinnati post 1829. It was Brown who had approached the Governor General Sir John Colborne in 1829, and received the promise of equal subjecthood. 'I have his letter now in my possession – his memorable words,' he told Drew.¹⁴¹ Jones and his wife briefly returned to the US where he once more suffered discrimination. In 1849, they finally settled in Chatham. 'Our children growing up in this country,' Jones promised, 'will grow up entirely different from their fathers, - of more benefit to themselves, of more benefit to the government, and will be more able to set good examples to the rising generations' He concluded, 'intelligent parents will raise up intelligent children.'¹⁴² Brown echoed William Whipper's critique, evoking an America robbed of opportunity. Failing to recognise the promise of equality, blacks had been driven to seek aid in a foreign place. It was Britain that realised their potential, and it was she who would benefit. Brown drew attention to the harsh reality of an evolved black British American identity being passed down the generations. Others too talked at

¹³⁹ Ibid., 301.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 300.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 245.

¹⁴² Ibid., 248.

length about their deprivation of education, and the possibilities afforded by British America to younger generations.¹⁴³

That both gender norms and family potential were frustrated in the free states has long been recognised.¹⁴⁴ A degraded status for blacks was seen to be the norm in an irredeemably prejudiced white society. Even organised opposition to the ACS that could be characterised as an opportunity for black male Americans to manifest their masculinity, did not allow them to reach their full potential.¹⁴⁵ Drew's testimonies allowed him to present blacks as family-oriented, aspirational and hard-working. That it was in British America that their elevation was to be found was a bitter irony. For some, it was testament to their escape from America's corrupting urban environments. It was no accident that from the outset, the suitability of the Canadian soil was highlighted at black conventions or that its acquisition by black immigrants was considered paramount. The 1832 National Convention at Philadelphia, for example, was silent on the political and social advantages afforded those forced to flee to Canada West, but pointedly highlighted 'the purchase of lands in the Canadas.'¹⁴⁶ In this, it reflected and responded to white Americans' critiques of urban blacks as degraded, and later, the neo-Jeffersonian ideals of the 1840s and 50s that asserted Free Soil as fundamental to white improvement.

As Carla L. Peterson has noted in her examination of the work of Shadd Cary, whilst white America sought its future in the West, Shadd Cary 'promoted Canada for the black.'¹⁴⁷ The centrality of the soil to Shadd Cary is indicated by the fact that having lauded the climate of Canada, and its suitability for black settlement, she posed the central question of her work; 'it is important to know if by this investigation... a

¹⁴³ Ibid., William Grose 87;

¹⁴⁴ Horton, *Free People of Color*, 76-7;

¹⁴⁵ Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 8-9.

¹⁴⁶ Ripley (Ed.), *BAP Vol III*, 110.

¹⁴⁷ Carla L. Peterson, "*Doers of the Word*": *African-American Women Speakers and Writers in the North, 1830-1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 106.

permanent nationality is included in the prospect of becoming purchasers and settlers.’¹⁴⁸ Though conceding the importance of ‘personal freedom and political rights,’ for her, it was the ownership of land that was ‘paramount,’ and it is in the combination of all three that Shadd Cary acknowledged a fundamental precept of American citizenship, the right to the ownership and protection of property. What follows is unexpected as she focused on a detailed analysis of the Canadian soil, bypassing ‘POLITICAL RIGHTS – ELECTION LAW- OATH – CURRENCY.’¹⁴⁹

It is evident that ‘nationality’ for Shadd Cary was explicitly an expression of the relationship between owner and land. It is the latter that determined the identity of the former, and it was no accident that in her assessment of the land, she extolled the role of the British American government in its affordable provision. Having established a positive link between the land and its administration, she was then able to assert Canada West as not only a space for black freedom and security, but also self-reliance. Noting ‘formerly totally destitute coloured persons,’ Shadd stated, ‘I firmly believe that with an axe and a little energy, an independent position would result in a short period.’¹⁵⁰ It is also evident that this was achievable thanks to the elevated fertility of Canadian land and its produce by comparison with the USA. In Canada, ‘the Irish potato grows much larger,’ vegetables ‘are decidedly superior,’ and if fruits are to be compared, then ‘pre-eminence will be the award of the Province.’¹⁵¹ In Shadd’s panegyric, Canada emerges as both a fecund and political Promised Land. Henry Bibb struck a different note in setting up the Americans Refugee Home in 1851, for whilst advocating land purchases, he advised that part of the money available be kept in the bank for further acquisitions, ‘while slavery exists in the United States.’¹⁵² For Bibb, land ownership represented no permanent affiliation of nationality. As Heglar has noted, he, ‘looked

¹⁴⁸ Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-14 provides an examination of the soil. Political Rights et al appear on 26.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 11-2.

¹⁵² *Voice of the Fugitive*, 18 June 1851, Vol. I, No. 13.

forward to an eventual return to the United States.’¹⁵³ Even Frederick Douglass saw the rural space in the British province as revitalising. The result was blacks ‘are more respected in Canada than in the States, because they are engaged in more respectable occupations.’¹⁵⁴ This mirrored the importance of work in defining white American manhood where, ‘it helped to connect a man’s inner sense of identity with his identity in the eyes of others’¹⁵⁵

The one constant challenge to black uplift that confronted communities on both sides of the border was prejudice. Writing in 1852, as emigration to Canada West swelled, Shadd Cary painted an overly positive portrait of the province as ‘a country in which chattel slavery is not tolerated, and prejudice of color has no existence whatever.’¹⁵⁶ The latter may have been the case for her, and other leaders of the black community who enjoyed an elevated status, but the prejudice she did concede was amongst blacks themselves. She decried a preference for separate churches as, ‘their influence on the colored people is fatal... In her bosom are nurtured the long-standing prejudices, and hatred against whites.’¹⁵⁷ Her lengthiest explanation of the prevalence of prejudice was focused on a minority of black settlers for whom, ‘there is yet a deal of ignorance, bigotry, prejudice, and idleness.’ These, she accused of promoting a prejudice towards whites amongst recently arrived fugitives. It stoked their memories of slavery, so that ‘every casual remark by whites is tortured into a decided and effective negro hate.’¹⁵⁸ Casual or not, implicit is the existence of prejudice amongst whites. Indeed, Shadd Cary

¹⁵³ Heglar, ‘Introduction’ in Bibb, *Narrative*, xiii. Ironically, Bibb would die in Canada West in 1854 whilst Shadd Cary would return permanently to the United States in 1865.

¹⁵⁴ *The North Star*, February 23, 1849, quoted in Patrick Rael, *Black Identity & Black Protest in the Antebellum North* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 191.

¹⁵⁵ Rotundo, *American Manhood*, 168.

¹⁵⁶ Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration*, 16-7.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 17-8.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

confirmed it, and condemned those blacks 'who by their indolent habits tend to give point to what of prejudice is lingering in the mind of whites.'¹⁵⁹

Carla Peterson has shown that intrinsic to Shadd Cary's concept of race was a belief in a lack of fundamental differences between whites and blacks other than that of colour.¹⁶⁰ Here, Shadd Cary testified that whites could assert such differences based on the indolence of some black settlers and their failure to eradicate longstanding prejudices. Indeed, the onus was on blacks to extricate themselves from both, prior to securing the acceptance of whites. For Shadd Cary, Canada West was a space for black uplift, a laboratory in which refugees and fugitives could, and should, reinvent themselves, thereby disproving the persistent accusations of many white Americans that black freedom resulted only in racial failure. Given Shadd Cary's belief in the intrinsic equality of races, it is illuminating that she did not require white British Americans to undergo a parallel process of self-revaluation. Indicating the extent to which the 1850s was so perilous for black Americans, it seems that British America was merely required to provide safety and opportunities while blacks, both free and fugitive, ensured their own transformations.

Shadd Cary's analysis found echoes in Drew's testimonials, though the latter also presented a complex situation. For the Reverend R. S. W. Sorrick of Hamilton, a resident since 1845, the challenge to blacks, indeed, 'the main obstacle is a prejudice existing between colored and white.'¹⁶¹ It seems that prejudice was a mutual phenomenon. Fugitive Henry Williamson, also a resident of Hamilton, drew attention to jealousy on the part of blacks towards whites, and he was not alone.¹⁶² Even when the latter approached their new neighbours 'with the best intentions in the world,' the refugees were mistrustful, a wariness that Williamson attributed to the fact 'they have been so

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. Shadd Cary seems to echo the critique of Thomas Smallwood in his *Narrative* published a year earlier.

¹⁶⁰ Peterson, *Doers of the Word*, 99-100.

¹⁶¹ Drew, *Refugee*, 121.

¹⁶² Ibid., William Thompson 137.

much deceived and kept down by the white people.¹⁶³ For William Jackson of Queen's Bush, it seemed white prejudice was incited by fugitives unused to British American manners. Newly free, 'they go beyond good limits,' said Jackson, 'and have not courtesy enough.'¹⁶⁴ The extent of prejudice described varies. Refugee Nelson Moss of London, confirmed, 'there is a great deal here in London, but not so much as in Pennsylvania.'¹⁶⁵ Whereas R. Van Branken, a refugee from New York State, insisted, 'among some people here, there is as much prejudice as in the States,' and for Robert Nelson of Colchester, 'the prejudice is higher here in this place than in any part of Canada.'¹⁶⁶ Edward Patterson, another fugitive in Hamilton, similarly identified distrust on both sides and clarified that the main problem was 'the ruffians in Canada.'¹⁶⁷ John D. Moore of London too identified the main source of prejudice as 'the low class of people,' noting that, unlike in the States, they were kept at bay by the law.¹⁶⁸ The prevalence of prejudice amongst Canada West's white labouring classes was ignored by Shadd Cary, her only intimation being that blacks were sometimes barred from taverns that she described as, 'invariably of an inferior class.'¹⁶⁹

In an 1851 editorial entitled 'Color-Phobia in Canada,' Henry Bibb too, pinpointed 'the lowest class of whites' and 'the very dregs of society' for their prejudices, blaming their corruption on influences from the United States.¹⁷⁰ This focus on a specific group of Canadians highlights the complex contradictions that existed between what white Americans characterised as British America's vertically hierarchical, and by implication,

¹⁶³ Ibid., 134.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 190.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 153.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 305 & 371.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 121.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 174.

¹⁶⁹ Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration*, 35.

¹⁷⁰ 'Color-Phobia in Canada,' *Voice of the Fugitive*, 21 May 1851 in Bibb, *Narrative*, 227 & 229.

rigid society, and their own. The latter, despite the evident contradictions that existed, not least between the North and the South, was understood to be horizontally egalitarian, a flexible and dynamic construct. Neither was so simple. For most white Americans post-Independence, free blacks proved the great conundrum in their new world of equals, until Jacksonian America offered the reassuring solution that the world they were constructing, politically, legally and socially, was intended for them alone. Deprived of citizenship and security, many blacks turned their backs on the Republic and headed north. Class in British America whilst it functioned as a great differentiator, was a fluid space in which wealth and ability, or lack thereof, could propel individuals up and down the social ladder. These systems meant that, when it came to racial prejudice, the results were very different. A wealthy black man in British America could become a Wistar Gibbs, a community leader and political figure, whereas in the USA, he would always remain a black man with money, and as such had no status or rights. The acquisition of money itself by blacks was a problematic attack on the white social order promoted in Jacksonian America. For too long historians when correcting the myth of a Promised Land that failed, have focused on the extent of prejudice in Canada. Instead, we must recognise that the rights of blacks in British America, that set them on the same legal and political footing as the 'ruffians' who were their persecutors, and from whom they were undifferentiated under the law, (an irritant that helps explain the high levels of prejudice amongst working class whites), effectively punctured the claims of the American experiment, and certainly exposed the failings of the Declaration of Independence.

Overcoming prejudice most clearly exemplified by segregation, and underlining the opportunities equal status provided were both goals pursued by many blacks in Canada West. The provision of education was to the fore. From the outset, desegregated schools proved problematic in many white areas. Josiah Henson explained the founding of his school at Dawn in 1842. 'Owing to the insurmountable prejudices of the inhabitants,' he tells us, 'the children of the blacks were not allowed to share the advantages of the common school.'¹⁷¹ Refugee William Thompson admitted that the black children of Galt were not initially allowed to attend their local school until he approached the governor,

¹⁷¹ *Life of Josiah Henson*, 74.

‘and the law was declared that all had equal rights.’¹⁷² Nelson Moss too testified to the co-education of white and black children, and was explicit regarding the expected results; ‘If the children grow up together, prejudice will not be formed.’¹⁷³ The degree to which desegregation was desirable was contested. R. Van Brenken reported that, as in Rochester, New York, the segregated school at Chatham was the choice of blacks themselves. ‘I was never in favour of such a thing,’ he says. Whether schools or churches, Brenken asserted segregation as a negative, for, as in Rochester, ‘it injured them very much.’¹⁷⁴ William Henry Bradley of Dresden too reported debate amongst his community that had resulted in separate schools, ‘although many colored people have prayed against them as an infringement of their rights.’ In neither case was there any suggestion that the choice was enforced by the broader white community. Instead, black agency in deciding communal institutions seems to have operated with the parameters of mistrust and suspicion of whites identified by Henry Williamson and William Thompson. It is also clear that such mistrust was imported from the States and remained persistent in the face of British American prejudice. In both cases, blacks were involved in constructing what they saw as their own secure spaces, though they were not always agreed on how those spaces should function to the best effect.

Complicating such debates was the nascent character of the black British American community. As Richard Almonte has pointed out, that community is misunderstood if seen, ‘as it often is in popular Canadian history – as a uniform group of ex-slaves happy simply to be in Canada.’¹⁷⁵ At mid-century, all black settlements in Canada West were involved in a difficult process of construction, not helped by the increase in immigration post-1850. Conflict was inevitable. Community members came from diverse backgrounds. The differentiation between refugee and fugitive was heightened by issues of age, gender, ability, and place of origin. The very process of settlement,

¹⁷² Drew, *Refugee*, 137.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 153.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹⁷⁵ Richard Almonte (Ed.), Thomas Smallwood, *A Narrative of Thomas Smallwood (Coloured Man)*, (1851; Reprinted Toronto: The Mercury Press, 2000), 12.

involving as it did flight, physical danger, threat of capture, and dislocation from long-established homes and relationships contributed to the complexity of the organisational processes in which they were involved, and the insecurities they experienced. They were refugee communities in the true sense, and within them, the broader prejudices existing between blacks and whites were sometimes conflated to encompass conflicts between blacks themselves.

Such was the case with Thomas Smallwood who when drawing attention to the prejudice he had encountered in Toronto, added that, 'the greatest prejudice of all is that against myself personally, held by people of my own colour.'¹⁷⁶ Thus he introduced the great purpose of his 1851 narrative, the clearing of his name. His focus was accusations made against him when he lived in Washington DC, and involved in the operations of the Underground Railroad that he had been guilty of embezzling funds raised to help the fugitive cause. This he denied at length, drawing attention to all those he had assisted in their escape, and pointing the finger at others who had misled and betrayed his confidence.¹⁷⁷ Such is the detail of his account that it seems Smallwood was a well-intentioned victim, and his narrative highlights the long-recognised role of black Americans who actively subverted fugitives' efforts to escape. However, the necessity of asserting his innocence draws our attention to the fact that forging a new life in British America involved more than simple readjustment.

Black Canadian communities were emerging at a volatile time during which distrust and accusation proliferated. Smallwood's reputation was not helped by his disputatious character. A shareholder in Shadd Cary's newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*, he sued her for payment, and launched acrimonious accusations against Josiah Henson and the Dawn Settlement. The latter seems to have been his focus when in 1843 he attempted to raise money in western New York State to assist in the transportation of fugitives from DC. He complained that abolitionists were, 'more willing to give their thousands to a defunct institution got up by a few designing persons in the name of colored

¹⁷⁶ Smallwood, *Narrative*, vii.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-43. Twenty-four of the fifty pages of Smallwood's *Narrative* are devoted to clearing his name.

refugees.¹⁷⁸ In this opinion, he echoed debates that focused on black public institutions in which all members of the community were involved. Even its leaders were often disunited in their objectives. Henry Bibb, editor of the *VOF*, was a founder of the Refugee Home Society in 1851, dedicated to providing fugitives with land on which to settle. Shadd Cary's *Provincial Freeman* was strongly opposed to its reliance on what she saw to be demeaning charitable support that undermined blacks' commitment to self-improvement, as well its focus on fugitives with no provision for free black refugees. Segregated schools were another issue upon which Bibb and Shadd Cary clashed. Bibb was a supporter, whilst Shadd Cary was bitterly opposed. Smallwood too contributed to the debate in the Appendix to his Narrative. In terms similar to Shadd Cary's, he rejected segregated churches for blacks. These he saw as, 'a bar to their moral and religious elevation, as well as to their domestic elevation.'¹⁷⁹ Like her, he identified their animus as inspired by previous experience in the US, which, 'has engendered a prejudice in the minds of many of the colored people against being in connexion with the white people, and if not remedied,' how, 'can we complain of prejudice against us, while we ourselves are the promoters thereof?'¹⁸⁰ Again, the onus was upon blacks to rectify the existence of prejudice in British America.

These debates are proof of the processes in which blacks were actively engaged, in navigating their transitions in status and place. 'There is prejudice here,' declared Thomas Hedgebeth of Chatham but, 'the colored people are trying to remove this by improving and educating their minds,' as well as proving themselves industrious. He stated that all blacks needed to do is show 'that all they want is cultivating.'¹⁸¹ Hedgebeth seems to be talking about the black community of Chatham, but it is evident

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 36-7. Richard Almonte sees this as a reference to the Refugee Home Society, also accused of corruption by Shadd Cary. See Almonte (Ed.) Smallwood, *A Narrative*, 95. However, this cannot be the case as Smallwood is describing activities in autumn 1843. The Refugee Home Society was founded in 1851. It must be the Dawn Settlement to which he is referring that was established in 1842.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 59.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 59 & 60.

¹⁸¹ Drew, *Refugee*, 279-80.

from its mixture of refugees and fugitives that not all required the same levels of improvement. His testimony addressed not only the denuded vitality of blacks themselves. In conceding the importance of proof of improvement before whites, he, like so many others, testified to the needs of blacks and their potential for success as measured by white Americans to Drew's readership. As the 1850s progressed, the focus on proof was contributory to a shift in the discourse of emigration as black conventions increasingly debated options of settlement outside British America and the USA. Central and South America, and Haiti, gave way in the late 1850s to a resurgence of interest in Africa, particularly as advocated by Martin Delany, Henry Highland Garnett, Alexander Crummell and even Frederick Douglass. This too can be characterised as a path towards masculinisation, a choice where 'black nationality comes to replicate the values of Western, Christian, capitalist patriarchy.'¹⁸² As such, it is not surprising that Shadd Cary should remain opposed. British America had provided a space in which all normative gender roles for blacks could be realised and, in her case, even transgressed. As Peterson has pointed out, using the activism of white American women as her model, Cary remained 'convinced of the cultural opportunities for women in homes and communities in North America.' Such opportunities would not be provided by the model upon which African settlement was predicated.

Flawed, and in some cases failed, challenged yet committed, the black communities of British America were actively promoted by blacks themselves. Even when ciphered through white abolitionists such as Drew, their voices sought to disprove the unremitting cycle of social and economic degradation that many white Americans saw as their natural state. As free black subjects, community and family leaders, men and women, they were not an 'indigent, dependent, transient, or publicly rowdy' race.¹⁸³ They were disputatious, contesting integration in education and religion, testimony to the empowerment of black agency that British America provided. Their American experience fostered prejudice towards white British Americans that amongst the lower classes was reciprocated. Importantly, there were models of segregated schools,

¹⁸² Peterson, *Doers of the Word*, 114.

¹⁸³ Melish, *Disowning Slavery*, 137.

churches, and communities that a post-Civil War white South would be happy to embrace.

4. WARM HORIZONS – How Black Americans Challenged Climate Theory.

Harry Thomas, a fugitive from Virginia announced that in Canada, ‘the climate agrees with me – as it does with colored men generally,’ adding that ‘my health is good.’¹⁸⁴ As we saw in Chapter Three, the theory advocated by some white Americans, particularly popular amongst Southerners, that blacks could not thrive except in tropical climates gained traction in the 1850s. Chilly British North America would seem an unlikely spot for successful black settlement, so it is no surprise that the testimonies of the refugees and fugitives countered such theories. The British provinces shared a climate comparable to that of many Northern states, but in emphasising their suitability, blacks were making a broader point. John Evrie, he of the 1853 fruit-theory, was a New Yorker, and to him, and white Americans, North and South, they emphasised their ability to thrive anywhere. They asserted their agency, their rights as human beings to make choices and flourish outside of the cordon of the slave South. They also admitted the extent to which slaves themselves were often ignorant of Canada, an ignorance fostered by their masters.

Harry Thomas and others were battling against a long-established belief to which blacks themselves had contributed. In the late eighteenth century, blacks of African origin engaged in petitions requesting a return to their homeland, whose ‘warm climate is much more natural [and] agreeable to us.’¹⁸⁵ For black British Americans of a generation later, the climatic suitability of their adopted home emerged as a key factor in their struggle to break their bonds not only figuratively, but geographically. They laid claim to a broader geographic identity. In the face of slavery’s insistence that they were only suited to a warm climate, blacks sometimes employed that very warmth to assault

¹⁸⁴ Drew, *Refugee*, 305.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in Horton & Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 178.

the South itself, and its status in the American experiment. Writing to the *Provincial Freeman*, on July 30, 1854, a C. S. Depp of Niles, Michigan exclaimed that ‘the fugitives are better off in a cold climate, than in a warm one under slavery, from their own words.’¹⁸⁶ The editor of that newspaper, only two years before had focused on climate at the outset of her work, *A Plea for Emigration*. Shadd Cary indicted Africa as a focus for colonization, ‘teeming as she is with the breath of pestilence, a burning sun and fearful maladies.’¹⁸⁷ She too took a stab at southern presumptions, citing Canada West, her destination of choice for blacks, with its climate both ‘healthy and temperate,’ as ‘exempt from the steady and enfeebling warmth of the southern latitudes.’¹⁸⁸ In doing so, she reversed southern claims, characterising the climate as responsible for the enervation of which the South’s white slave owners were so often accused. She went further, and when discussing the Caribbean, asserted for blacks a superior ability to acclimatize to whites as those ‘capable of resisting the influence of great heat, are also capable of enduring severe cold.’¹⁸⁹ For Shadd, these assertions of multiple suitability freed blacks from their Southern prison, empowering them with a hemispheric claim.

Born in Washington DC, but a resident of Sandwich, Canada West, black abolitionist James Theodore Holly in 1851 wrote for the *VOF*, setting three goals for the refugees of Canada West. Firstly, to give thanks to the British government, secondly, to support Britain in resisting American territorial aggression, and thirdly, to prove, ‘the adaptability of any portion of the human race to exist and develop themselves equally in any climate.’¹⁹⁰ It is this third point that takes up the lion’s share of Holly’s column. For him, the proof of this principle ‘must demonstrate the unity of the human race.’ Holly wrote at length about the ability of Europeans to acclimatise to Africa, and it is the presence of black Americans on ‘the American Continent, in the north temperate zone,

¹⁸⁶ *Provincial Freeman*, Vol. I, No. 23, Saturday, August 26, 1854.

¹⁸⁷ Shadd, *A Plea for Emigration*, 3.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 5 & 6.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹⁰ *Voice of the Fugitive*, Wednesday July 16, 1851.

and side by side with the Anglo-American' that supported his claim to a wider hemispheric home for blacks.¹⁹¹

Time and time again, blacks highlighted the temperate climate of British America, and, most importantly, their suitability to it, and its suitability for them. On arriving in British Columbia, Mifflin Gibbs, though fleeing California's tightening discriminatory laws, did not fall to his knees in gratitude for freedom. His first comment concerned the weather. Looking back forty years after his arrival in Victoria, Gibbs writes, 'on account of the salubrity of its climate and proximity to the spacious land-locked harbour of Esquimault it is delightful as a place of residence.'¹⁹² In an introductory rhetorical flourish, Bostonian Benjamin Drew asked his readers to consider why black Americans had 'exchanged the genial clime of the south for a realm where winter holds half the year?'¹⁹³ In the question he posed, and the answers they provided, Drew and his black testifiers launched a two-pronged attack upon pro-slavery theory.

The interviewees punctured long held views that blacks were only suited to tropical climes, thereby undermining the credibility of pro-slavery theorists and slaveholders. Drew's question pricked the pacifying assurances of the slaveholding class, so often employed in their assertions that blacks preferred the South. Drew's testifiers went further and assaulted the very credibility of their former masters. By revealing that the latter were frauds, particularly in the context of Canada, they assaulted white Southern honesty, and honour. 'I heard when I was coming that Canada was a cold and dreary country,' stated fugitive Henry Williamson, thirty-three years a slave in Maryland, 'but it is as healthy a place as a man can find. The colored people tell me the climate agrees with them, and I do know it is so.'¹⁹⁴ Such an assault threatened to destabilise the so-often-asserted bonds of father and child that characterised the paternalist slave system. The extent to which such testimonies were being orchestrated by Drew to meet his

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Gibbs, *Shadow and Light*, 60.

¹⁹³ Drew, *Refugee*, 14.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 134.

abolitionist agenda is difficult to assess, but the words of Benjamin Miller, a fugitive from St Louis, suggest that some attempt at balance was made. Miller confessed, 'we have a colder climate than we have been used to, to contend with; we have our own ignorance and poverty to contend with,' and yet he owned property valued at \$1,800, had a wife, and eight children.¹⁹⁵ Like the Loyalists and other blacks who had fled the USA before them, refugees and fugitives battled a harsher climate, and, like whites, they overcame it, survived and, in some cases, flourished. In the pages of the *VOF*, Henry Bibb and his wife Mary used climate as evidence of both black fortitude and fitness. In her attempt to raise money for black schools, Mary attested the endurance of those unfortunates, forced to flee the USA for 'this desolate, cold country.'¹⁹⁶ Henry, on the other hand, in promoting land acquisition, insisted that, 'the argument which is frequently brought up by pro-slavery men that it is so cold that colored people cannot live here is a falsehood... proof to our mind that wherever a white man can live and prosper that a colored man can also...'¹⁹⁷ As William Jackson of Queen's Bush certified, the climate, for those whether white or black, 'is healthy for all.'¹⁹⁸

Climate was part of a broader Southern propaganda designed to dissuade blacks from fleeing to Canada. Ignorance regarding the British Provinces was commonplace according to some interviewees, indicating the problem of communication between blacks, free and slave, and the extent to which information was controlled in the slave states. Twenty-year-old fugitive, John A. Hunter, recently arrived from Maryland was only one of those who reported, 'a great many slaves know nothing of Canada, - they don't know that there is such a country.'¹⁹⁹ Dan Lockhart reported, 'I was told before I left Virginia, - have heard it as common talk, that the wild gees were so numerous in Canada, and so bad, that they would scratch a man's eyes out.'²⁰⁰ He had also been told

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁹⁶ *Voice of the Fugitive*, 26 February 1851, Vol. I, No. 5.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18 June 1851, Vol. I, No. 13.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 190.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 115; also William Street 287.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

that Canada was barren, but for rice. Having fled slavery in Kentucky to Canada in 1845 at the age of forty-seven, Robert Nelson was even more emphatic. 'It is reported throughout the world, that colored people cannot live here: I have been here ten years, and have seen no one starving yet.'²⁰¹

Climate proved as contested a ground amongst blacks as emigration or segregation. Writing long before the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, black abolitionist and advocate of Liberian colonisation, John Brown Russwurm dismissed Canada as a safe haven for blacks as it would prove unwilling to provide even 'a temporary shelter against the bleak winds of a winter.' For him, the only destination for 'a man of color, of republican principles' was Africa.²⁰² Russwurm summoned the spectre of intemperate weather to highlight British America's political unsuitability. In doing so, he opposed the reassuring advice of the 1830 National Colored Convention that the climates of British America, amongst other things, were 'similar to those in this country.'²⁰³ The Third Annual Convention in June 1833 went further, extolling Canada as, 'far more advantageous than the desolate regions of Africa, where the scorching rays of a meridian sun, blasts by its withering influence.'²⁰⁴ But the resolutions of conventions could prove contrary. Pre-1850, whilst preserving Canada as an option, committees were even more keen to stress the suitability of the United States where, 'we have a climate which seems made for us, and we for the climate.'²⁰⁵ The similarities between the British provinces and some of the Northern States was acknowledged, but post-1850, opinion shifted. In 1851, the North American Convention applauded 'the salubrity of the climate of the milder

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 370.

²⁰² *Liberia Herald*, February 6, 1831, in Winston James, *The Struggles of John Brown Russwurm: The Life and Writings of a Pan-Africanist Pioneer, 1799-1851* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 224.

²⁰³ *Constitution of the American Society of Free Persons of Colour*, 10.

²⁰⁴ *Minutes and Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 23.

²⁰⁵ *Proceedings of the National Convention of Colored People and Their Friends, held in Troy, N. Y., on the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th of October, 1847.* (Troy NY: J. C. Kneeland and Co., 1847), 22.

regions of Canada West,' hailing it as 'the most desirable place of resort for colored people... on the American continent.'²⁰⁶

Martin Delany disagreed, opposing the convention's resolution to encourage migration from the States as 'impolitic and contrary to our professed policy,' which was to oppose the 1850 Fugitive Law and colonisation.²⁰⁷ A year later, Delany changed his mind. In combating the work of the ACS, he provided a lengthy argument against Liberia as a suitable destination for black Americans. Primary was the unsuitability of the climate, 'being located in the sixth degree of latitude North of the equator, in a district signally unhealthy'²⁰⁸ His judgement of British America was partial. Having visited the Canadas a year earlier, he concluded that Canada East was unsuitable as, amongst other things, it was 'cold and sever.'²⁰⁹ But its neighbouring province, 'the climate being milder' than that of most northern states, lead him to confide to his readers that, 'he prefers Canada West to any part of North America, as a destination for the colored people.'²¹⁰ Delany was anything but consistent. It was politics that ultimately damned his chosen Canada.²¹¹ He conceded that the two Canadas will do in the interim for 'our enslaved brethren flying from Southern despotism,' but they were only a pit stop.²¹² The ultimate goal, and 'future home of the colored race on this continent,' is the West Indies, Central and South America.²¹³ Delany confronted any climatic aspersions that might have been cast upon his choices, stressing 'that there is every variety of climate in South, as well as North America.' and highlighted the millions of coloured people already living in those

²⁰⁶ *Voice of the Fugitive*, Wednesday, September 24, 1851.

²⁰⁷ Quoted in Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Tide*, 142.

²⁰⁸ Delany, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration*, 169.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 173.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

²¹¹ See Ch. 5.

²¹² Delany, *Condition, Elevation, Emigration*, 177.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 178.

regions, which, for him, involved none of the political dangers threatening black British Americans.²¹⁴ In essence, whilst rejecting the chosen home of the latter and presenting his readers with an alternative, Delany walked the same path as his fellow black Americans.

Superficially paradoxical, Delany too sought to undermine the climatic theories of proslavery whites, and, like Shadd Cary, was far more candid in the extended geography to which he, as a black American, laid claim. The breadth of climatic disagreement was indicated during the debates of the black San Franciscan community in April 1858 as it decided between emigration to Sonora, Mexico and Victoria, British Columbia. For black community leader Peter Anderson, the latter was a climatic challenge too far.²¹⁵ More problematic was the work of black abolitionist and physician James McCune Smith who in an 1859 essay argued for the temperate advantages of the American climate, its exploitation hampered by the 'continuance of slavery.'²¹⁶ Smith made no reference to British America. His focus was the USA as the space within which both blacks and whites could fulfil their potential, but his rejection of cold climates as limiting suggests he saw no role for Canada in a black North American future. Only a year before, Josiah Henson had disagreed. Seven years after the exhibition of his black walnut boards in London, he felt confident to assert that in Canada West, 'the climate is good, the soil is good, the laws protect us from molestation; each and all may sit under his own vine and fig tree with none to molest or make them afraid.'²¹⁷ For 'all' blacks Henson claimed a British space of equitable security and climate.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 179, 180-1. Unlike the 1851 North American Convention, Delany does not find the presence of slavery in South America problematic and even defends Brazil.

²¹⁵ Lapp, *Blacks in Gold Rush California*, 241.

²¹⁶ James McCune Smith, 'Civilization: Its Dependence on Physical Circumstances' *The Anglo-African Magazine*, No. 1 (January 1859) in John Stauffer (Ed.), *The Works of James McCune Smith: Black Intellectual and Abolitionist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 262.

²¹⁷ *Truth Stranger Than Fiction*, 212.

Climate was political. In this respect, the contrast between the pre- and post-1850 arguments is illuminating. The British American climate along the border was no different from that of many Northern States, but the latter were increasingly closed as the threat to free and fugitive blacks heightened, and citizenship and its legal protection was removed. Black agency in asserting the suitability of the British provinces sought to challenge both theory and myths woven by Southern slaveholders. It also potently restated their embrace of the British land of liberty to a conflicted America.

5. CONCLUSION

This has been a chapter about black voices. Their response is captured in the letter written by fugitive John Henry Hill to William Still. He directly challenged the Southern slaveholder. 'Our masters have told us that there was no living in Canada for a Negro,' but they had lied.²¹⁸ The question I posed at the outset was how black experiences in British America changed their understanding of the USA, and equally importantly, how by becoming British Americans, it changed America's understanding of them. In answer to the first, from the outset, blacks demonstrated a much broader concept of America than their white counterparts. Free black Thomas Smallwood, involved in assisting fugitives in Washington DC, 'was convinced that the place could only be found in America, to my satisfaction, in the British dominions.'²¹⁹ John Henry Hill, in the same letter in which he condemned white Southerners, expressed a very clear idea of the continent; 'I'm in America, but not under Such a Government that I cannot express myself, speak, think, or write.'²²⁰ They had not embraced the US' acquisition of the continental demonym. America remained a broader concept, beyond the borders of the USA, and they asserted their right to live in it. This challenged both arguments for colonisation and climatic suitability.

²¹⁸ Still, *Underground Rail Road*, 193.

²¹⁹ Smallwood, *Narrative*, 53.

²²⁰ William Still, *Underground Railroad*, 193.

What the black British American testimonies clearly reveal is anger and frustration with a republican experiment from which they had been ostracised. Emotional attachments were to loved ones left behind, and the localities from which they were unwillingly forced. Most of the testimonies gathered by Drew focused on the loss of regional identities. They missed home, Kentucky or Virginia. Whilst leaders such as Douglass clung to a frustrated American identity, those who fled in bitterness rejected it, permanently or temporarily. Some embraced wholeheartedly the new British American identities they were offered, others assumed them whilst their regional personas, as Virginians, North Carolinians, and New Englanders, became dormant, awaiting the revivification of American emancipation. Few were those who hankered for the nation they had left. This was especially true for fugitives. For black refugees, American identity was more liminal, something for which to strive. This was especially true amongst community leaders, but that was destabilised post-1850 and particularly, post-1857. By moving to British America, blacks made decisions about who and what they were, and what they would accept. All the biographies, testimonies, and interviews were proof of a continuous attempt to change white American minds. This commitment was proven by those who returned to the USA post-1865, most to the South. In one key respect, the British American exile influenced black understanding of America; the horizons of that world in which most blacks had been restricted to a paltry space were dramatically widened. Hence, the repeated positive testimonies about climate. Supported by the acquisition of political rights, construction of families, and communities, black British America was a place of expansive outlooks, and for some, opportunities. The extent to which such fuelled aspirations were to be realised would be determined within the realm of post-Civil War Reconstruction, the confines of which would increasingly narrow.

In answer to the second part, the extent to which the black British American experience influenced white Americans' understanding of the nation is difficult to gauge pre-1865. Even Civil War when it came did not set out to free the slaves or improve black Americans' condition. The nation's commitment to a post-Jacksonian liberty only slowly evolved in bloodshed, and the sacrifice of black Americans themselves. It can only be surmised that the voices from beyond the border intersected with the increasingly divisive debates that led to conflict in 1860. This is suggested in 1864 when Bostonian

abolitionist Samuel Gridley Howe, one of three members of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission appointed to examine the conditions of refugees and fugitives in the South and Canada West, published his report, and our voices entered a mainstream discourse. Howe cited Benjamin Drew.²²¹ While much of what Howe wrote supported the testimonies provided by blacks pre-war, of far more importance in moulding white American opinion of post-war America was where he differed. The black claim to climate was dismissed as 'the opinion of the common inhabitants of any place respecting its salubrity if often not worth much.' In fact, 'the most reliable medical opinions are that these people are unfavorably affected by the climate.'²²² This was good news for Northerners, especially when Howe's medical evidence argued that their states too were unsuitable for black settlers. Black Americans were put back in their climatic box, and that not even a Southern one as Howe predicted 'they will dwindle and gradually disappear from the peoples of this continent.'²²³ Howe did not report black affinity with the American Union. Reflecting Drew's testimonies, and again reassuring Northerners, he stated that 'they have not taken firm root in Canada, and that they earnestly desire to go to the southern region of the United States.'²²⁴ What is clear is that Howe's, and the Commission's, conclusions were at odds with the claims of blacks themselves, and boded ill for the reconciliation of race in America.

Some would flourish. Mifflin Gibbs returned to the US to enjoy an elevated role, but for every Gibbs, many more blacks suffered the disappointment of de-Reconstruction. The advice he gave fellow black Americans in his 1902 autobiography seemed to be taken from the pages of Shadd Cary and Smallwood. Recognising the inherent prejudice of white Americans, he urged fellow blacks to 'labor to make yourself as indispensable as

²²¹ S. G. Howe, *The Refugees From Slavery In Canada West: Report to the Freedmen's Inquiry Commission* (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1864), 3-4, 6-8. The Commission reported on the South the previous year. See *Preliminary Report Touching The Condition and Management of Emancipated Refugees; Made To The Secretary of War, By The American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, June 30, 1863*. (New York: John F. Trow, 1863).

²²² Howe, *Refugees From Slavery*, 21.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 33.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 102.

possible in all your relations with the dominant race, and color will cut less figure in your upward grade.'²²⁵ It was a maxim with which black American leader, Booker T. Washington concurred.²²⁶ And yet, Gibbs still posited that 'nowhere is the promise along all the lines of opportunity brighter for the American Negro than here in the land of his nativity.'²²⁷ He acknowledged that the promise of Reconstruction had been frustrated, and that with regard to the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, 'subsequent events have fully shown that only to the magnanimity and justice of the American people and the fruition of time can they be commended.'²²⁸ Earlier in the autobiography, Gibbs asserted his commitment to a broad franchise for blacks, characterising the existing system as 'one too limited and unrepresentative.'²²⁹ His final exhortation to reliance upon fate must have provided little succour to black Americans in a South where citizenship remained elusive. Successful in California, Gibbs had proven himself even more so in British Columbia. The positive sojourn in the latter, and the political opportunities it had provided Gibbs had evidently impinged little upon an identity that by 1902 had proven both professionally and financially enriching, though seemingly at times ambivalent, and often opportunistic.

The fluidity with which the likes of Gibbs morphed from British American to American highlights the geographic shift that had taken place in black identity. Having disproven the climatic limitations some whites insisted were an inherent part of their race, black British Americans had laid claim to a hemispheric and global place for themselves. This was reflected in the establishment of organisations such as Henry Bibb's short-lived North American League, founded in September 1851. Whilst promoting emigration to Canada, it also was 'to serve as a central authority for blacks in the Americas.'²³⁰ Mifflin

²²⁵ Gibbs, *Shadow and Light*, 21.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, vi. Washington wrote the Introduction to Gibbs' autobiography.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, vii and 172.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 92.

²³⁰ Ripley (Ed.), *BAP Vol III*, 462.

Gibbs' himself stepped beyond the American sphere when in 1897, he was appointed US Consul to Madagascar. Those who remained within the British Empire could too experience the expansion of vistas of opportunity. Whilst in England, Lord Grey offered Josiah Henson a role in British India, where he was, 'to introduce the culture of cotton on the American plan. He promised to me an appointment to an office, and a good salary.'²³¹ Like Loyalists before him, Henson's choice of being a British American opened up imperial vistas in the wider British world, extending beyond the North American continent. Such opportunities should not be over-stated. They remained the privilege of a few, and would shrink as the century progressed. In both the USA and the Dominion of Canada, integration gave way to segregation and restriction.

Far more lasting were the broader familial and communal developments that British America facilitated. These had contributed to the arguments made by abolitionists in support of emancipation in the 1850s. Post-Civil War, black family and communal identities remained a fixture on both sides of the border. Carla Peterson has correctly identified Shadd Cary's writings as an exploration of racial boundaries, socially, politically and geographically. At root, they represented an exploration of home. 'What can be said to constitute home for African Americans?'²³² The title of Shadd Cary's newspaper, the *Provincial Freeman*, was itself a provocative evocation of the *Pennsylvanian Freeman* as Peterson has noted. It trumpeted the disconnect between US claims to liberty and those of British America, raising questions regarding the latter as a space for black settlement where communities functioned as both temporary home and permanent abroad. But this conclusion is too simplistic. For some, the new black communities of Canada West did become permanent homes as is testified in the evidence provided to the likes of Drew, and by those blacks who chose to remain. They transited from refugees to settlers, and beyond. Fundamental to any assessment of home is identity and in answering Peterson's, and Shadd Cary's, question, I ask what it meant to be a black American? For Shadd Cary, it meant contributing to the work of Reconstruction and ultimately, a role in the American black women's movement. For the remainder of her family, it meant very little. They remained in Canada West where

²³¹ *Truth Stranger Than Fiction*, 196.

²³² Peterson, *Doers of the Word*, 104.

their descendants live to this day. British America allowed blacks to make choices about what it meant to be black and American, what they were capable of, and where they chose to call home. In answering those questions, black British Americans exercised choice, something denied them in the USA. For some, what they found in British America was Canaan, for others it is would never be, but most importantly, what was fostered was the empowerment of black North American agency. British America may have been no Promised Land, but the experience it provided enabled blacks, both refugee and fugitive, to determine their own diaspora.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXPANSIVE HORIZONS: Examining the Persistence of American Continentalism

1. INTRODUCTION

Through the summer of 1868, New York-based journalist Charles Graham Halpine, under his popular Civil War pseudonym, Private Miles O'Reilly, wrote a series of campaign songs supporting Ulysses S. Grant's election campaign.¹ In one verse, Halpine predicted that a Grant victory would see the fulfilment of the nation's continental destiny.

'No "Dominion" shall be North of us
And South of us no foe-
Our Stars and Stripes in the Canadas,
And likewise Mexico!'²

Grant's campaign slogan, 'Let Us Have Peace,' provided reassurance on the disrupted domestic front, but Halpine looked beyond the nation's borders, inspiring voters with an expansive vision of the new presidency.³ His was a pipe dream, and as such, it smacks of electioneering hyperbole, but to dismiss it as irrelevant would be to miss the point. Americans periodically trumpeted the likely incorporation of the provinces into the Union. They had done so as rebel colonists in 1775-87, until the Constitution closed the door that Confederation had opened to Canadian entry. During the War of 1812, what was considered an easy conquest inspired a string of unsuccessful invasions. Anticipation of integration informed the response of many Americans to the Canadian

¹ *New-York Tribune*, August 9, 1868, 4; John Strausbaugh, *City of Sedition: The History of New York City during the Civil War* (New York: Twelve, 2016), 346.

² *Daily Alta California*, Vol. 20, No. 6699, July 19, 1868, 4.

³ This was also a feature of the election literature of Grant's running mate, Schuyler Colfax. See Edward Winslow Martin, *The Life and Public Services of Schuyler Colfax*. (New York: United States Publishing Company, 1868), 219.

Rebellions of 1837-8, and the Montreal Annexation Manifesto of 1849. In 1868, that Halpine felt it was a vote-winner testified to the post-Civil War zeitgeist. The Republic was both confident having survived a bloody war, 'powerful, truculent, and expansionist,' and uncertain in the divisive domestic world of Andrew Johnson.⁴ Annexation reflected long-held expectations. The questions that confront us are why throughout the period under examination, and especially in the late 1860s, did Americans believe that they would acquire British North America, and why did they fail?

Central to the answers is the continentalist ideology discussed in Chapter One. It was the imagined continentalism at the core of the American identity, and encapsulated in its appropriation of the demonym American. It was a volatile concept that easily shifted from the imagined to the real, from possibility to presumption that the USA would encompass all North America. Such shifts were determined by politics and events in British America, and the USA. In 1868, Halpine's verse exploited American grievances that the provinces had abandoned their neutrality during the Civil War by harbouring Confederate militants. Acquisition of Mexico, recovering from French occupation, also fired the imagination as the country was long acknowledged to be a straw man. This chapter explains frustrated American desires. British North America was particularly vulnerable to American continentalism. Not because it was an easy target like Mexico, but geographically, historically, and politically, its existence was an anomaly. As we shall see, the conviction that geography, specifically the links between the St Lawrence and the Great Lakes, supported political unity was longstanding. To this was added the north-south economic corridor between British Columbia and California. History was entrenched, as we have seen in the dismissal of the Canadiens in Chapter Two. It was their preservation by the imperial system that had sundered the old British America of the 1760s and 70s, separating regions that should have remained united in the new America. Canadian survival proved the British American system defunct. The provinces were backward economically by comparison with the US. Their political development was considered a path to independence, with annexation to the States the result. The dynamism of American expansion Southwest and Northeast, and the acquisition of

⁴ Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle*, 165.

Alaska, rendered union inevitable. As Halpine made clear, in his dismissive inverted commas, Dominion as a viable political system was a non-starter. As this chapter will show, American failure to realise this future was the result of a flawed understanding of the provinces and its peoples. British America had no intention of uniting with the States. The Loyalist identity remained attached to monarchy. US military attempts to extinguish it during the Revolution and the War of 1812 had strengthened it. Americans little understood British American politicians who were adept at playing US politics to their advantage in their negotiations with the imperial metropole. What Americans often viewed as the desire of provincials to enter the Union were attempts to remain decidedly outside it.

This chapter traces American continentalism from the late colonial period with a focus on the years 1865-71 when enthusiasm for annexation reached a peak. This was unsurprising at a time of Reconstruction in the USA and what could be termed Construction in British America. Conceptually, annexation was the child of both, and the alternative futures they presented. Yet, historians of Reconstruction have adopted 'an air of studied indifference toward foreign affairs,' focusing instead on domestic issues, leaving our understanding hampered rather than enriched by their absence.⁵ As Mark M. Smith has pointed out, shifting beyond the domestic sheds light upon American racial ideologies that informed foreign policy.⁶ This is particularly true in the Santo Domingo debates where annexation was opposed on the grounds of racial incompatibility. President Grant's hope that it would provide a haven for African Americans and the fissures the debates caused in the Republican party are well-known, but they also raised broader questions concerning race and place in Reconstructed America. Indeed, the two cannot be separated. As we shall see, place or geography was racially determined, impacting upon the nation's longstanding continentalist aspirations. How these debates intersected with assumptions of Canadian integration into the Union remains

⁵ Mark M. Smith, "The Past as a Foreign Country: Reconstruction, Inside and Out," in Thomas J. Brown (Ed.), *Reconstructions: New Perspectives on the Postbellum United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 117.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 119.

unexplored. I examine these in the case of Charles Sumner who opposed Santo Domingo annexation whilst supporting that of British America.

This chapter does not seek to explain at length the failure of annexation nor the collapse of continentalism. That ‘there was a vast continental space to absorb without expending military efforts to go northward’ is too trite an explanation of the US-British American entente.⁷ Indeed, that entente was repeatedly contested. The contrast between the northern and southern borders in the 1840s is informative. Military efforts were expended to the South and to great effect. That southern borders were significantly extended had more to do with what lay on the other side. Suffice to say that in the context of British America, the strength of Britain on the seas was enough to discourage US adventures to the north. Mexico had no such resource. Instead, I examine the ways in which continentalism ebbed and flowed throughout my period, how it was conceptually employed, debated, and explained in public discourse. In that, it proved its resonance with an American geographical identity that was constantly evolving.

2. A NATION WITH BROAD HORIZONS – How Americans Imagined A Greater America.

In 1776, Thomas Paine grasped the spatial parameters of the spirit at work in Britain’s American colonies. Separation from the mother country involved ‘not the affair of a city, a country, a province, or a kingdom, but of a continent – of at least one eighth part of the habitable globe.’⁸ A Greater America was predicted from the outset. The role of the continent in stimulating the move towards independence has been well examined.⁹ It involved the rejection of a British American identity and the embrace of one that, at face value, seemed straightforwardly American. The nurturing of this identity was a complex process, based upon the known and the imagined. The geographic division of the Old

⁷ Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors*, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 100.

⁸ Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, (Philadelphia: W. and T. Bradford, 1776), 14.

⁹ Drake, *The Nation’s Nature*.

World from the New was a given. The notional size of North America by comparison with the Mother Country was evoked by Paine to fire the rebel cause.¹⁰ But in its detail, the continent remained elusive. James D. Drake has highlighted colonists' 'limited knowledge of North America's contours and characteristics,' but geographic specificity was not a requisite for the continental imagination they conjured.¹¹ Little recognised is the distended role newly acquired Quebec played. The city itself was, 'among the most highly prized pieces of real estate in North America,' a colonial valuation based upon the access it provided to the American interior.¹² Between 1763 and 1775 that valuation was on the increase, thanks to reports that elevated Quebec's status as a gateway to not only the continent, but beyond to the Pacific Ocean. Ironically, many of these reports were gleaned from London newspapers.

Colonists read of a passage from Lake Superior, running westward, 'many hundred miles, as large as the Mississippi; which, if true, may in time be a means of laying open the treasure of Acapulco and the Spanish south sea.'¹³ Letters from Quebec expressed 'great hope' of finding navigable communications from Lake Superior to the South Seas via a large river reported by the Indians.¹⁴ Everything from access to new fisheries to the discovery of a North-West passage through the interior stoked the colonial imagination.¹⁵ In an age without visual communications, such reports formed the bedrock of colonists' understanding of the New World they inhabited. The continent was a space of imagined potential. In 1774, Congregational Minister Samuel Williams

¹⁰ 'There is something very absurd, in supposing a continent to be perpetually governed by an island.' Paine, *Common Sense*, 20.

¹¹ Drake, *The Nation's Nature*, 2.

¹² *Ibid.*, 179.

¹³ *Boston Evening Post*, 10 June 1765; 9 March 1772; *Georgia Gazette*, 4 July 1765.

¹⁴ *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, 23 February 1767; *Georgia Gazette*, 11 March 1767; *Boston Evening Post*, 24 August 1767.

¹⁵ *New-York Mercury*, 10 June 1765; *Boston Evening Post*, 19 October 1767.

could look forward to the colonies advancing in the arts and sciences, noting that ‘the natural productions of this vast continent, are a treasure yet untouched.’¹⁶

As Rebels became Revolutionaries, continental confidence was bolstered by voices from outside. Gazing west from Britain in 1780, ex-Royal Governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Pownall, saw the emergence of the USA in both political and geographic terms. He wrote of the emergence of a ‘new system of power’ that was ‘founded in Nature.’¹⁷ The latter, as testified in landscape and geography, engendered a process that was truly continental; ‘North-America is de facto AN INDEPENDENT POWER.’¹⁸ Pownall’s political unit was as much a product of imagined geography as the identities of colonists themselves. What is striking is the foundation stones these accounts provided for continentalism. They provided factual testimony at the time of the Union’s birth to support the extension of the later nation to its natural expanse. So, for example, in 1867, Senator Charles Sumner could pluck from the 1768 edition of *The Administration of the British Colonies*, Pownall’s description of North America’s waterways. These Sumner summarised as being ‘two vast aqueous masses - one composed of the Great Lakes and their dependencies and the other of the Mississippi and its tributaries,’ but of more importance was Pownall’s statement that from the lakes, they extended ‘through all and every part of the continent.’¹⁹ For Sumner’s purpose, like Pownall’s, the geographic cohesion of the continent testified to its natural political unity.²⁰

Unsurprisingly, this strengthening continental identity became welded to the still evolving national identity. The American past would form a continuous backdrop to the

¹⁶ Samuel William A. M., *A Discourse on the Love of our Country; Delivered on a Day of Thanksgiving, December 15, 1774*. (Salem NE: Samuel and Ebenezer Hall, 1775), 24.

¹⁷ T. Pownall, *A Memorial, Most Humble Addressed to the Sovereigns of Europe, on the Present State of Affairs, between the Old and New World. The Second Edition*. (London: J. Almon, 1780), 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹ *The Works of Charles Sumner*. XV Vols. (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1877), Vol. XII, 124 & 125. Initially published by Charles Sumner.

²⁰ See Section 4, ‘OPPOSING HORIZONS’ below.

argument for annexation of the remaining British provinces, but whilst demonstrating the resonance of a national memory, it also highlighted the aspic in which that memory was preserved. Continentalist Charles Sumner mined that past on a lecture tour in 1867, reminding audiences of a truism. ‘Congress was called “Continental,” the army “Continental,” the money “Continental,”’ he declared, ‘implying national unity and predominance, if not exclusive power on the continent.’²¹ Listeners in the 1860s understood that a continental destiny was no contemporary invention, but anchored in the hallowed origins of the nation. It did not matter to Sumner that over the course of the Revolution, and in the face of military defeat in Canada, ‘Continental’ as a descriptive of the fledgling United States had slipped into the shadows. The flag of ownership had been planted.

Those who became citizens of the USA were not the sole inheritors of that continental identity. In 1775, Georgian delegate to the Second Continental Congress, Presbyterian Minister John J. Zubly characterised all rebel colonists as a continental majority. They were, ‘the bulk of the inhabitants of a continent extending eighteen hundred miles in front of the Atlantic, and permitting an extension in breadth as far as the South Sea.’²² Rebel Zubly opposed Independence, becoming a Loyalist, indicating the extent to which continental identity was the shared inheritance of those on either side of the post-1783 divide. Loyalists who chose to remove to Nova Scotia and Upper Canada at the end of the War of Independence expressed their commitment to a British American identity. They remained acutely aware that it was both transatlantic and imperial as well as specific to the hemisphere they inhabited, as Canadian Liberal George Brown reminds us.²³ Indeed, the new Dominion of Canada was established upon longstanding aspirations as it was committed to expand to the Pacific. Yet, ironically, for American continentalists in 1867, it seemed Canada was appropriating their mantle. Such was the extent to which the northern hemisphere was seen to be the sole property of the USA.

²¹ *Works of Charles Sumner*, Vol. XII, 232.

²² John J. Zubly, D. D. *The Law of Liberty. A Sermon on American Affairs, Preached at the Opening of the Provincial Congress of Georgia. Addressed to the Right Honourable The Earl of Dartmouth*. (Philadelphia & London Re-Printed: J. Almon, 1775), 10.

²³ See pp. 34-5 above.

British American continentalism had been given a fillip in the 1790s and 1800s as thousands of Americans settled in Upper Canada. Geography, and cheap land, evidently trumped any nascent American nationalism, even if it involved embracing subjecthood. They were only partially fulfilling the Geographer of the United States, Thomas Hutchins' prediction in 1784 that, 'this immense continent will be peopled by persons whose language and national character must be the same,' for they became British Americans.²⁴

Their presence inspired a misplaced confidence when the USA invaded the provinces during the War of 1812. The debacles in which Madison's Administration became embroiled were attempts to realise the fulfilment of continental ambitions. Indeed, there is little difference between the intentions of those who invaded Canada in the 1810s, and California and Mexico in the 1840s. They were out for what they could get, but Canada was a disaster and Mexico a success. In both cases, it is important to note the terminology employed to clarify territorial goals, indicating that even in war, continentalism represented the natural extension of the nation. Conquest was a term never used, other than by opponents. In 1848, the cession of Mexican territories was officially a negotiated purchase. Writing in 1812, Thomas Jefferson in his oft-quoted depiction of the invasion of Canada as 'a mere matter of marching,' was also not talking of conquest, whatever the impressions left by modern historians.²⁵ In his letter to Pennsylvanian politician, William Duane, his phrase of choice was 'the acquisition of Canada,' the goal being the 'final expulsion of England from the American continent.'²⁶ In stressing the latter, Jefferson spoke both as an Anglophobe and a continentalist. The passivity of 'acquisition' underscored the rightness of Britain's ejection. Jefferson

²⁴ Thomas Hutchins, *An Historical Narrative and Topographical Description of Louisiana, and West-Florida Etc.* (Philadelphia: Robert Aitken, 1784), 93.

²⁵ Jon Latimer, *The War of 1812: War with America* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 52; Jeremy Black also uses the term 'conquer' about the invasions. Jeremy Black, *Fighting for America: The Struggle for Mastery in North America, 1519-1871* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 165.

²⁶ Thomas Jefferson to William Duane, 4 August 1812 <<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-05-02-0231>> Accessed December 23, 2017.

asserted the US demonym, emphasising England's presence where it did not belong. One can only wonder whether the American treaty negotiators at Ghent in 1814 would have been prepared to concede Canada had their position not been hampered by failure. It was a tightrope along which they tiptoed between territorial desire and diplomacy.

Charles Maier has emphasised that the acquisitions from Mexico were 'conquests,' and asserts that US imperialists would have kept Canada if they 'had had their way.'²⁷ The negotiators' conundrum was captured in 1827 in Chapter VI, 'European Colonies in America,' of diplomat Alexander Hill Everett's work, *America*. This Everett, brother of the orator Edward, insisted that 'had we subdued Canada in the last war, or should we do it any time hereafter, we should of course restore it at the conclusion of peace.'²⁸ His assertion, also grounded in the 1814 Ghent Treaty, smacks of disingenuousness. Everett spent the previous three pages of his work explaining that 'these foreign substances... must ultimately be all taken up and assimilated in the mass,' and that, should it gain independence, the policy of British America should be, 'to form part of our union, rather than to exist in a separate state.'²⁹ Everett hinted at what would become the doctrine of consensual annexation.

The Canadian Rebellions of 1837 and 38 seemed to provide the first evidence of it. Many northern newspapers were supportive.³⁰ Later, that support would be interpreted as symbolic of Americans' 'genuine passion for expansion' and situated under the expansive umbrella of Manifest Destiny.³¹ Congress itself was mute on the subject,

²⁷ Maier, *Among Empires*, 29.

²⁸ *America: or a General Survey of the Political Situation of the Several Powers of the Western Continent, with Conjectures on their Future Prospects. By a Citizen of the United States.* (Philadelphia: H. C. Carey & I. Lea, 1827), 211.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 208 & 210.

³⁰ Maxime Dagenais, "'[T]hose Who Had Money Were Opposed to Us, and Those Who Were Our Friends Were Not the Moneyed Class": Philadelphia and the 1837–1838 Canadian Rebellions,' *American Review of Canadian Studies*, Vol. 47 No.1 (2017), 1-18.

³¹ Ephraim Douglass Adams, *The Power of Ideals in American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1913), 78.

concerned to avoid a rupture in the relationship with Britain at a time when borders in the northeast had yet to be negotiated. Democratic Senator James Buchanan of Pennsylvania highlighted the dangers on June 18th, 1838, when he drew the Senate's attention to coverage in the *London Times* accusing the USA of desiring Canada, of seeking to 'wrest it from Great Britain, and annex it to the United States.'³² Democratic Congressman Isaac H. Bronson of New York on June 27th, was more in tune with the *DR's* coverage examined in Chapter Three. He situated the 'spirit of freedom (or revolt if you choose to call it so)' in the Canadas within the republican parameters of the continental identity. 'The march of civil liberty and free government, particularly on this continent, is not backwards,' he declared. North America itself was thus 'the arbiter of progress.'³³ He compared Southerners' sympathy for the struggle in Texas with that of Northerners for the Canadas. Given the explosive political potential of the former, Bronson deplored interference. He advocated US neutrality in the Canadian case. But he had highlighted the problem that would plague continentalism for the next two decades, the difficulty of marrying Southern and Northern aspirations as the issue of slavery became increasingly divisive though both sections were committed to the removal of monarchy from the Republican continent.

The greatest contribution to the annexation debate pre-Civil War was made by British Americans themselves. To the enshrined ideas that geography and the spread of republicanism fated the provinces to assimilation was added that of the economic advantages they would gain. A political blueprint emerged outlining how annexation could be achieved. Assimilation to the United States was to be a natural progression following the provinces' independence from Great Britain. The Montreal Annexation Manifesto of September 14th, 1849, and its publication in October, was the work of a Canadian minority disgusted with Britain's economic policy and the end of imperial preference. Unfortunately for them, the Manifesto was the right move at the wrong time as American politics was dominated by the territorial fallout from the Mexican War. In Congress, there was no debate of annexation, but for Northerners, it was always a useful

³² *Congressional Globe, 25th Congress, 2nd Session, Appendix, 383.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 435.

bugbear with which to alarm Southerners in increasingly heated encounters over the Mexican cessions.

Months before, on January 23rd, 1849, during a Senate debate on Reciprocity with the British American provinces, previously Democrat, currently antislavery Free Soiler, Senator John Adams Dix of New York, responded to Democrat Robert M. T. Hunter of Virginia's objection that Reciprocity was a bill for 'quasi-annexation.' Dix hoped that should annexation ever occur, his Democratic colleague would support it with the ardour fellow Democrats across the sections had shown during the vote over the annexation of Texas, 'or are we to understand that annexation is only to be countenanced when it can be made at one extremity of the Union, and be opposed at the other?'³⁴ Dix quickly papered over his implication that there was one rule for the slave states and another rule for others. He explained that, to his knowledge, 'Canadians desire union with England first, independence next, annexation to the United States last of all.'³⁵ Indeed, he warned that the defeat of Reciprocity and the frustration of trade would make annexation more attractive on both sides of the border. Reports that 'the British provinces on this continent are in a deplorable condition,' supported such arguments.³⁶ Post-Mexican War, annexation had become a dangerous concept. It was denounced by Whigs as a threat to the Union.³⁷ Democratic Congressman William McWillie of Mississippi on March 4th, 1850, suggested the agitating influence of England behind increasing interest in the acquisition of Canada and Cuba.³⁸ Annexation was both a threat from without and within. Assimilation of British America would find no foothold on the antebellum map.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 330-31.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 331.

³⁶ *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington DC), 24 October 1849, 3.

³⁷ *Congressional Globe, 31st Congress, 1st Session, Appendix*, 256, 692.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, *31st Congress, 1st Session*, 448. This mirrored the *DR*'s accusation of a British plot. See pp. 123-4 above.

At the time, the Montreal annexation movement prompted a debate in Northern newspapers whilst those in the South remained silent.³⁹ Rumbblings had already attracted American attention prior to the publication of the Manifesto.⁴⁰ The *New York Evening Post's* Montreal correspondent identified it as the pet project of a vocal though minority group. It was not long before he situated it in the context of broader Canadian disaffection with Britain. On September 7th, he revealed plans for a new paper in Canada West, *The Canadian Independent*, the prospectus for which stated that 'the attainment of Canadian independence can only be regarded as a necessary preliminary to admission to the American Union.'⁴¹ This was explained as the inevitable result of geographic proximity and economic necessity. The prospectus made no mention of political and cultural attachments to Great Britain, but on September 10th, the *Post's* correspondent provided his own rationale for the appearance of a pro-annexation publication. It was 'an indication of the temper of the times,' a shift in mood determined by the bleak economic repercussions of the Mother Country's turn to free trade. In his most pithy phrase, he clarified provincial disillusion with a monarchic system. 'Loyalty to the person of the sovereign is a very beautiful and poetical feeling,' he wrote, 'but one cannot eat it, drink it, and sleep on it.'⁴² However, he conceded that support for annexation was far from universal. 'The Lower Canada British' were firmly committed, but in Canada West, 'I believe there is as yet no strong feeling for annexation.'⁴³

The publication of the Manifesto on October 10th ratcheted up the American debate. Not for the last time were Americans unable to see British American politics for what they were, domestic machinations involving provincials and the imperial government in which the former could evoke the threat of the United States as required. Annexation was the desire of 'a large majority of the people of Canada,' trumpeted the *Republican*

³⁹ Only two southern papers reported it; *The Daily Picayune*, (New Orleans), 23 October 1849, 1; *Easton Star*, (Easton MD), 30 October 1849, 1.

⁴⁰ E.g. *The Evening Post* (NY), 6 September 1849, 2

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7 September 1849, 2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 10 September 1849, 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 15 September 1849, 1.

Herald in Providence, Rhode Island.⁴⁴ Others were nearer the mark, identifying its supporters as members of the elite.⁴⁵ The identification of annexationists as community leaders fused with growing Free Soilism at the State Whig Convention in Montpelier, Vermont on October 21st, where it was resolved to support the annexation of 'the fertile and free territory, and the intelligent population of Canada' to the US.⁴⁶ British American anti-annexationists were dismissed. Massachusetts' *Hampshire Gazette* informed readers that the 1000 or so who protested the Manifesto were 'persons of not much note.'⁴⁷ Washington DC's *Daily National Intelligencer* was more circumspect, reporting anti-annexation protests without comment.⁴⁸ Some took the opportunity to mock Canada's economic woes. Connecticut's *New London Democrat* quoted the *New York Morning Star*'s assessment that Canada was 'gradually wasting away, trying various commercial and political projects to better their condition.' The report continued in doughface terms, stating that New England probably was not favourable to the annexation project, 'and we are sure, the South is not.'⁴⁹

Many readers were popped sugar-coated annexation pills. A few were familiarised with the divergence of Canadian opinion as some newspapers proved adept at recognising the flaws in American presumptions. They saw the Manifesto as a political device, aimed more at Canadian politicians and the imperial government. the hobby horse of an elite group. Free Soiler, William Cullen Bryant, long-time editor of the *Post*, trod carefully. In a lengthy column, the Manifesto was quoted with its emphasis on dissatisfaction with Britain's 'withdrawal of protection from the colonies.' Bryant discerned the voice of irked pro-British Canadians, far from sympathetic to the American Republic, who put up

⁴⁴ *Republican Herald* (Providence RI), 17 October 1849, 2.

⁴⁵ *The Semi-Weekly Eagle* (Brattleboro VT), 18 October 1849, 2, *Boston Herald*, 30 October 1849, 1.

⁴⁶ *The Boston Semi-Weekly Atlas*, 24 October 1849, p. 2. Also, quoted in the *Milwaukee Sentinel and Gazette*, 31 October 1849, 2.

⁴⁷ *Hampshire Gazette* (Hampshire County MA), 23 October 1849, 3.

⁴⁸ *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington DC), 20 October 1849, 3.

⁴⁹ *New London Democrat* (New London CT), 20 October 1849, 2.

‘the cry of annexation as a mode of torifying the home government into a change of officers and policy in Canada.’⁵⁰ Philadelphia’s *The Dollar Newspaper* smelt the same rat.⁵¹ Of more importance to American readers was the explicit admission of the Manifesto’s signatories that an independent Canada was economically untenable. The *Post* and others conceded that annexation remained a contested proposal, opposed by many and supported by the few.⁵² But underpinning the *Post*’s coverage was a view slowly becoming prevalent, that British American independence could never be anything more than a pit stop en route to annexation. Despite Bryant’s initial careful words, the *Post* reported on the 11th the rapid growth of ‘feeling in favor of the independence of Canada, with its natural consequence of annexation to the Union.’⁵³ The viability of an independent Canada was thus rejected.

Baltimore’s *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* went further. It explained that ‘annexation grows out of that natural instinct which impels a people to demand a political existence of their own.’ The paradox posed by the *Daily Advertiser*, that independence equalled annexation, was explained by the fact that Canada was transitioning from the colonial status of ‘parasite plant’ to ‘self-government.’⁵⁴ It critiqued Canada’s role in the British imperial system, and indeed, the validity of that system, whilst asserting that the transition from colony to independence was inherently a process of annexation. Denying Canadian agency, this was a bold assertion of the United States as the only guarantor of self-government, and simmering beneath the the *Daily Advertiser*’s logic was continentalism. Such a conclusion could easily be extrapolated from the title provincial annexationists adopted for their umbrella organisation. As debate spread into the Maritimes, delegates from outside Canada East

⁵⁰ *The Evening Post* (NY), 12 October 1848, 2. The *Post*’s correspondent was also quoted in the *Boston Weekly Messenger*. 17 October 1849, 2.

⁵¹ *The Dollar Newspaper* (Philadelphia PA), 17 October 1849, 2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 18 October, 2 & 22 October 1849, 2; *Boston Weekly Messenger*, 24 October 1849, 1.

⁵³ *The Evening Post* (NY), 11 October 1849, 1.

⁵⁴ *American and Commercial Daily Advertiser* (Baltimore MD), 15 October 1849, 2.

gathered in Montreal as 'The British American League.'⁵⁵ Americans of the time routinely spoke of Canadians, Newfoundlanders, or Nova Scotians. The term British American seemed to straddle two opposing political and geographic identities, and its advantage was that it left provincial pro-annexationists' options open, whilst tantalising the US with possibilities.

At this point, interest in annexation was the tail end of the 1840s surge in Manifest Destiny doctrine. Bryant's *Post* cited the *Baltimore Patriot*, in a short piece it entitled 'More Territory.' The *Patriot* characterised Americans as 'a land-getting people,' who had celebrated the acquisitions of Florida, Louisiana, and California.⁵⁶ If Canada should need to fight for admission to the Union, 'there will be a strong party ready among us to take her part and aid her in throwing off her colonial dependence.' It seemed that for American expansionists, dependence and independence were two-sides of the same coin. Canada's was a lose-lose situation outside the United States. More tellingly, the article proceeded to remind readers in continentalist terms that 'this is our present destiny.'⁵⁷ Canada had no destiny outside that which had been ordained by, and for, Americans. Maine's *Portland Advertiser* affected a moderate position but it anticipated independence sooner rather than later. It concluded that 'the chestnuts will fall themselves when ripe, and there is no need of clubbing the burrs off.' Here was the 'Ripe Fruit Theory,' first expressed by John Quincy Adams in April 1823, and elaborating on the idea that Nature herself conspired to ensure that all North America would gravitate towards the United States. At this point in 1849, when Canada appeared a 'depressed and distracted colony,' it seems the ripeness that was sought was not that of a flourishing addition to the Union, but a desperate neighbour, easily absorbed.⁵⁸

Ardent expansionist and Democrat Thomas Ritchie was at the helm of Washington's *Daily Union*. He reported the publication of the Manifesto under the heading 'Important

⁵⁵ *The Evening Post* (NY), 17 October 1849, 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 18 October 1849, 1.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵⁸ *Portland Advertiser* (ME), 30 October 1849, 2.

from Canada' but without comment.⁵⁹ His interest remained piecemeal, limited to bitesize reports, until October 20th when readers were assured that annexation was unlikely as 'from ten to twenty years of independence will be necessary to free the leading minds of the colony from their English affiliation.'⁶⁰ Four days later, the paper drew an interesting contrast with Cuba, the actual 'fruit' that had been the focus of Quincy Adams' 1823 theory. According to Ritchie, the Caribbean island's entry into the Union was the expectation of European journalists 'at no distant day... as one of the inevitable destinies of Providence – as they treat that of the future independence of Canada.' It went on to harangue the Whigs for opposing 'the annexation of Cuba.'⁶¹ Ritchie, the Virginian, differentiated between a Cuba fated to become part of the nation, and a Canada that would remain outside. He was wrong to critique the Whigs, who did not want to annex anything. As his argument implied, the assimilationist balancing act between a slave-holding Cuba and a primarily Anglo-Saxon Canada was one the nation in 1849 could not pull off.

As the nation embraced compromise over the Mexican territories, debate in Canada pricked only sporadic interest. The Whig-supporting *Boston Semi-Weekly Atlas* on June 22nd, 1850 drew its readers' attention to the strength of divisions in the province. Its report of Parliamentary debate in Toronto revealed support for both annexation and independence, and opposition to either. In the opinion of the *Atlas'* correspondent, the nays reflected the majority view of provincials, but he pointed out the fickleness of public opinion. It was 'impossible to say what turn the Colonial mind may take, for it is not famous for stability.' Readers were thus reassured that no to annexation now need not mean never. They were also reminded of Canada's potential as the report went onto extol its beauty and resources. It was 'destined to be the seat of a vast empire.'⁶² As to whose empire that would be, the correspondent remained provocatively silent.

⁵⁹ *The Daily Union* (Washington DC), 14 October 1849, 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 20 October 1849, 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 24 October 1849, 3.

⁶² *The Boston Semi-Weekly Atlas*, 22 June 1850, 1.

3. A NEW HORIZON – How Americans Understood the Dominion of Canada.

Americans thought they knew what was meant by dominion. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams opened his 1821 July 4th speech in Washington DC, talking of the British who, ‘from a small island in the Atlantic Ocean, had extended their dominion over considerable parts of every quarter of the Globe.’⁶³ He closed his address extolling the United States, saying ‘her glory is not Dominion, but Liberty’⁶⁴ For Adams, dominion signified the exercise of power without consent, a principle that differentiated the British Empire from that established by Jefferson and his Revolutionary colleagues. Throughout our period, Americans understood its usage in the British and in the broader context of empire. The relationship between colony and metropole was defined by *dominium* and *imperium*. The former signified sovereignty within the space in which it was established without impinging upon or diminishing the overarching sovereignty of the latter, which remained preeminent.⁶⁵ The Revolutionary generation were familiar with this usage. Writing to John Jay on June 26, 1785, in his new role as Minister Plenipotentiary to Great Britain, John Adams listed Nova Scotia, Canada, and Newfoundland amongst ‘the British dominions.’⁶⁶ In 1827, Alexander Hill Everett had characterized the British in America as, ‘a metropolitan government and its remote dominions.’⁶⁷ In an 1848 speech in memory of John Quincy Adams, William Seward explained that the American Revolution, ‘left the remaining British dominions, and the continent from Georgia around Cape Horn to the Northern ocean, under the thralldom as

⁶³ *An Address delivered at the request of a Committee of the Citizens of Washington; on the Occasion of Reading the declaration of Independence, on the Fourth of July, 1821, by John Quincy Adams.* (City of Washington: Davis and Force, 1821), 5.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁶⁵ Ken MacMillan, ‘“Bound by Our Regal Office:” Empire, Sovereignty, and the American Colonies in the Seventeenth Century,’ in Foster (Ed.), *British North America*, 71 & 88.

⁶⁶ *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations, by His Grandson Charles Francis Adams.* X Vols. (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1853), Vol. VIII, 274.

⁶⁷ Everett, *America*, 209.

before.⁶⁸ Dominion was also in frequent usage in magazines and newspapers. A writer in *DBR* could refer to a time when ‘France retained her dominion in Canada.’⁶⁹ When in 1867, the new Confederation of Canada adopted the title Dominion, it was to be expected that American interest would be minimal as the implications were continuity rather than innovation.

Dominion was not British Americans’ title of choice. An observer at the 1864 Quebec Conference that would lead to Confederation, noted that the Maritime Provinces arrived to establish, ‘a United Kingdom of Canada.’⁷⁰ Soon-to-be Prime Minister John A. MacDonald was a supporter, but ‘kingdom’ was strongly opposed by London, not wishing to provoke an America with whom relations were strained. The title Dominion was chosen, which Donald Creighton suggested was plucked by Samuel Tilley of New Brunswick from Psalm 72.⁷¹ It was thought by the British that in America, ‘dominion’ would play safely. Those who paid a little more attention to the title might have found cause for concern. As far back as 1780, Thomas Pownall had used it to suggest both space and control when he asserted that the British Government, ‘have not only lost for ever the dominion which they have wrought their nation up to, but the external parts of the Empire are one after another falling off.’⁷² Psalm 72 read, ‘He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from river unto the ends of the earth.’ The new Canada hinted at a variety of innovative continental possibilities. Americans would be forced to rethink Dominion.

⁶⁸ George E. Baker (Ed.), *The Works of William H. Seward*, V Vols. (New York: Redfield, 1853), Vol. III, 80-1.

⁶⁹ “Mississippi River – Discovery, Characteristics and Resources,” *DBR*, Vol. 20, Iss. 5 (May 1856), 540.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Donald Creighton, *The Road to Confederation: The Emergence of Canada, 1863-1867* (Reprint Don Mills ON: Oxford University Press, 2012), 421.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 423; Alan Rayburn, *Naming Canada: Stories about Canadian Place Names Revised and Expanded Edition* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 18-9.

⁷² *A Memorial*, 3.

This section explores how Americans responded to emergence of the new Dominion, an event that resonated with some, not least because annexation was once more to the fore. By the late 1860s, despite its aggressive connotations in Europe with military annexations such as that of Schleswig-Holstein by Prussia, in American political discourse, specifically in the case of British America, annexation was considered a consensual process whereby the people of one polity chose voluntarily to become incorporated into another. The emergence of the new Dominion stimulated debate of this subject, both without and within the British American provinces. A minority of British Americans were not keen on the new polity, and it was the debate they initiated that Americans leapt upon as a means of explaining the process that was taking place across the border, predicting its eventual failure. For many Americans who heeded the pro-annexationists in the provinces, it was not dominion that was sought, but assimilation.

This seemed proven by events such as that which took place on April 10th, 1866, when a group of New York City's leading citizens met to discuss developments in Canada, and propose, 'the expediency of detaching the provinces from the British crown, with a view of uniting the same with the United States.' It was reported on the front page of the Democratic *New York Herald*, which went on to state that the proposed Confederation of the British provinces was dismissed as, 'a ridiculous proposition.' A series of resolutions were passed which extolled republicanism, 'the best mode of government.' The USA and Canada, given their geographical proximity, were destined to be 'one territory,' and the group advocated the creation of 'a permanent annexation society,' strikingly named the French Canadian Annexation Society. In fact, as the *Herald* reported, those in the room represented 'some of the most respectable portion of the resident [French] Canadian population.'⁷³ Other papers also reported the event in less detail. The Republican *New-York Tribune*, 'the greatest organ of public opinion in the United States,' briefly mentioned 'a meeting of the French Canadian residents of this city' at which it had been suggested that the only cure for Canadian ills, 'the only hope of a successful future,' was

⁷³ *The New York Herald*, 11 April 1866, 1. The meeting had also been advertised in the *New-York Tribune*, 10 April 1866, 8.

annexation.⁷⁴ This meeting underlines the extent to which Confederation provoked a movement for British American annexation that was not the sole purview of Americans. The flare-up of pro-annexation movements in Montreal in 1849, which I have discussed, was mirrored by those in the Maritime provinces and British Columbia in the late 1860s. They too were prompted by a distrust of change in forms of government. Movements such as the French Canadian Annexation Society were a new phenomenon, more reminiscent of the Hunter Lodges that had formed in 1838 in the US in support of the Canadian Rebellions. Like those, these were based on a flawed understanding of the British American mainstream. This was reflected in the haphazard reporting of annexation meetings and debates in the provinces that sometimes had to be rapidly retracted.⁷⁵

The French Canadian Annexation Society's opinion of the Republic was the opposite of that shared by the majority of British Americans. The Society skirted the reality that the Union had only survived thanks to a Civil War against almost a third of its members who had sought independence, resulting in casualties estimated at over 700,000. Indeed, the solvent of Canadian Confederation was a parliamentary federal system that sought to avoid the perceived inadequacies of the States' system that had led to such a collapse. Unlike their fellow British Americans, the New York-based Society shared in that optimism that characterised the Union North. Victory indicated that 'the nation was made to last, that it had a destiny in the world.'⁷⁶ It seemed inevitable to them that Canada would wish to be part of that destiny. Such ideas were exported across the border. Republican Congressman Benjamin Butler of Massachusetts' heavy handed correspondence with a Canadien in which he extolled annexation 'or absorption of Canada, as being both necessary and inevitable for the future welfare of the United States,' was printed in Montreal's *Le Pays*. It was brusquely dismissed by the city's

⁷⁴ Harry W. Baehr, Jr., *The New York Tribune since the Civil War* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1936), 1; *New-York Tribune*, 12 April 1866, 7.

⁷⁵ E. g. *New-York Tribune*, 23 November 1866, 1; 1 December, 1 & 3 December 1866, 8.

⁷⁶ Mark Wahlgren Summers, *The Ordeal of the Reunion: A New History of Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 204.

Gazette, as unlikely to stimulate any Canadian support, as was ‘the declaration of Gen. Banks.’⁷⁷

The *Gazette* referred to the ‘Bill for the admission of the States of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Canada East, and Canada West, and for the organization of the Territories of Selkirk, Saskatchewan, and Columbia,’ presented to the House of Representatives by Butler’s fellow Massachusetts Congressman, Nathaniel P. Banks on July 2nd, 1866.⁷⁸ It was a clumsy bill, displaying an ignorance of provincial concerns. In Article III, Banks advocated incorporating Newfoundland into Canada East and Prince Edward Island into Nova Scotia. Such crass insensitivity to one side, it seems Banks was attempting to energise American anti-British sentiment at a time when Britain was held responsible for the construction of Confederate privateers during the war, and Canada for shielding Confederate traitors. The bill’s importance lay in the broader constituency it addressed. H. B. Sargent, a fellow Massachusetts officer who had served with Banks in Louisiana, responded to his friend’s bill, purring that, ‘the insult to England is sublime.’⁷⁹ In 1866, a congressional election loomed, and Banks spoke to the anger of anti-British voters. He reached out to Irish Americans, and those Fenians who had launched failed raids on Canada West in June.⁸⁰ On November 2nd that year, at a Republican rally in Melrose, Massachusetts, he criticised a Canadian judiciary that had freed Confederates guilty of invading the States during the war and yet, had now condemned to death captured Fenians.⁸¹ Importantly, Banks had once been a Know-Nothing.⁸² Recognising the

⁷⁷ *New-York Tribune*, 21 January 1867, 5; *The Daily Picayune* (New Orleans), 26 January 1867, 2.

⁷⁸ < <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhb&fileName=039/llhb039.db&recNum=4308> > Accessed 24 July 2017. Selkirk would become the Province of Manitoba.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Fred Harvey Harrington, *Fighting Politician: Major General N. P. Banks* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1948), 178.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 178-9.

⁸¹ *Boston Journal*, 3 November 1866, 1.

⁸² William B. Kurtz, *Excommunicated from the Union: How the Civil War Created a Separate Catholic America* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 131.

election potential of annexation and critiquing Canada, he used both to strengthen his Republican base. Banks' bill was pure politics. His rationale was not lost on colleagues also facing re-election. The July 26th vote in the House was 123-0 in support.

A public sentiment against Canada was expressed on January 10th, 1866, when the New-York Wool-Growers meeting in Syracuse debated the soon-to-expire 1854 Reciprocity Treaty. Its Committee noted that the only reciprocity Canadians had displayed in return was, 'with our Rebels, whom they had afforded an asylum and had encouraged in their raids.' The response should be to let Reciprocity bite the dust as 'it would hasten annexation.' 'A Canadian lawyer,' was cited who had said, 'come over and take us... we prefer to come than remain where we are.'⁸³ Upon such poor evidence Americans would base their analysis, paying little attention to other voices. As the collapse of Reciprocity loomed, provincials applauded American intransigence as it would result in 'the speedy Confederation of the British American provinces.'⁸⁴ But Americans chose to focus only on Confederation's opponents.

The Maritimes were of special interest. In April 1866, the *New-York Tribune* concluded that the New Brunswick legislature 'must be very adverse to the scheme to disregard the wish of the crown in the matter.'⁸⁵ By the end of the month, Nova Scotia's assembly had voted in favour, though opposition there remained vocal, and New Brunswick's decision remained uncertain.⁸⁶ Such indecision fired American imaginations. At the same time, Americans underestimated the impact of raids upon Canada by Fenians keen to strike a blow for a free Ireland. Few were as far-seeing as the *Tribune*, which having identified discontent amongst British Americans regarding proposed Confederation, recognised that the Fenian threat, 'and the cry of common danger of the last few days will have the effect of pushing over to the scheme many who until now opposed it.'⁸⁷ By

⁸³ *New-York Tribune*, 15 January 1866, 5. Also, 3 March 1866, 12,

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 9 February 1866, 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 31 March 1866, 12.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 20 April, 5 & 23 April 1866, 5.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 March 1866, 3.

the end of the year, the *Tribune's* prognosis seemed confirmed. It reported that in Canada, 'the feeling of the people toward the United States Government is not very friendly at present.' Still, 'there is a large party who are not unfriendly to this country, and would readily live under the flag.' The *Tribune*, in sometimes confusing language, captured the contested debate surrounding Confederation as provincial leaders negotiated with the imperial government. 'The mass of the people' supported the negotiations whilst at the same time, 'the influence of the United States Government in Canada is now great and increasing.' Readers could have been excused their confusion but the *Tribune*, like others, continued to situate the British American debate within American political discourse. Thus, the Province of Canada itself must join the Union to 'derive the advantage of an infusion of capital and men of enterprise, and perhaps attain a degree of prosperity that could not be realized under confederation.'⁸⁸ In Gilded Age America, materialism was predicted to trump emotional identity. Because of such reports, "assertions that Canada desired annexation, hollow in the ears of those unsympathetic, were sincere expressions of an American opinion."⁸⁹ US notions that British Americans were would-be Americans remained as firmly held as they had been in the 1810s.

In the British provinces, the politics being played were very much the same as those in 1849. Again, Americans failed to see annexation as a ploy in political negotiations between colonies and imperial government. In 1868 in Nova Scotia, opposition to Confederation persisted. Provincial delegates to the imperial Parliament in London seeking withdrawal from the Dominion, 'pointed threateningly to the nearness of the United States, and to the great temptations which the people of Nova Scotia would feel to ask for annexation to the powerful neighboring Republic,' if their request was refused. The *Tribune* skirted this diplomatic quadrille and drew readers' attention to the discontent in Nova Scotia, adding that 'independence from England and annexation to the United States have many friends in all the British provinces.' Its report, entitled 'THE DISUNION MOVEMENT IN NOVA SCOTIA,' that had acknowledged that movement's use

⁸⁸ Ibid., 17 December 1866, 4.

⁸⁹ Smith, *The Treaty of Washington 1871*, 20.

of annexation as a political weapon, concluded by recasting that weapon for American domestic consumption as a political reality.⁹⁰ True, there were pro-American anti-imperialists in the British provinces, but to conflate this with what was taking place in Nova Scotia was to ignore the point. Independence from Britain played no part in that province's attempts to extricate itself from the new Dominion.

Americans began to grapple with the implications of the title Dominion in early 1867. Chosen by London to allay American concerns, it could prick sensitivities. It was a loaded term that conveyed imperial control and mastery. In his November 1866 Lyceum Hall speech, Nathaniel Banks celebrated the French withdrawal from Mexico, asserting that 'with it should disappear from the American continent forever all attempts by European powers to establish dominion over any portion of the continent.'⁹¹ The latter was to be feared as an implicit threat to the USA. The imminent elevation of the British American colonies to the status of Dominion could be construed as such a threat. Congressman Banks sensed as much, and on March 27th, 1867, offered a joint resolution regarding 'a confederation of States on this continent, extending from ocean to ocean, established without consulting the people of the Provinces to be united, and founded upon monarchical principles.' The statement was laden with irony. The British provinces were following in America's continental footsteps, and provincial negotiation of Confederation had involved far more representation of the people than was ever the case during the Louisiana Purchase or the cession from Mexico. Banks was playing on fears and with facts. He was challenged by two Democrats from New York, James Brooks and Fernando Wood.

Brooks questioned how provincial representatives could be considered not to be speaking for their constituents. Banks responded by citing the 30,000 signatories of a Nova Scotian petition against Confederation, citizens who constituted 'a majority of all who would be permitted to vote even under our laws' but were being ignored by their legislature. Banks makes clear the extent to which republican Americans failed to grasp

⁹⁰ *New-York Tribune*, August 7, 1868, 4.

⁹¹ *Boston Journal*, November 3, 1866, 1.

the parliamentary system. He hearkened back to an American constitutional model that differentiated between legislature and convention.⁹² The latter was a separate elected body that had ensured the transition from Articles of Confederation to the adoption of the Constitution. The 30,000 signatories, however, alongside their fellow Nova Scotians, had their say in the September 1867 elections when all the province's pro-Confederationist legislators were lost their seats.

Complicating the republican conundrum were British America's 'monarchic principles.' Fernando Wood called for a broad condemnation of monarchy 'anywhere on the American continent,' a support for republicanism, and specifically 'a report in sympathy with the struggling people of Ireland.' Twice-elected mayor of New York City and a Fenian supporter, Wood's tangential intervention spoke more to his New York City constituents than the point.⁹³ It took another New York Democrat, John Winthrop Chanler, to find Banks' Achilles heel. 'This resolution means nothing,' he announced. It ignored a fundamental truth as 'it assumes the Government of Canada to-day is not monarchical.' For Chanler, the only way to provide the resolution with any teeth was to denounce British monarchy on the continent and assert Canadian independence with the support of American arms. The consolidation of an existing monarchical presence, highlighted by Chanler, impinged on what remained unsaid, and that was the fundamental principle that informed the debate. In his opening and closing remarks, Banks summed up the purpose of the resolution. He stated that Confederation was 'in contravention of the traditions and constantly-declared principles of this government,' and again, in closing, it was 'in contravention of the rights and interests of this Government.' All else was of secondary importance.⁹⁴ Underpinning Banks' resolution was a belief that Confederation contravened the Monroe Doctrine. It was a tenuous argument. The Doctrine, with its negative upon novel European expansion in the Americas, was inapplicable, which surely explains his and Congress' silence. This

⁹² Gordon S. Wood, *Friends Divided: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 167-71.

⁹³ For Wood's Fenianism, see Jerome Mushkat, *Fernando Wood: A Political Biography* (Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1990), 159.

⁹⁴ *Congressional Globe*, 40th Congress, 1st Session, 392.

contrasted with a Senate debate on Mexico on July 12th where the Monroe Doctrine was to the fore.⁹⁵ Britain was in possession of all those territories British Americans sought to acquire. What Americans confronted was a loophole both Britain and its colonists sought to exploit, which in itself was a cause for concern.

Some had already grappled with the implications of a strengthened monarchy to the north. In August 1866, the *New-York Tribune* derided citizens' fears of the establishment of "a 'new nationality' under a monarchical government in North America." The country's republican institutions were such that 'not all the pomp and glitter of courts will be able to alienate from them the people's affections.' This was the result not only of their political principles but because 'they have been tested in every way' and had displayed to the world 'their vitality and power.' They had been proven in war. Thus, even Confederation would not hamper 'the ultimate fusion of the British provincials with the American people.' The article ended reminding readers that 'the world gravitates towards Republicanism.' It was an ironic conclusion. It is interesting that in confronting what it implicitly saw as the seductive suasion of monarchy, the *Tribune*, having rejected its appeal for Americans, failed to see its importance to British Americans. It was the very core of their national identity. The irony would have been ladled thickly for a Canadian reader as the same page grappled with political upheavals in the South, and the 'Revolutionists' it termed responsible for the July 30th New Orleans Massacre.⁹⁶ Typically, Greeley's paper ignored the contradictions in its own coverage as less than a month before it had reported outrage in Canadian government circles at Nathaniel Banks' July 2nd Bill. According to its Montreal correspondent, Canadians were loath to consider annexation 'to what is termed here the political confusion of the United States.'⁹⁷ In October, it would report on its front page a speech by Nova Scotian Premier Charles Tupper at a dinner with Lord Caernarvon, Secretary of the Colonies. In it, Tupper warned of the danger of 'the belief which was every day gaining ground in the United States that the time had come when a great portion of British North America

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 599-600.

⁹⁶ *New-York Tribune*, 8 August 1866, 4.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 July 1866, 5.

ought to be united with that country.’ However, he asserted that British Americans felt ‘that life and property were safer under their monarchical constitutions than under the despotic countries of Europe, or... the republics of the West, they were strongly attached to the British connection.’⁹⁸ Conservative that he was and heavily contested though Confederation was in his province, he captured far more the Canadian spirit than Horace Greeley.

When Dominion Day arrived on July 1st, 1867, it unsurprisingly attracted the attention of the country’s leading newspapers. On July 2nd, the *New York Herald* provided three columns of detailed coverage of the first ‘Dominion day.’ Its provincial correspondents reported the appearance of something new in North America, though underpinning their coverage of ‘the birth of the new State’ was continuity. Choruses of God Save The Queen, military regalia, and patriotic bunting accentuated the persistence of monarchy in North America, if not its elevation. It is interesting that the same page reported the defeat and execution of Mexico’s Emperor Maximilian. The *Herald’s* readers confronted monarchy vanquished to the south and resurgent to the north. But underpinning the report were familiar prejudices. In both cases, instability was stressed. ‘The unhappy, misguided but well meaning prince’ in Mexico had been betrayed by his own Mexican supporters. In the Dominion, simmering beneath the bunting and hoopla, there were significant pockets of concern. In Halifax, the celebrations were ‘a poor affair... The Scotch, English and Irish societies have refused to go in the procession.’⁹⁹ Much column space was given to the political opposition in Ontario to McDonald’s new coalition government. And if American readers were left in any doubt of Canada’s opinion of their political system, the Toronto reporter quoted a speech of D’Arcy McGee’s at length.

McGee, an Irish-born Canadian political leader, derided American democracy and majority rule. Lauding parliamentary federalism as ‘the highest system of free government yet instituted among men,’ he went onto assert that Canada was ‘doing true service to the people of the United States, we are teaching them the advantage of our

⁹⁸ Ibid., 25 October 1866, 1.

⁹⁹ *The New York Herald*, 2 July 1867, 2. Discontent in Nova Scotia continued to be highlighted e.g. August 5, 1867, 7.

form of government.' He invited American minorities 'borne down by the weight of the mere majority,' to seek asylum in Canada. The *Herald* was quick to assure readers that, 'all that about democratic rule is "bosh,"' and closed with a couched threat; 'Mr McGee knows that now he cannot too much abuse the republican government by the side of Canada.'¹⁰⁰ Having survived Civil War, the Union was the bogeyman that had helped foster Canadian Confederation. The *Herald's* warning may have had a specific object. On this 1st of July, McGee's speech may have sounded like a clarion call to unrepentant Confederates, some of whom had fled to Canada. Jefferson Davis had made a pro-British speech at Niagara, that upstaged coverage of British American confederation in some newspapers.¹⁰¹ The *Herald*, therefore, may have been warning newly constructed Canadians to steer clear of involvement in America's Reconstruction. In the editorial on page 6, speeches such as McGee's 'in which they glorified the new dominion and affirmed its superiority over the neighboring republic' were brushed aside as the quarrelling provinces would 'soon learn in what direction to look for a secure, prosperous and progressive country.'¹⁰² In conclusion, the *Herald* proclaimed Northern confidence, dismissing the Canadian experiment as politically regressive. Put simply, it found it difficult to grasp what it was that was taking place north of the border. Its only prognosis for Canada was that the temptation of annexation would prove irresistible.

The *New-York Tribune* took a more measured approach, reporting the celebration of 'Dominion Day' in Ottawa and Toronto, and with less fervour in Halifax, on the front page of its July 2nd edition. It was a shift in tone from its assessment a few months earlier when it reported that Confederation was 'an anomaly, and something of a blunder.'¹⁰³ By June 11th, it conceded that 'the relations between the Provinces are not always understood in the United States,' and on the July 2nd editorial page, it too

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 2 July 1867, 3. An abbreviated version also appeared in *The Evening Telegraph*, (Philadelphia PA), 2 July 1867, 5.

¹⁰¹ See pp. 228-9 below.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 2 July 1867, 6.

¹⁰³ *New-York Tribune*, 11 March 1867, 4.

grappled with the novel step British Americans had taken.¹⁰⁴ The new Canada was recognised to be ‘an experiment in government,’ one in which ‘the political connection hitherto between England and the Provinces has been all but completely severed.’ The emphasis was on ‘but’ as confederation represented only ‘virtually the birth of a new nationality.’ The *Tribune* characterised what had emerged as ‘a sort of mock royalty in a community already largely imbued with republican sentiments.’ The result was ‘quasi-royalty versus republicanism.’ Failing to grasp the Dominion concept, it resorted to comparison, wondering if ‘this new scheme of government will give British North America, comparatively, as much prosperity as the United States enjoy.’¹⁰⁵

By late August, it seemed to have arrived at an answer when on the 24th it published a scathing critique of Canada. Provincial newspapers were ‘vituperative, vague, and frothy,’ the religion was ‘narrow and intolerant,’ the very country ‘a lifeless region, of wasted water-power and unappreciated sceneries. Politics and politicians were damned. McGee was a ‘Tammany sachem,’ ‘the most superficially smart politician in Canada,’ whilst Governor-General Lord Monck was presented as ‘the last of that dismal line of martial mediocrities that has made English rule in Canada a blank history.’ The report caustically concluded that annexation was the Dominion’s fate, ‘the sign of the Prophet Jonah – who was humanely swallowed by a neighboring shark.’¹⁰⁶ This was the *Tribune*’s most abusive characterisation of Canada to date, but it represented a logical culmination to the tortuous path it had followed throughout its coverage of confederation. Like all, it was simply confounded by what was taking place in the provinces. Abusive dismissal was the only response.

A newspaper that by the 1860s, ‘completely dominated its region,’ the Republican *Chicago Tribune* provided a detailed analysis of Dominion Day, the aim of which was to put the new polity in its place.¹⁰⁷ In a lengthy column, it swiped at the hyperbole of the

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 11 June 1867, 2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 2 July 1867, 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 24 August 1867, 2.

¹⁰⁷ Sidney Kobre, *Development of American Journalism*, (Dubuque, IA: Wm. C. Brown Company Publishers, 1969), 287.

Toronto Globe, suggesting that American readers would ‘find it somewhat difficult to comprehend how British America has become one of “the nations of the world.”’ On a point by point basis, the *Tribune* challenged the *Globe*’s inflated claims ‘concerning the extent, population, and commerce of the new Dominion.’ Mockingly, it reminded readers that ‘we are gravely assured that in “no other country in the world are the climatic conditions more favorable for health and longevity” than in the Dominion of Canada,’ and in the continued role of the Imperial government in its affairs, ‘such is the Kingdom which, according to Canadian authority, took “its rank among the nations of the world” on the first of July.’¹⁰⁸ The monarchy that was the new Dominion was honestly acknowledged, but, ultimately, tired clichés enabled the *Tribune* to close with a dismissive characterisation of a presumptuous and misplaced polity.

Other newspapers echoed the same themes. The *Charleston Daily News* noted ‘the grumbling in Halifax and some other places.’¹⁰⁹ The least critical were those voices nearest the border. Montpelier’s *Vermont Watchman and State Journal* mused that, ‘the new dominion is a strange conglomeration of monarchical and republican makeshifts.’¹¹⁰ The *Rutland Weekly Herald* in Vermont, responding to the royal proclamation of May 23rd wished its British American neighbours well, foreseeing that ‘in due time they will become a nation, and a great one, too.’¹¹¹ The celebrations of Dominion that the *Tribune* had characterised as hyperbolic received an upbeat opinion in the *Hartford Daily Courant*. Across the provinces, ‘no previous event in the history of the country has called forth such universal rejoicing.’¹¹² Others simply recorded the event in factual terms.¹¹³ Those papers disposed to offer readers a detailed analysis of

¹⁰⁸ *Chicago Tribune*, July 3, 1867, 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Charleston Daily News* (SC) July 10, 1867, 2.

¹¹⁰ *Vermont Watchman and State Journal* (Montpelier VT), July 10, 1867, 1.

¹¹¹ *Rutland Weekly Herald* (VT), May 30, 1867, 4.

¹¹² *Hartford Daily Courant* (CT), 3 July 1867, 4.

¹¹³ *Weekly North-Carolina Standard* (Raleigh NC), 29 May 1867, 3; *The Hillsborough Recorder* (NC), 19 June 1867, 2; *Baton Rouge Tri-Weekly Gazette & Comet*, 28 May 1867, 2; *Memphis Daily Appeal*, 25 May 1867, 1;

the state of the provinces were keen to draw attention to their financial liabilities and indebtedness.¹¹⁴ It was ironic that the British financial support that ensured imperial cohesion was dismissed at a time when the American public debt had soared. Collapse was inevitable for the *Chicago Tribune*, as the British American debt was at least '\$77,500,000.'¹¹⁵ Civil war had left the US with a debt of \$2.7 billion, up from \$65 million in 1860. The paper, like many others, pooh-poohed the Dominion's aspirations, concluding that the result of Confederation would be annexation. On 17 September 1867, it reported that 'friends of the Government here and in England' saw Confederation as a means of strengthening British America, a conclusion he derided in the face of US military might. The Dominion's inability to survive an American onslaught was such that instead 'of seeing in the future of the Dominion a State rivalling the United States, one would see it adding to the territory and greatness of those United States.' He cited American victory at the Battle of Chippewa and the capture of Fort Erie during the War of 1812 as testimonies of American superiority. One must assume that his readers would fail to note his mistake in situating Chippewa 'near the Detroit,' when it was on the Niagara Peninsula.¹¹⁶

July 1st was thinly covered in the South, but earlier in the year, *DBR* in contrast to Northern assessments, bemoaned the end of Reciprocity as it predicted a glowing future for the new Confederation. It concluded that, 'with the exception of the United States, no country in the world can exceed British America in the extent and diversity of its capabilities, which are susceptible of unlimited expansion.'¹¹⁷ The latter was perhaps a pointed swipe from a Southern magazine still smarting from Northern victory. On July 2nd, the *New Orleans Republican*, whose title was an unashamed giveaway of its pro-Reconstruction politics, made no reference to the emergence of the new Dominion. Instead, it reported a speech by Jefferson Davis at Niagara Falls in which he stirred the

¹¹⁴ *Chicago Tribune*, 3 July 1867, 2; *Charleston Daily News* (SC), 29 May 1867, 2.

¹¹⁵ *Chicago Tribune*, 3 July 1867, 2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 September 1867, 2.

¹¹⁷ 'British North America,' *DBR*, Vol. 3, Iss. 2 (February 1867), 165.

crowd, saying, 'I hope that Canada may forever remain a part of the British Empire,' and 'may the British flag never cease to wave over you!' It reminded readers that the ex-Confederate president, 'having failed to destroy his own country,' and thus been proven wrong about the Union's political future, now demonstrated his ignorance of its continental destiny; 'What flag is it that he hopes may never cease to wave over a country that is certain one day to be part of this Union?' For the *Republican*, Southern Reconstruction was part of a process that involved the de-construction of Canada. It asked, 'was it an American citizen who uttered these words? Thank heaven! it was only Jefferson Davis.'¹¹⁸ Unrepentant rebels were cast out of the American future.

The discussion of annexation did not cease with Confederation, and became entangled with a broader geopolitical debate involving the settlement of complaints against Britain for her actions during the Civil War. The term maintained its consensual meaning. Alaska acquired by purchase and treaty was an acquisition. Other territories were also to be the subject of annexation. For some, Santo Domingo seemed a more likely candidate than Canada. Arguing in favour of Santo Domingo on December 21st, 1870, Republican Senator Oliver P. Morton of Indiana dismissed the expectations of his colleague, Charles Sumner. He asserted 'that the people of Canada are further from us to-day, and are less inclined to annexation at this time, than they were thirty years ago.'¹¹⁹ Morton expressed a rare appreciation of his northern neighbours, but his was a solitary voice. Santo Domingo rumbled on with Republican Senator Carl Schurz of Missouri, speaking in opposition to its annexation on January 11th, 1871. He ridiculed Morton's analysis. Surely, the Canadians who 'speak the same language, have the same habits, social and political, have the same common law, the same traditions, the same way of thinking, almost the same way of self-government,' Schurz argued, 'if we annex them to-day they would be good Americans and republicans tomorrow.' Schurz displayed little appreciation of the Canadian identity in the making, and ignored the presence of the Canadiens. One of the founders of the Republican Party, Senator Justin D. Morrill of Vermont displayed the same ignorance on April 7th. He dismissed Santo

¹¹⁸ *New Orleans Republican*, 2 July 1867, 2. Davis' speech was also reported by *The Bossier Banner* (Bellevue LA), 6 July 1867, 2.

¹¹⁹ *Congressional Globe*, 41st Congress, 3rd Session, 238.

Domingo and beckoned Congress to gaze north, 'from a land congenial to monkeys and parrots to something of more substantial value.' He, like others, saw the new Dominion as a pit stop on the road to union with the United States. He predicted that having moved away from a Great Britain eager to shed the dependency of her colonies, 'at Toronto, Montreal, Halifax, and Quebec, we shall hear from more than four million throats, "Hail Columbia!"'¹²⁰ This for Morrill was the wellspring of annexation, one that 'should seek us, and ought not to be bought, conquered, or obtained by any of the common acts of diplomacy.'¹²¹ Not all appreciated the distinction. The *New York Times* for one was dismissive, characterising the speech as riddled with 'mistaken information,' and asserted that Morrill 'followed SCHURZ in the cry against annexing territory to the South, but looked for the annexation of Canada.'¹²² Schurz, Morton, and Morrill draw our attention to the continuing paradox central to US understanding of the British American psyche. Their dilemma was that the US' northern neighbours were both British and American, alien and yet similar, the former an echo of a rejected past, the latter a mirror of the American present. The evolution of an alternative American identity to the north was both a testament to the success of the US experiment and a repudiation. Canada would remain an anomalous paradox little understood, a prism through which at different times Americans would catch images of themselves.

Response to the title Dominion remained complex, rendered more so when senators could speak of the exercise of 'dominion over Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Mosquito Coast,' or 'the dominion of the Turks,' and the 'folly of incongruous annexations under one dominion of separate, remote, and diverse peoples.'¹²³ When black Republican Congressman Joseph H. Rainey of South Carolina reminded listeners that the United States had 'established its dominion upon this continent,' many were surely discomfited

¹²⁰ Ibid, *Appendix*, 30. In the *Congressional Globe*, this section of Morrill's speech was titled, "NO ANNEXATION TOLERABLE EXCEPT NORTHWARD."

¹²¹ Ibid., 532.

¹²² *The New-York Times*, 8 April 1871.

¹²³ *Congressional Globe*. 42nd Congress, 1st Session, *Appendix*, 527 & 533.

by the unspecified parameters of the new dominion to the north.¹²⁴ In 1870, President Grant referred to Britain's delegation of authority to 'the colonial authority known as the Dominion of Canada,' which he characterised as 'this semi-independent but irresponsible agent.'¹²⁵ Others could be more dismissive. For Republican Senator William. M. Stewart of Nevada on February 23rd, 1871, the confederation was 'this New Dominion, or Old Dominion, or whatever it is called.'¹²⁶ The response to an evolving British America was never partisan. Across the political spectrum, Americans failed to understand what it was that was taking place to the north. The only recourse for both Democrats and Republicans was to see it through the mirror of the American experiment. The question that remained was what was to be the limitations, politically and geographically, of the Canadian Dominion. In this, the Canadian espousal of Dominion paralleled the US' appropriation of America. Both were suggestive of space yet to be defined.

4. OPPOSING HORIZONS – Seward and Sumner's Continental Visions.

While Congressmen like Banks and Chanler trumpeted initiatives to secure British America, it was to William Seward, Secretary of State from 1861 to 1869, and Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee between 1861 and 1871, the two post-war leaders of American foreign policy, that they looked for support. Both were Republicans, former Whigs, and ardent continentalists. Staunchly anti-slavery, post-Emancipation Seward distanced himself from Southern politics. In 1866, he told friends that, 'the North must get over this notion of interference with the affairs of the South.'¹²⁷ His focus was national territorial expansion by treaty, purchase or concession. 'A bargain hunter and something of a

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 394.

¹²⁵ <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29510>> Accessed 6 November 2017.

¹²⁶ *Congressional Globe, 41st Congress, 3rd Session, Appendix, 1575.*

¹²⁷ Quoted by Smith in Brown, *Reconstructions*, 124.

compulsive shopper' is one way of characterising his approach.¹²⁸ The purchase of Alaska in 1867 was meant to entice British Columbia into the American fold. Certainly, in British eyes, 'a step had been taken toward the absorption of the whole northern continent.'¹²⁹ Faced with the challenge of a Confederated Canada, he articulated a vision of a shared economic and cultural space that was ahead of its time.

Sumner was Seward's opposite. He was an ardent abolitionist, famous for his bloody beating by Congressman Preston Brooks on the Senate floor in 1856. At war's end, he committed himself to the cause of the freed slaves, becoming a leading architect of Reconstruction. Territorial expansion was a path he trod with care. The result is that in his speeches of the late 1860s, his argument and intent could appear unfocused and even hypocritical, but, as I will show, there was no madness in his method. Rhetorical styles and diverging political views separated these men, but on the future of the British provinces, they were as one. The foundation of their shared belief was summed up by Seward in an 1852 Senate speech in which he urged no enforced annexation of the provinces, but was confident that their future incorporation into the United States was inevitable. 'I am content for the ripened fruit which must fall,' he stated, evoking his mentor, John Quincy Adams.¹³⁰ It was an analysis shared by Sumner, who in an 1867 article for the *Atlantic Monthly* reached back further to Turgot's originating maxim that, 'colonies are like fruits, which hold to the tree only until they reach their maturity.'¹³¹ As we have seen, Canadian annexation was not feasible pre-Civil War, but by the late 1860s, the ground had shifted. Ironically, the end of slavery that made annexation viable energised political shifts north of the border that ensured it would never take place. The mitigating impact of American slavery upon US expansionism had been appreciated by British Americans. At a banquet on October 11th, 1866 in London, Charles Tupper of New Brunswick drew British attention to it. The provinces had provided succour to

¹²⁸ Summers, *Ordeal of the Reunion*, 209.

¹²⁹ Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 544.

¹³⁰ Baker (Ed.), *William H. Seward* Vol. I, 273.

¹³¹ Quoted in *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XII, 45.

black refugees and fugitives, so 'every proposal for the annexation of Canada was bitterly opposed by the pro-Slavery party.'¹³² The provinces recognised that the change in circumstances left them exposed unless they formed a united polity able to withstand annexation or aggression. They were indeed ripe fruit.

Unbeknownst to Tupper, annexation at the end of a gun was furthest from Seward and Sumner's minds. In his 1852 speech, Seward had expressed his hope for peaceable annexation; 'I devoutly pray God that that consummation may come; the sooner the better; but I do not desire it at the cost of war and injustice.'¹³³ Sumner shared the same goal. In his 1867 article, he rejected expansion by conquest. Invoking Jefferson's hopes for the acquisition of British America in 1812, he stated that whereas 'Jefferson had looked to war for the extension of dominion' and failed, he was sanguine about the future; America's 'destiny is mightier than war.'¹³⁴ Where he and Seward differed on annexation was in the detail. Prior to the Civil War, Seward's expansionist aspirations had been mediated by the potential extension of slavery. Like other Whigs, he opposed the acquisition of Texas in 1844, the Mexican territories in 1848, and southern schemes to prise Cuba from Spain in the 1850s. This opposition to the extension of slavery informed a letter published following a vacation in the British provinces in the summer of 1857. It appeared in the *Albany Evening Journal* that September and was reprinted in the *New York Times* in 1862.¹³⁵ In it, Seward warned that one day a strengthening Canada might threaten the United States, but only if slavery continued to weaken the Union. Post-war, Seward's preference was for purchase of territory without conflict, or voluntary admission to the Union. The latter was Sumner's preference, whereby British Americans would request to join the United States.

¹³² *New-York Tribune*, 25 October 1866, 1.

¹³³ Baker (Ed.), *William H. Seward*, Vol. I, 273.

¹³⁴ *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XII, 182 & 183.

¹³⁵ Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012), 167-8, 588 n.7.

The purchase of Alaska and the emergence of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 required a reformulation of annexation. The new Dominion, especially, forced a re-evaluation of the timeline of continental expansion. Sumner and Seward responded in different ways. The British North America Act that initiated Canadian Confederation received royal assent on March 29th. Seward purchased Alaska from Russia the following day. This, and his further attempts at territorial appropriation, were considered beyond the boundaries of consensual annexation. Some detractors saw them as spending sprees, betrayals of the Ripe Fruit Theory. The *New-York Tribune* advocated wait and see, predicting that Santo Domingo, along with Haiti and Cuba, would ‘gravitate to us as Canada will, and be ready for incorporation with our Union.’¹³⁶ No timeline was specified. Seward’s Alaskan purchase received Sumner’s support, not least because of promises made to an old ally, Russia. His advocacy helped see the bill through, though the financial costs remained contested. His main defence was a speech on April 9th, 1867. Where Seward on Confederation was mute, and remained so, Sumner typically confronted the Dominion head on. He reminded his listeners of the changes afoot north of the border. The acquisition of Alaska Sumner titled an ‘Extension of Dominion,’ evidently American dominion.¹³⁷ The choice of terminology could not have escaped his listeners. Sumner’s understanding of American dominion was clarified when he went onto situate the Alaskan appropriation within the long history of American expansion. Alaska, like its predecessors, was a natural addition. Sumner restated a narrative of national expansion as an exercise in dominion that served a twofold purpose. Firstly, he reminded listeners that at the core of a seeming passive noun was the dynamism of an active, aggressive verb. Dominion was inherently an engine for expansion. Secondly, he sought to erase any notion that what was taking place to the north was simple colonial restructuring under a grandiose title. I suggest what he posited was a powerful confederacy with its own expansive determinism. Canada had its sights set on British Columbia as well as the Hudson’s Bay Company Territory. Essentially, Sumner rewrote the North American geopolitical map. For him, it now consisted of a contest between

¹³⁶ *New-York Tribune*, 6 February 1868, 4.

¹³⁷ *Works of Sumner*, (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1883), Vol. XI, 219.

two competing Dominions, one to the North, mimicking, and challenging the other to the South.

The conflict between Two Dominions that Sumner evoked was not only over space but ideology. American expansion was an 'Extension of Republican Institutions.'¹³⁸ He cited John Adams' 1787 claim that 'the northern part of that whole quarter of the globe' was destined to be Republican.¹³⁹ He tore Manifest Destiny from its 1840s moorings, asserting that 'even at that early day was the destiny of the Republic manifest.' In this section of his speech, Sumner arrived at two conclusions. Firstly, the Alaskan cession 'was a visible step in the occupation of the whole North American continent,' and 'as such it will be recognized by the world.' Secondly, it portended the extirpation of monarchy in North America, a further step in a process involving, 'first France, then Spain, then France again, and now Russia.' Sumner evoked the 1803 Louisiana Purchase, the 1819 cession of Florida, the recent expulsion of France from Mexico, and the acquisition of Alaska. He imbued the American advance with momentum.

It is not surprising that Sumner turned to the elephant-in-the-room suggesting that the American advance into Alaska would halt that of Great Britain. As his biographer, David Donald has pointed out, this was an argument that Sumner had adopted at meetings of the Senate Foreign Committee where he pointed out that the purchase would, 'squeeze England out of the continent.'¹⁴⁰ Sumner's argument was that the purchase was part of the broader continental competition between the US, and Britain and her new Dominion, in which, Canada specifically was doomed to fail. A continent divided against itself could not stand. For Sumner, American success was a given in that it continued the age-old conflict between Monarchy and Republicanism, and the extinction of the former

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

¹³⁹ John Adams, *Preface to his Defence of the American Constitutions*, January 1, 1787, in *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations, by His Grandson Charles Francis Adams*. (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), Vol. IV, 293. Quoted in *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XI, 222.

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in David Herbert Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 305.

in North America was preordained. Victory would be achieved by consensual annexation. Alaska was a necessary exception but further territories would be absorbed, 'without war, and I would add even without purchase.'¹⁴¹ Commitment to the latter determined Sumner's opposition to Seward's other schemes in the West Indies.¹⁴² Sumner foresaw annexation in response to 'the will of those who are to become our fellow-citizens,' drawn to the superiority of Republican institutions.¹⁴³ He never grasped the irony that the pro-monarchic Dominion to the north had been explicitly established to halt any drift towards Republicanism. Dominion, meaning the exercise of power, was a term to which Sumner would often return.¹⁴⁴

In September 1867, he picked up the continentalist themes of his April 9th Alaska speech in his *Atlantic Monthly* article, which he later republished, 'revised and enlarged,' as a monograph in March 1874.¹⁴⁵ In it, Sumner called upon, 'some of the prophetic voices concerning the future of America and the vast unfolding of our continent.'¹⁴⁶ His aggrandising use of 'our' was no slip of the pen. He cited luminaries from John Adams to Alexis de Tocqueville testifying to the eventual unification of the continent of North America as exclusively American. This demonymic construction, Sumner traced back to the Revolutionary period when 'the Colonies struggling for independence were always described by this continental designation.' To him, it foreshadowed, 'that coming time when the whole continent, with all its various states, shall be a Plural Unit, with one Constitution, one Liberty, and one Destiny.'¹⁴⁷ As in his Alaska speech, Sumner's thesis was that there could be only one Dominion of the North American continent.

¹⁴¹ *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XI, 233

¹⁴² Donald, *Rights of Man*, 354-6.

¹⁴³ *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XI, 233.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. XIII, 16, 60 & 134.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. XII, 3.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 180-1.

This was dictated by Nature herself, in the continent's waterways.¹⁴⁸ Quoting an 1849 letter from his English friend Richard Cobden, Sumner reminded readers that even a British Liberal acknowledged that, 'Nature has decided that Canada and the United States must become one, for all purposes of free intercommunication.'¹⁴⁹ Cobden gingerly sidestepped inevitable political union with the United States, which he saw as dependent upon the wishes of British Americans. His letter focused on the disputes between Britain and the colonies over the ending of imperial preference. Writing in 1867, Sumner saw those disputes reaching fruition, 'what is somewhat grandly called "The Dominion of Canada" marks one stage of its progress.'¹⁵⁰ His dismissive tone left readers in no doubt as to what the final stage would be. What for Cobden was a conditional possibility, for Sumner was inevitable. British Americans would gravitate towards the States, electing to 'be united in the same federal government.'¹⁵¹ There was no contradiction between Sumner's advocacy here of consensual annexation, and his earlier statements that acquisition of Alaska would force Britain from North America. Consent would be the inevitable consequence of the diminution of the mother country's influence, drawing colonists into the US orbit. Sumner would expand upon this two years later when explaining the unifying impact of a strengthened USA upon North America's peoples.

The *Atlantic Monthly* article was a warm up, as in October and November 1867 Sumner took, what Donald has termed, 'his doctrine of continentalism' on the lecture circuit as far west as Wisconsin, and south into Missouri.¹⁵² Reviews were mixed, and politically-motivated, suggesting to Donald that it 'persuaded those who were already true believers and failed to convince those who were not.' To what extent these were responses to Sumner's doctrine is unclear. The criticisms were primarily stylistic, the

¹⁴⁸ See p. 203 above.

¹⁴⁹ Cobden to Sumner, November 7, 1849, quoted in *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XII, 173-4.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹⁵² Donald, *Rights of Man*, 310.

Democratic *New York World* labelling Sumner 'tedious' and 'soporific.'¹⁵³ In fact, continentalism was only a small, though important, part of a speech in which Sumner's overarching theme was the fabric of the nation. The title posed the question, 'Are We A Nation?' He examined those 'tokens of Nationality,' the flag and national motto.¹⁵⁴ He discussed the nation's nomenclature, and delved into the Revolutionary past to remind his audience of its continental character. The inherent truth of that character was affirmed by the fact that 'our country was called "America," and we were called "Americans."¹⁵⁵ For Sumner, the continental demonym might yet become 'the natural designation of one country.' Not once in his speech did he mention the new Dominion, and yet, its presence was implicit throughout.

Seward pursued a similar trajectory and at times, echoed Sumner. Silent on the changes taking place to the North, his sights were set on the acquisition of British Columbia that, in his words, would 'round off our North Western territory.'¹⁵⁶ As Reginald Stuart has pointed out, Seward's silence was a dismissive American shrug, reflected in newspaper coverage, and very different from Sumner's sense of impending threat. In Stuart's words, 'faith in the convergence thesis made the Canadian Confederation seem a temporary phase in North American development.'¹⁵⁷ Like Sumner, Seward situated his continentalism within the broad American narrative. 'Canada is only a nominal colony or dependency,' he declared in an 1853 Senate speech, 'Great Britain yet retains Canada, only by yielding to her what she denied to us – fiscal independence.'¹⁵⁸ Evoking the Revolutionary past, he reminded listeners of Canada's place within it. He echoed rationales dating back to the invasions of 1775, the War of 1812, and that encouraged US acceptance of the 1854 Reciprocity Treaty. Most importantly, he perpetuated

¹⁵³ Ibid., 312.

¹⁵⁴ *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XII, 226.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 232.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Stahr, *Seward*, 499.

¹⁵⁷ Stuart, *United States Expansionism*, 244.

¹⁵⁸ Baker, (Ed.), *William H. Seward*, Vol. III, 617.

American ignorance of the Canadian psyche, the depth of Canadian allegiance to Britain, and the animosity many British Americans felt towards the United States. It seemed impossible to him that Canada would do anything other than follow the path already set by America.

The ideological continuity between 1853 and the late 1860s is captured in two speeches Seward made in the summer of 1869. No longer Secretary of State, in August, he addressed the few inhabitants of Sitka in his one successful addition to the Union, Alaska. There, he reiterated his continentalist commitment. He conceded that the closest neighbour, British Columbia, was, 'within a foreign jurisdiction.' However, he assured them that, 'British Columbia, by whomsoever possessed, must be governed in conformity with the interests of her people and of society upon the American continent.' The tone became menacing as he promised that if the governing of British Columbia should, 'conflict with the interests of the inhabitants of that Territory and of the United States, we all can easily foresee what will happen in that case.'¹⁵⁹ The overt message is based upon presumptions that the British province would join the Union. Ironically, the primary opponent to Confederation, the provincial governor Frederick Seymour, had died in June, though annexation of British Columbia remained a hot topic.¹⁶⁰ It is the subtext, his warning on governance, that is most indicative of the extent of Seward's continentalism beyond the purely political. British Columbia must be governed not only according to the wishes of its inhabitants, but in conformity with a broader continental society. Seward here extinguished any difference between monarchical British America and the Republic. It was the continent itself that functioned as the great unifier, and that is underlined when he asserted that the interests of inhabitants on both sides of the border, whether British or American, were the same. It seems to me that Seward was saying something new here about America's continental identity. It is continuity that provides the key. In another speech made in 1853, Seward had proclaimed, 'with

¹⁵⁹ George E. Baker, (Ed.), *The Diplomatic History of the War for the Union, Being the Fifth Volume of the Works of William H. Seward, New Ed.* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1890), 567-68.

¹⁶⁰ E.g. *New-York Times*, 22 September, 4 & 31 December 1869, 1; *The New York Herald*, 31 December 1869, 5, 14 February 1870, 7; *New-York Tribune*, 31 December 1869, 1.

telegraphs and railroads crossing the Detroit, the Niagara, the St. Johns and the St. Lawrence rivers... with a fleet in Hudson's bay and another at Bhering's Straits... [Canada's] principles, interests and sympathies assimilate to our own.' The result was that Canada 'will ultimately become a member of this confederacy if we will consent.'¹⁶¹

This expansive vision built upon the Senate speech made in January earlier that year. The assimilation of expansion with technological innovation tied it to the tail of Manifest Destiny, that over-used phrase, coined by editor John L. O'Sullivan in 1845. For Sullivan, America's territorial expansion was made manifest by the contraction of the continent in the face of the technological advances of the 1840s, not least the advent of the telegraph in 1844. As those advances continued, the promise of Manifest Destiny remained resonant for continentalists such as Seward. The first US-Canadian railroad was inaugurated in 1851. Sumner too knit geographic unity and technology in his 1867 'Are We A Nation?' lecture. He cited the twin miracles of the age folding space; 'the telegraph, when once extended, is an indissoluble tie; the railway is an iron band.' Sumner's vision could be as mystifying as his language. At times, he spoke in continental terms, reminding listeners that 'the country is one open expanse, from the frozen Arctic to the warm waters of the Gulf, and from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains.'¹⁶² Then, his focus was specifically national, talking about the relationships between states, and the East and West coasts. This juxtaposition strikes me as purposeful. His aim was not to obscure, but to tap into that corner of the American psyche fostered since the Revolution that was itself an obscurity; where did America, nation and continent, begin and end? Sumner sidestepped from one to the other, leaving his departing audience with a shifting imagined space, one in which continent and nation were both separate and the same.

Seward left Alaska for British Columbia, where he spoke to the leading citizens of Victoria on Vancouver Island. 'I have never heard any person, on either side of the United States border, assert that British Columbia is not a part of the American

¹⁶¹ Baker, (Ed.), *William H. Seward, New Ed.*, (1888), Vol. IV, 122.

¹⁶² *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XII, 235.

continent,' he announced, stating the geographic position as well as deftly laying claim to the border. Then, he added, 'or that its people have or can have any interest, material, moral, or social, different from the common interests of all American nations.'¹⁶³ The latter, whilst recognising the existence of separate polities saw them sharing a common continental identity. He went further, listing Oregon, Washington Territory, British Columbia, and Alaska, which 'I venture to call it by one name, the North Pacific American coast... the long ages when communities pervaded by common interests could be separated in their commerce have come to an end,' as, 'steam on land and sea and the electric telegraph have leveled the mountains and bridged the ocean.'¹⁶⁴ Seward not only transcended borders to suggest a new regional identity, but employed the spatially contracting forces of technology to drive home his point. Ironically, it was a transcontinental railroad that would draw British Columbia into the Dominion in 1871. But here, Seward reminded his listeners that those forces extended not only east-to-west but north-to-south. It strikes me that even whilst Seward hoped for the political annexation of British Columbia, and Canada as whole, he was also suggesting an alternative continentalist model that had roots dating back to the 1790s, when American settlers flooded into Upper Canada, and one that would have resonated with British Columbians, 30,000 of whom, many from the US, had relocated during the 1858 Fraser River Gold Rush. Voluntary annexation of Canada remained Seward's expectation, but here a continentalism of a different kind was being advocated, based upon transnational economic and cultural imperatives. By the late twentieth century, William Seward would be proven prophetic.

Prophecy was not to prove Charles Sumner's forte as annexation of British America was to become mired in the broader debates in which he was engaged, involving race and its place in America's future. In many ways, his path continued to parallel Seward's. In September 1869, Sumner, in his clearest advocacy of Canadian annexation, highlighted the conundrum that was consensual annexation, and his failure to grasp the British American identity. In a speech to the Republican Convention in Worcester,

¹⁶³ Baker, (Ed.), *Diplomatic History*, Vol. V 569.

¹⁶⁴ Baker, (Ed.), *Diplomatic History*, Vol. V, 570 & 571.

Massachusetts on September 22, he once again trawled through a continentalist narrative beginning with Benjamin Franklin's failed 1776 mission to Quebec, through Richard Cobden's well-mined 1849 letter, until concluding that, "Reciprocity," once established by treaty, and now so often desired on both sides, will be transfigured in Union.'¹⁶⁵ For Sumner, this 'end was certain; nor shall we wait for its mighty fulfilment.' Annexation was to be economically determined. He may have been persuaded by reports of dissatisfaction in the Dominion, particularly the Maritimes, but if so, he was sorely off the mark. Like Seward, Sumner exhibited no understanding of what exactly had taken place in British America or why. There was one nugget that shed light on his main purpose. Destiny's 'beginning is the establishment of peace at home, through which the national unity shall become manifest.' Reconstruction must succeed. Sumner's was a call to continued Republican commitment to the great experiment, which is not to deny the sincerity of his continentalism but is to situate it within, what for him, was the predominant issue of the day.

This interpretation is strengthened when one turns to the speech Sumner made a month later, in Boston on October 21, 1869, entitled 'The Question of Caste.' He grappled with the challenges of racial unity and equality confronting the nation. Sumner's conclusion summoned a future in which differences between all races, including blacks and Chinese, would 'be lost in the widening confines of our Republic, with an ocean-bound continent for its unparalleled expanse, and one harmonious citizenship.'¹⁶⁶ Shortly before, he had acknowledged that colour 'may be the ground for personal like or dislike,' but in his coda, he seduced his audience with the possibility of racial harmony tied to the nation's fulfilment of its continental destiny.¹⁶⁷ Indeed, the latter was to be the engine of unity. The Reconstruction of the nation was synthesised with the reconstituting of its geographical parameters. The detail, as was so often the case in Sumner's language, remained sufficiently unspecified to allow listeners to draw their own conclusions. His rationale was political.

¹⁶⁵ *Works of Sumner* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1900), Vol. XVII, 129.

¹⁶⁶ *Works of Sumner* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1880), Vol. XIII, 183.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

'The Question of Caste' spoke to an uncertain America in elevating tones. It is impossible not to discern the Fifteenth Amendment, promising the right to vote to all races, which awaited states' ratification even as Sumner spoke. The contradictions in Sumner's political presentation style were highlighted over the coming months when, in a series of interviews, he explained his opposition to the annexation of Cuba and Mexico. Cubans were unacceptable as citizens, as they 'don't speak our language' and 'know very little about our customs and institutions.'¹⁶⁸ The same was true of the Mexicans. Yet Sumner foresaw annexation. 'We will get all the West India islands sooner than we want them,' he said, and, 'the annexation of Mexico will probably occur quite as soon as it is desired.'¹⁶⁹ Setting to one side the striking contrast in racial message between these interviews and 'The Question of Caste,' the overall theme was that expansion was inevitable, but not now. When questioned on specifics, Sumner expressed preferences best left for that future he so enjoyed leaving ill-defined. In late 1869 and early 1870, his focus, as always, was politics and the long-term goal. He was intent on avoiding recognition of Cuban rebels as belligerents as it would undermine Civil War claims against Britain that could lead to the acquisition of Canada.¹⁷⁰ In both *The New York Herald* interviews, he stated his preference for the latter. There, "'the people speak our language and are familiar with our institutions.'¹⁷¹

British America was Sumner's *idée fixe*. This explains one of the most contentious episodes in his career that led to his removal from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. A speech on March 24, 1870 opposing the Grant Administration's treaty to acquire Santo Domingo secured Sumner's fall from grace.¹⁷² The speech, given the same month as his pro-Canada interview to *The New York Herald*, dismissed the Caribbean as

¹⁶⁸ *The New York Herald*, 29 December 1869, 7.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, & 7 March 1870, 5.

¹⁷⁰ Donald, *Rights of Man*, 416-7.

¹⁷¹ *The New York Herald*, 29 December 1869, 7.

¹⁷² Summers, *Ordeal of the Reunion*, 225-6.

a space for American expansion. 'To the African belongs the equatorial belt and he should enjoy it undisturbed,' he announced, whilst the US was 'an Anglo-Saxon Republic, and would ever remain so by the preponderance of that race.'¹⁷³ This not only contradicted his Boston speech, but rendered one of America's leading white Reconstructionists a hypocrite. Here, the historical waters become muddy as both David Donald and Eric T. L. Love remind us that the March 24 speech was delivered in closed session. We rely on newspaper reports that focused on Sumner's hypocrisy.¹⁷⁴ The tangle of reasons for his personal opposition to Grant, not least of which may have been the dismissal of a friend James Ashley, governor of Montana Territory, has been examined in detail.¹⁷⁵ In his speech, in addition to climate and race, he highlighted the cost, the assumption of the Dominican debt, and entanglement in the rebellion under way against President Baez. Love is right to focus on the race issue as it was picked up by both pro-annexation Indiana Republican Oliver P. Morton, who refuted Sumner's assertions, and anti-annexation Missouri Republican Carl Schurz who, 'knew that racism, exploiting fear of dark races, alien people, from hot places, was his best weapon.'¹⁷⁶ But Sumner's argument must be squared with the Boston speech and his newspaper interviews. Doing so enables us to clarify his continentalist doctrine.

In the March 24th speech, he stated that the West Indies 'should not be absorbed into the United States, but should remain as independent powers.'¹⁷⁷ By December 21st, 1870, interrogated by senators who saw his opposition as a personal vendetta against Grant, Sumner declared that 'a darling idea of mine, entertained for years, has been a protectorate in the Gulf to be maintained by the great Republic.'¹⁷⁸ The apparent side-

¹⁷³ Quoted in Eric T. L. Love, *Race Over Empire: Racism and U.S. Imperialism, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 57.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 56; Donald, *Rights of Man*, 443.

¹⁷⁵ Donald, *Rights of Man*, 439-44; Calhoun, *The Presidency of Ulysses S. Grant*, 231-5.

¹⁷⁶ Love, *Race Over Empire*, 59.

¹⁷⁷ Quoted in Donald, *Rights of Man*, 443.

¹⁷⁸ *Congressional Globe*, 41st Congress, 3rd Session, 253.

stepping from March to December suggests a man on the defensive but in a political context, it is possible to make sense of both statements in conjunction with his newspaper interviews. In March, Sumner launched his first salvo against annexation, insisting on the West Indies' independence. He later modified this, arguing for an American protectorate. Central to both was his newspaper statement that annexation would come 'sooner than we want.' Sumner was not opposed to annexation, but in the West Indies, he saw it as a gradual process that was being dangerously speeded up. Complicating both his argument and that process was his animus towards Grant. The playing of the race card was pure politics. His resort to unashamedly racist language, contradicting his long-established position, provided, in the context of Reconstruction, the perfect 'barrier to annexation.'¹⁷⁹ That he was right to do so was proven by the impact it had on other senators, who adopted the argument, leading to the eventual defeat of the treaty. In the Boston speech, the 'hospitality of citizenship' was to be offered to 'the stranger hurrying from opposite shores, across two great oceans – from the East, from the West,' to blacks and Chinese, the latter surely as linguistically and politically challenged by the American experiment as West Indians.¹⁸⁰ To accept Sumner's racism at face value can only lead to one conclusion. But his was policy, not hypocrisy. Like Mexico, the West Indies were to be acquired when desired.

Neither Sumner nor Seward realised their continentalist ambitions for Canada. Their public statements had a whenever-however character that was inspirational, but left listeners uncertain as to how the end goal would be achieved. This was especially true as the politics of the late 1860s became more febrile and the focus increasingly upon domestic issues. Both politicians were hamstrung by this. Sumner became ever more engrossed in his battle with the Grant Administration, and Santo Domingo, in opposition to which he was forced to resort to arguments that rendered him a hypocrite in the eyes of the public. Seward by this point was no longer a player having exited government, but unlike Sumner, he voiced a vision moving forward that if not continentalist in the traditional sense, pointed towards an alternative future, one which the USA would

¹⁷⁹ Love, *Race Over Empire*, 59.

¹⁸⁰ *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XIII, 183.

dominate economically and culturally. That future had also been recognised by Sumner when in his April 9th, 1867 speech in support of the Alaskan cession, he listed five reasons in support of the purchase. At the top of that list, he showed himself in perfect accord with Seward's commitment to the strengthening of US international trade. He too implicitly situated this within the extension of the American continental footprint. He argued Alaska would strengthen US commerce with China and Japan, via the new transcontinental railroad, 'a new highway to the East,' drawing the American Nation and Asia closer together.¹⁸¹ Both pushed at a vision in which trade would prove a great unifier, but neither could accept one which did not involve political assimilation under the Union flag.

5. CONCLUSION

We have seen that the American belief that the nation would acquire British America was based upon fundamental misunderstandings of the provincial psyche, ensuring failure. It is unsurprising that the US did not understand the changes taking place as the shift towards Dominion was a novel imperial experiment. Only time would prove its ability to foster a Canadian national identity, and provide the foundation of today's Commonwealth system. Less excusable is the American lack of imagination, as it was burdened by prejudices, central to the American experience, that hindered any meaningful analysis of British Americans and their politics. These consisted of assumptions, each encouraging a continentalist outlook, that together made annexation of the provinces seem inevitable. The Dominion remained part of a flawed imperial system, the corruption of which Americans had been wise enough to recognise long ago. The Dominion was a monarchy, relic of a past that Republicanism and Democracy across the Western Hemisphere was rejecting. Geography dictated a north-south axis, from the St Lawrence in the east to British Columbia and California in the west. This assertion was particularly ironic given America's own transit through deserts and the Rocky Mountains to reach the Pacific. The US transcontinental railroad completed in 1869 would be matched by that of the Canadians in 1885. The main flaw was the

¹⁸¹ *Works of Sumner*, Vol. XI, 219.

dismissal of the British American identity. Most provincials wanted to be annexed it was argued. In this, Americans fell foul of politics that were just as devious as their own. These misconceptions came together in a much-publicised letter written in 1869 to the Nova Scotians by Democratic Unionist Robert J. Walker, though his intended British American audience was evidently much broader.

Walker was a long-standing continentalist. In 1848, he been a vocal member of the 'All Mexico' movement, foreseeing, 'the onward march of the American people over the North American continent.'¹⁸² Between 1862 and 1864, he published the *Continental Monthly*, a magazine in which he echoed Seward and Sumner, characterising the Union as a force ordained by Nature. 'Disunion,' he stated, 'is opposed to the physical laws of this continent,' and 'Canada... would soon seek admission to the Union.'¹⁸³ In his letter of April 21st, 1869, he responded to the inquiries of the Nova Scotia League, an association of pro-annexationists.¹⁸⁴ In 1867, Nova Scotia had been one of the founding provinces of the new Dominion, and the Annexation Movement would fail there, as it did in British Columbia, to which Walker also referred.¹⁸⁵ The Pacific province joined the Dominion in 1871. As is evident from its title, Nova Scotian annexation was to be the inaugural of the broader assimilation of the whole of British America. Walker said as much. Nova Scotia would lead the way as, 'you would certainly bring in all the rest of British North America into our Union.' His discussion of British America in the continental round, suggests that he hoped for his argument's dissemination beyond the confines of the Maritime Province. The extent to which this was achieved is unclear.

Walker grappled with the conceptual crux of continentalism, and the place of British America. For him, the latter formulation was a geopolitical absurdity. In advocating the

¹⁸² James P. Shenton, *Robert John Walker: A Politician from Jackson to Lincoln* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 103-4 & 126.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁸⁴ *Letter of Hon. Robt. J. Walker on the Annexation of Nova Scotia and British America. From the Washington Chronicle, April 23, 1869.*, (Washington DC, 1869).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

suitability of union between the Nova Scotians and their US neighbours, Walker stressed that 'you are of our blood, race, and language.' He sought to disengage them from any pretension to Britishness. Walker stated that, 'England is European, and you, like ourselves, are American by birth or adoption. This great American continent is your home and ours.'¹⁸⁶ Walker not only attempted to render the colonists' British identity defunct, but prove that it was infeasible. There was also an implicit sting in his assertion. 'American' had hitherto been the exclusive demonym of the United States. In his advocacy of annexation Walker asserted that being American was only possible by not being British American. His argument was double-edged. Whilst severing the colonial cord with Britain, he reeled in his readers with the oblique inference that their intrinsic Americanness predisposed them to be part of the United States. I would go so far as to suggest that what Walker presented was an imagined re-annexation of British America.

He followed up the assault upon Nova Scotians' Britishness with a repudiation of monarchy and a call to revolution. 'Read these words, fellow Americans of Nova Scotia,' he instructed, 'and see how parallel your present position is with that of ours in 1774.' Ironically, even as he was writing, the Nova Scotian group was a waning band though they had never been a majority in the province. Most were anti-Confederationists and not Annexationists. Indeed, in Walker's argument, we see the fundamental flaws that characterised the US' understanding of the British American psyche. The Annexation Movement in Nova Scotia, and elsewhere, was stimulated by fears of becoming less-British within the Confederation, not by the desire to become more American. The imperial government that Walker characterised as focused on 'the so-called European balance of power' was the one that British Americans saw as a bulwark against the United States. 'As part of the British realm,' he mocked, 'you participate in her wars, and follow her destiny,' revealing no comprehension of the British imperial identity to which most Nova Scotians and other British Americans were so attached.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

Nowhere did Walker reveal his deficient understanding of the broader forces at work in the provinces more than in his dismissal of the Confederated experiment. The Dominion's aspiration to continental prominence, he thundered, 'from Newfoundland to the Arctic and Pacific, is but little more than a fragmentary selvage of the United States.'¹⁸⁸ Contradicting the American experiment, Walker asserted that, 'it is composed of detached parts, incapable of intercommunication, or of being consolidated into one empire.' Ignoring the establishment of a federal capital and Parliament in Ottawa, for Walker, this chimeric polity could 'never be a compact body, with one head or heart or arterial system.'¹⁸⁹ Fundamental to his thesis was the impossibility of communication. He asserted, 'no continuous railroad route, entirely through British territory, can ever unite Halifax and Montreal with the Pacific.'¹⁹⁰ The Dominion had no share in Manifest Destiny, technology was incapable of overcoming obstacles and distance. Its limitations were divinely ordained. 'Can the Canadian Dominion alter the decrees of Providence?' asked Walker, 'can they change climate and geography?' This damning assessment was contrasted with a glowing portrait of the Union's future, with the settlement of the West and its connection with the East by the soon-to-be completed transcontinental railroad.¹⁹¹ Overall, Walker's epistle to the converted, and further conversion was his aim, was a volley of all that we have examined in this chapter. Summoning the Spirits of 1774 and 76 in his American experiment, he denied the validity of a Canadian alternative that shared similar expansionist aspirations. Fundamentally, those spirits were his downfall, as they were of all continentalists. The New World objections to Britishness and monarchy that proved so resonant in the 1770s had little traction in the North America of the 1860s, or a British Empire that not only remained the global superpower but that was reinventing itself. The viability of that reinvention remained to be seen, but it gave sustenance to the alternative continental nation that would become Canada.

¹⁸⁸ "Selvage" meaning the edge on a fabric or margin to stop unravelling. See <<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/selvage>> Accessed 25 August 2017.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 13. A sentiment repeated on 16.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

In hindsight, continentalism strikes us as a blind alley, fated from the outset to failure. The Loyalist British provinces to the north, settled in the aftermath of a revolution they opposed, were never drawn to the Union they had rejected. But such a conclusion would be to misunderstand the fundamental role continentalism had in the evolving American identity of our period. It was a core creed of the Revolutionary generation. What followed Independence was its slow adaptation to the realities of North American geopolitics. The continent remained imagined American space, and by that, I mean the purview of the USA. Turning the imagined into a reality involved periodic political spikes that captured the national imagination and, when successful, resulted in the expansion of American territory. In the case of British America, Britain itself was the arbiter in determining its fate, not any inclination on the part of American themselves for a bordered polity that did not include the provinces to the north. British provincials by choice and inclination, if supported by the imperial government, were never enthusiastic annexationists. Even the influx from the States during the 1790s and 1810s were insufficient to alter that. Late Loyalists as they came to be called, established new homes and new identities. The War of 1812 was a war of words in a shared language that defined diverging concepts. Words expressed allegiance and choice, but they also fostered identities. If Britain remained the power preeminent by sea, continentalists were never able to indulge in territorial adventures of the Mexican War variety. Also, increasing sectional tensions pre-Civil War closed the door on British America, as it did on what remained of the Mexican Republic. Continentalists were forced to resort to the possibility of annexation. They were, as we have seen, far from proficient players in what was for provincials a game of imperial stakes. But, that so many American leaders from the Revolutionary generation down to the Sumners, Swards and Bankses did so with such fervour, that newspapers continuously debated the possibilities whilst exhibiting so little understanding of their subject, was testament to the core resonance continentalism had with an American public. It also revealed a nation in which confidence in the Republican experiment, not undermined by Civil War but destabilised by it, in reasserting its own strength could not conceive of an alternative yet equal political system on the continent to which it laid claim, and by 1871, dominated.

CHAPTER SIX

REDISCOVERING LOST HORIZONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Most Americans did think about British North America, as this study has shown, even if only when stumbling across the name of a British province in the business columns of a newspaper, in the historic and review sections of a cultural journal, or when trumpeted on the campaign trail. When political shifts in the provinces demanded attention, the British neighbours provoked a flurry of American interest. The 1774 Quebec Act, the 1837-8 Canadian Rebellions, the introduction of responsible government, the 1849 Annexation Manifesto, and the creation of the Dominion all stimulated broader continental debates, not least in the USA because such shifts were often seen to portend the integration of the British provinces into the Union. These are our lost horizons. Such engagement has been forgotten, and it is with forgetting that this study began. Margaret MacMillan has reminded us that ‘history is about remembering the past, but it is also about choosing to forget.’¹ Choice has been key, and historians of eighteenth and nineteenth century North America and the US public have been complicit in making such choices. Both have ignored historical encounters with a British America that did not disappear in a puff of peace in 1783.

The Carnegie School with its Whiggish account of conflict averted through mutual respect peddled its message at a time of critical change in world geopolitics. Its last volume appeared in 1945 just as America was stepping up to the challenge of assuming Britain’s global mantle. As the threat of the imperial bugaboo faded, so too its old colonies in North America seemed of little relevance in an increasingly insular historiography that told the story of the providential rise of the twentieth century’s superpower. If, as political scientist Karl Deutsch has suggested, ‘a nation is a group of people united by a mistaken view of the past and a hatred of their neighbours,’ then

¹ Margaret MacMillan, *Dangerous Games: The Uses and Abuses of History* (New York: Modern Library, 2009), 113.

historians of the United States have met both criteria by ignoring powerless British America and focusing on perfidious Mexico, the latter a subject of continuing interest.² Such an approach serves a public sustained by the myth that the founding of the nation witnessed the disappearance of the British. Some years ago, at a conference at the Institute of Historical Research in London, Phillip Buckner was forced to correct an eminent Americanist who opened his paper saying, 'After the British lost their empire in North America in 1783...'³ Not only did the British presence persist. Less palatable was the fact that it flourished. Both Republic and colonies experienced fluctuating economies, but they witnessed significant growth, demographically and territorially. There was an influx of immigrants north and south of the border, though the United States attracted the lion's share. US movement west was at a quicker pace, facilitated by the acquisition of Louisiana, the Mexican cessions, Oregon and Alaska. The Dominion, though a late arrival, fulfilled its continental objectives with the appropriation of Rupert's Land and the North-West Territory in 1870, and British Columbia in 1871. In 1880, it acquired the Arctic Islands, geographically superseding its more powerful neighbour.

More irksome for Americans was that Canada emerged by comparatively peaceful methods as the Union grappled with the fallout of the Civil War. Little wonder that annexation was at a peak as Reconstruction America confronted a newly constructed Canada. The latter was never meant to happen. As we have seen, there was a persistent belief that the British provinces were a regressive failure, so much so that integration by the United States was a given. How had the USA been so wrong? But how much more reassuring for an American public to find solace in Frederick Jackson Turner's and Teddy Roosevelt's comforting theses, captured by the artist Emanuel Gottlieb Leutze in his 1861 painting, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way?* Movement to the West, and not north, had always been the nation's destiny. Ernest Renan wrote that 'forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the

² Quoted in David Rieff, *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and Its Ironies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 138.

³ Buckner, 'American-Canadian Relations,' 25 Nov 2013, 29.

creation of a nation.’⁴ The errors are conspicuous, and today, despite the introduction of important global and transnational perspectives to American historiography, all is well in the United States of Amnesia.⁵ Thomas Bender may recognise that the American nation is ‘connected with and partially shaped by what is beyond it,’ but British North America remains lost.⁶

This study has argued the importance of its reclamation for our understanding of the evolution of the United States. It has highlighted the ways in which Americans engaged with their northern neighbours in the pages of newspapers and magazines, as visitors and tourists, and in the case of black Americans, as fugitives and refugees. British North America forced white Americans to confront their own nascent identities for the surviving colonies represented the past their young nation had rejected. At the outset, I evoked L. P. Hartley’s famous phrase. John H. Arnold has taken Hartley a stage further. ‘Visiting the past is something like visiting a foreign country,’ he writes, ‘they do some things the same and some things differently, but above all else they make us more aware of what we call ‘home.’⁷ Such was the impact of British America upon Americans. It heightened their sense of difference, and strengthened their commitment to the republican experiment. It reaffirmed what it was to be American. But its presence, its refusal to accept what Americans saw as the verdict of the Revolution, the invalidation of the British and validation of the American identity on their continent as a new, bold, distinct political presence, hard won through suffering and war, was also profoundly destabilising for the nascent nation still negotiating the meaning of that identity.

⁴ Ernest Renan, ‘What is a Nation?’ in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, (Eds.), *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 45.

⁵ Ian Tyrrell, *Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective since 1789* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007); Thomas Bender, *A Nation Among Nations: America’s Place in World History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2006).

⁶ Bender, *A Nation Among Nations*, 3.

⁷ John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 120.

Whether discussed in Congress, or reported in newspapers and magazines, Americans failed to engage with events in the British provinces on anything other than their own political terms. Even the testimonies of black Americans in Canada West were harvested and disseminated as American abolition propaganda. This absence of objective analysis is understandable. Positive reporting of political reforms within the now foreign imperial system was not only politically dangerous but potentially suicidal. The period I have been exploring saw the emigration of thousands of Americans to Upper Canada in the 1790s and 1800s, the threatened secession of an Anglo-oriented New England during the War of 1812, and the increasing disaffection of Anglophile opponents to Jacksonian Democracy, expansion and slavery. To this could be added the flight of thousands of black Americans who considered British America *their* empire of liberty. Throughout this period, ebullient American optimism must be weighed against fears and uncertainties that were equally prevalent. America post-Revolution was a shaky place. British America made it even shakier. A powerful British Empire confronted the evolving Republic with dangerous challenges as has been well explored.⁸ The republican experiment itself was far from secure, and the Union, ‘now and forever,’ ultimately ruptured.⁹ Even post-Civil War, a newly vivified confidence masked uncertainties.¹⁰ It is unsurprising that most Americans chose to dismiss the new Dominion of Canada as an unsustainable aberration.

Consistent negative reporting and discussion of events in the colonies served a twofold purpose. Firstly, it provided opportunities to promote the American experiment, and assert its superiority, both of which enriched Americans’ understanding of themselves. Secondly, it functioned as a constant political refrain, the reiteration of the continuing validity of the Revolutionary experience. Nothing good could be said of those who had rejected the Revolution and the Republic for to do so would imply that Americans

⁸ P. J. Marshall, *Remaking the British Atlantic: The United States and the British Empire after American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jay Sexton, ‘Epilogue: The United States in the British Empire’ in Stephen Foster (Ed.), *British North America*.

⁹ *Speeches of the Hon. Robert Y. Hayne, and the Hon. Daniel Webster*, 131.

¹⁰ Alys Beverton, ‘The Decline of the Model Republic: Images of Mexico in U.S. Public Discourse, 1860-1883,’ PhD Dissertation, University College London, 2018.

themselves were wrong. For Americans to be right, British Americans had to be wrong. If reporting of the colonies was biased, so what? The political battle at home, whether between Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, Whigs and Democrats, North and South, or whites and blacks, was to ensure the survival of the nation. Any serious attempt to understand what change in the colonies might mean to the political heretics that lived there was unimportant. The result was a deeply entrenched ignorance of their continental relatives. In broader geopolitics, it seems this did not matter when foreign policy and border negotiations with Great Britain were to the fore, but it obscured important changes that were guiding the colonies towards their own national future. So, Americans were confused. Ironically, colonists were far more attuned to the American reading of their politics. They played to their neighbour's flawed expectations, and proved themselves adept in recognising how those expectations could be employed to their advantage in both their internal politics, and in negotiations with the imperial government.

American armchair travellers and tourists to Quebec, magazine writers, newspaper journalists, polemicists, pulpit speakers, politicians on the floors of Congress or on campaign, and black refugees and fugitives seeking to construct their own identities, have all been the subjects of this study. In examining how they experienced and negotiated the British American presence on the nation's doorstep, four overarching themes have emerged. Firstly, there was the legacy of the American Revolution, fidelity to which determined much of the American response to events in the provinces and facilitated the mythologizing of the past. It was the Revolution, not least the effects of the 1774 Quebec Act, that had initially sundered the old colonial system, and led to the geopolitical realignment in which a new British North America had emerged. Secondly, there was the challenge posed by the remaining colonies attachment to the title British North America from 1783 onwards. For Americans, their rapid acquisition of the continental name as the national demonym rendered the concept of a British American oxymoronic. To be American was to be a citizen of the United States. Colonists' insistence on their British Americanness provided Americans with opportunities to strengthen their claim, and define its meaning. Thirdly, there were the ways in which the British American experience fostered not only white American identity, but also that of black Americans. Indeed, for the latter, it was far more facilitating, enabling refugees

and fugitives to construct new identities, socially and politically, and to make choices denied them at home. Black Americans were not citizens until the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1868, but when given the choice, they could choose to be black Americans or black British Americans. Finally, there was continentalism, the question of where America began and where it ended. The national demonym both clarified and obfuscated Americans' sense of place, and the evolution of British North America complicated this. I will conclude by exploring these themes.

2. RERUNNING THE REVOLUTION

We forget the centrality of the Revolution to the American experience prior to the Civil War's shattering intervention. The extent to which the latter has displaced the Revolution as an emotional lodestar was captured by Robert Penn Warren when he stated that 'the Civil War is our *felt* history – history lived in the national imagination.'¹¹ By implication, the War of Independence has become an *unfelt* conflict that Americans find difficult to engage with. That it has lost its emotional pull is indicated by the reels of film on the Civil War and the paucity dedicated to the Revolution by Hollywood over the past century.¹² Such was not the case prior to 1865, and British America was its living reminder. The 1774 Quebec Act was a blow to colonists who had anticipated the province's integration into the long-established British American community, stripped of its Catholic Canadien identity. Fleeing Canadians, themselves Protestant Anglophones, heightened the sense of betrayal. Following Independence, that betrayal intersected with the evolving American identity that the imperial rupture had unleashed. To the overwhelmingly Anglophone Republic, nurtured on Protestantism, Quebec seemed increasingly anomalous. The Quebec Act that sustained an ever-increasing Canadien population and its culture became a yardstick by which such a policy was to be judged, and a point of reference for the nation confronted by its own minorities. As colonists, Americans had never been advocates of multi-culturalism. Most

¹¹ Robert Penn Warren, *The Legacy of the Civil War: Meditations on the Centennial* (New York: Random House, 1961), 4.

¹² Melvyn Stokes, *American History through Hollywood Film: From the Revolution to the 1960s* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 9, 34.

were less so as US citizens. Louisiana was trumpeted as a triumph of Anglicisation, even if the realities were very different. Evidence of the danger posed to the Republic by the influx of Irish Catholics in the second quarter of the nineteenth century was to be found in the convents and seminaries of Quebec. Whigs, opposed to Jacksonian policies, may not have wished a Trail of Tears upon the Canadiens, but they applauded the extirpation of their language and religion proposed in Lord Durham's Report. Tourists and travel writers, little interested in the inhabitants themselves, judged the province through the lens of an American progress that the Canadiens had been denied. Implicit in travel guides and explicit in journal articles, the Quebec Act never ceased to inform Americans' assessments of Quebec. It was the point of departure, a cornerstone of the Revolutionary War. Its betrayal metamorphosed into a national sense of righteousness, vindication of Americans' rejection of Britain.

Whilst Quebec could be dismissed as an alien anomaly, it was less easy to ignore the burgeoning Anglophone provinces. These seemed to challenge the survival of the Revolution from the outset when in 1783 they received a fillip in the form of Loyalists fleeing the new United States. Little wonder that John Adams and his fellow negotiators in Paris argued for the cession of all the mainland continent. The threat was heightened in the 1790s and 1800s when thousands of American settlers, soon-to-be-called as Late Loyalists, flooded Upper and Lower Canada. But it was these that formed the soft underbelly of the War of 1812, firing American enthusiasm for the conflict, mainly in the West, as the Revolution could be fought again, and this time with emigrant Americans on side. Beyond impressment, Indian obstruction, and British arrogance, Canada remained, a repudiation of the Revolution and America's providential future. It is unsurprising that the war came to be celebrated as 'the second war for independence.'¹³ 'Collective memories are instruments of power,' David Blight tells us.¹⁴ Central to Americans' collective memory was the Spirit of '76, celebrated every Fourth of July. What British Americans remembered was what Maya Jasanoff has called 'the Spirit of

¹³ Quoted in Gordon S. Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* *The Oxford History of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 699.

¹⁴ Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield*, 279.

'83,' the year that enabled them to reassert and preserve their own identities within North America and the British Empire.¹⁵

Americans never grasped this foundational premise of the new British polities. Too blinkered by their own withdrawal from the Empire, they could only understand subsequent political upheavals in the provinces as repetitions of their own struggle. Michel Ducharme points out that historians' search for the impact of the American and French revolutions in British America has often proven unsatisfactory, "because they have tried to force Canadian political evolution into a historical framework that belongs to a different context."¹⁶ Americans exploring British America were guilty of the same mistake. The revolutions that had freed most of the Spanish and Portuguese colonies by the 1820s, won Greece its independence in 1829, and threatened continental Europe in 1848 might seem to justify the American analysis. That they do not becomes clear when we remember colonists' stubborn loyalism during the Revolution, and the tenacious resilience of both Canadians and Canadiens in the War of 1812. American commentators' recourse to the Revolution as the measure by which events in British America were judged, highlighted their need to constantly reaffirm their commitment to the American experiment, while revealing how fragile the success of that experiment really was. As Robert Penn Warren has reminded us, 'the Revolution did not create a nation except on paper.'¹⁷ The Constitutional settlement was no less vulnerable. The Revolution was understood to be ongoing, within and without the nation's borders, and the survival of the Republic required repeated iteration of its founding past. The fires of collective memory in the often-contested Union demanded frequent stoking.

It was this memory that informed American responses to the 1837-8 Canadian Rebellions. Though Democrats and Whigs disagreed on their validity, the former drew direct comparisons with the Spirit of '76 and the latter could not go so far as to deny the

¹⁵ The title of the Introduction to Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles*.

¹⁶ Michel Ducharme, *The Idea of Liberty in Canada during the Age of Atlantic Revolutions, 1776-1838* Translated by Peter Feldstein (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 230 n. 6.

¹⁷ Warren, *Legacy of the Civil War*, 3.

parallels with Americans' own experience. Such was the sanctity of memory. From the mid-1840s, and the introduction of responsible government in the provinces, the Revolution faded from view. The fulfilment of much of the nation's continental destiny, especially at Britain's expense, rendered recourse to the Revolution less important in US engagement with British America, though its value increased in the bitter internal debates between North and South. It was also implicit in responses to the 1849 Annexation Manifesto, the 1854 Reciprocity Treaty, and Confederation itself. In each case, the American struggle for independence was to the fore, in the emphases upon economic freedoms, the rejection of monarchy and the embrace of republicanism. These were seen revolutions in all but name that would propel British America into the Union.

3. UNBECOMING BRITISH AND BECOMING AMERICANS

Citizens of the United States became Americans by unbecoming British. The embrace of one identity and the shedding of the other was as revolutionary as their reinvention of the political sphere. Though they had long been described as British Americans, politically and culturally the colonists had considered themselves as Englishmen, and it was their failure to secure the rights they considered inseparable from their English identity that impelled them to embrace a new one. Unsurprisingly, American was the moniker they clung to quickly and tenaciously. Their appropriation, however, was challenged by the persistence of British Americans to the north. As A. R. M. Lower long ago recognised what was on offer in North America post-1783 was "two English-speaking American experiments."¹⁸ Mexican, Brazilian, Haitian, or any of the other national monikers adopted during the Age of Revolutions did not pose a challenge. British American did in three ways. Firstly, it was provocative. It was the identity Americans had renounced. Importantly, throughout the period examined in this study, Americans never referred to the colonists as British Americans. Instead, they talked and wrote about Canadians, French Canadians, Nova Scotians, and so on. Only the geographic footprint was British America or British North America. Secondly, by appropriating the continent's name and combining it with British, the colonists seemed

¹⁸ A. R. M. Lower 'Neutral Yankees of Nova Scotia: A Marginal Colony During the Revolutionary Years. by John Bartlett Brebner.' Book Review in *New England Quarterly* Vol. 10 No. 4 (1937), 798.

to be laying claim to the space that Americans saw as their own providential inheritance. Worse, that claim was being made in the name of Britain, the imperial power that the United States had sought to eject from continent. The 1775-6 invasions of Quebec, a pro-Patriot uprising in Nova Scotia in 1776, negotiations for all British America in 1783, and the invasions of Canada during the War of 1812 may have failed, but American continentalism had not disappeared, a subject to which I return below. Thirdly, the combination of British and American was not only disagreeable, it was insulting. For Americans, the rejection of Britishness had involved a reinvention of Americanness. They retained many elements of their British past, but these were now incorporated and secondary to a radically new American identity.

That identity was evolving within and in parallel to the evolution of the nation itself. The two were inextricable, propelled by the same dynamic forces of political, social and economic change. De Crevecoeur's nascent American of the 1780s matured into de Tocqueville's boisterous democrat of the 1830s. But, as we have seen, in their encounters with the British provinces, as tourists and the stay-at-home consumers of popular media, Americans' awareness of their difference, the attributes that set them apart, were heightened. Quebec proved particularly fertile. There, the survival of an alien culture that seemed increasingly antiquated fostered dismissive assessments of the people and the province that highlighted how Americans saw themselves and how they wanted to be seen. By comparison with the habitants, they were enterprising and resourceful. Their distaste for the undeveloped backcountry proved them to be expansionist and entrepreneurial, hardworking not indolent, people with an eye for an opportunity. The outdated cities of Montreal and Quebec alerted them to their capabilities for visionary forward-thinking and the superiority of American urban planning. In effect, it awoke a sense of their inherent modernity. Americans throughout the first half of the nineteenth century sought approbation from others, especially Britain. They winced at the accounts of British travellers that portrayed them in a derogatory light. In Quebec, they sought reassurance at the expense of others. It did not matter that they never engaged with the Canadiens, and in failing to do so revealed a cultural crassness that has always been characteristic of tourists. They were the great citizens of futurity.

More important were the broader notions British America fostered of what being American meant. Beyond national characteristics were the fundamental ideological differences that set Americans apart, particularly satisfying for US tourists judging those who clung to the identities they had discarded. The presence of established churches, particularly Catholicism, reinforced Americans' confidence in religious separation while also strengthening prejudices. Monarchy, hierarchy, and deference were mocked. They were relics of the jettisoned past, now replaced by republicanism, equality, and democracy. In newspapers, magazines and in Congress, these were promoted as the cornerstones of the future that British America would inevitably be forced to embrace. What is striking is that pomp and panoply, even military parades, offered no pleasure at all. Such was the success of the Jeffersonian revolution of 1800. The contrast with modern Americans' fascination with royalty is so stark that we are reminded how negotiated this American identity was. So focused on entrenching its republican present that it could not afford to be at ease with its past. Indeed, many Americans' inability to engage effectively with the British American psyche was proof of the long-term impact of the separation from Britain, and the bitterness felt towards the old mother country to which America, economically and culturally, still turned. The identity that Americans celebrated when confronting their provincial neighbours was bullish, and outwardly confident, but far from composed. In his eagerness to extol the superiority of all things American, and being American, Brother Jonathan did protest too much.

4. BECOMING BLACK BRITISH AND AMERICAN

The one group of Americans for whom monarchy offered hope was the refugee and fugitive blacks who found havens from white American persecution in Upper Canada from the 1820s, and in British Columbia from the late 1850s. Their American identities were not only in the process of negotiation but in many cases, non-existent. These varied from those of fugitive slaves who identified with their state or region of origin, to refugee free blacks who aspired to national identities that state Black Laws and the 1857 Dred Scott decision had denied them. In both cases, the British provinces that offered legal protection and political rights also enabled blacks to fulfil gender roles, maintain family units, build communities and enjoy an education, even vote. Asserting agency for themselves, blacks were given the opportunity to exercise choices they

seized upon. They were able to decide to remain British American subjects, or accept American citizenship following the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, and return to the United States. Their choices were decided by a variety of factors, a hankering for home, lost loved ones, opportunities, and security. If Samuel Gridley Howe's 1864 Report is to be trusted, the majority that re-crossed the border were fugitives heading south in search of home and family. Some black community leaders who had remained active in the abolition movement also moved South to take part in Reconstruction. But many remained in the provinces with their families, churches, schools, homes, and careers in the new communities they had helped found.

There were evidently differences between black British American identities, and those of white Americans. Unlike the latter, the provinces' new residents considered subjecthood no anathema. Their black American citizenship had rarely been fully realised, and ultimately, it was taken from them. Their lasting migration testified to the effectiveness of state and federal government legislation in ridding communities of unwanted free black inhabitants. This was an unintended consequence, bitterly opposed in the Northeast though playing to the prejudices of the Midwest, and a poor advertisement for the Republic's claim to liberty. However, one can discern broad similarities between whites and blacks. Though emigration was forced upon them, refugee blacks followed in the footsteps of the white settlers of the 1790s and 1800s for whom subjecthood too was no obstruction when measured against the possibility of acquiring cheap land. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the American identities of white citizens of the Early Republic were as liminal as those of mid-century blacks, emphasising the extent to which those identities required constant affirmation by the American experiment. Similarly, the choices of fugitives who returned to the States echoed those of hundreds of Californians who removed to British Columbia in 1858 to exploit the Fraser Valley Gold Rush. The attraction north was opportunity, freedom for one and gold for the other. When circumstances changed, both retraced their steps to the United States. This is not to ignore the very different contexts in which black and white agency was asserted, or that British America alone could not open the doors of the white Republic to its black émigrés. Bloody Civil War and a contested Emancipation achieved that. But the British American experience provided blacks with choices hitherto denied, and they exercised those choices. In doing so, they confounded Howe's and other white

Americans' claims that chilly Canada was an unsuitable climate. It was one in which they had thrived far more than in the often-marginalised spaces to which they had been restricted in the Northern states. By the end of the 1860s, it was difficult to argue that a black community outside of the tropical South was an unnatural home for America's black citizens.

5. WHERE AMERICA BEGAN AND ENDED.

We have seen that British American colonists lived within the limits of settlement while imagining a future in continental terms. This partly informed the expansion of the 1760s that contributed to the collapse of the imperial relationship. It gained speed post-Independence and remained an aspiration, the potential realisation of which ebbed and flowed, in the expanding Republic throughout the nineteenth century. Americans realised their colonial ancestors' dreams, swallowing up territory until the frontier was no more. They rarely adhered to the parameters delineated by the federal government, not least if American Indians stood in their way. The Mexican War satisfied their appetite in the south. Pre-Civil War, the presence of hybrid Catholic Chicanos dissuaded any further expansion. The north, however, was a different story. Two related factors persuaded Americans that the British provinces were sites of possibility. Firstly, there was the national demonym that blurred the Republic's negotiated boundaries between nation and continent, between what was real and what was imagined. Where America ended was also where a yet-to-be realised America potentially began. Together, these defined a continentalism that could inspire invasion, filibustering, and hopes of negotiated annexation, and yet, was flexible enough to enable Charles Sumner to flip-flop between nation and continent in speeches designed to leave listeners uncertain where one America began and the other ended. It was a concept to conjure with. Secondly, British America gave it credibility. Setting aside the Canadiens, as most Americans we have examined did, the primarily Protestant Anglophone provinces seemed fated to fulfil the nation's continental destiny by their own volition. History dictated as much. Had not Quebec been ordained to join the American Confederacy until the intrusion of the Quebec Act? How much more likely that its sister colonies, so similar in culture, language, and background to the states, would desire to join a Union

that by 1865 had proven itself in war. Dominion was considered a step towards disengagement from Britain prior to integration in the Union.

Much of this was predicated on American faith in the superiority of the Republican experiment. Political dissensions in the provinces and conflict with the government in London spoke of the fragility of the imperial system and its imminent collapse. The provinces were understood to be economically backward. Their hunger for a reciprocity treaty in 1854 and its renewal from 1866 onwards testified to that. Britain's failure to maintain her neutrality during the Civil War suggested she might be willing to cede Canada as recompense and a gesture of goodwill to the sabre-rattling Republic. Most convincing were the calls for annexation to the States in the provinces themselves in 1849, and 1867-9 indicating that the British American experiment was on its knees. This is the account that informs the American historiography, explaining the US' long held belief that consensual annexation was a possibility. Just as Americans in the late 1840s and late 1860s misread the messages from British America by failing to engage with the political realities at play there, American historians have compounded their mistake by ignoring the evidence of Canadian historians.¹⁹ There were minorities, specifically in British Columbia and the Maritimes, who argued for annexation. However, such arguments served two purposes.

First, they were intended to pique the interest of expansionist Americans, but only in so far as to achieve a second, more important goal. That was to convince the imperial government to reverse policy. In 1849, Montreal merchants sought to halt the end of imperial preference by threatening annexation to the States. In 1867-9, disgruntled colonists hoped to secure permission to extricate themselves from the Dominion, and Ottawa's newly-established central authority, and return to the pre-Confederation

¹⁹ For evidence of the lack of desire for annexation in British America, see Philip Buckner, "'British North America and a Continent in Dissolution': The American Civil War in the Making of Canadian Confederation,' *The Journal of the Civil War Era* Vol. 7, No. 4 (December 2017), 512-40; Philip Buckner, 'Beware the Canadian Wolf: The Maritimes and Confederation,' *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region/Revue d'histoire de la région atlantique* Vol. 46, No. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2017), 177-95; Philip Buckner, 'The Creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1860-1901,' Buckner (Ed.), *Canada and the British Empire*.

system in which they answered directly to London. Neither attempt was successful nor was annexation the result. In both cases, much of the posturing was just that. For British Americans, annexation was a carrot to dangle before their neighbours, and a stick with which to prod London. That Americans took the bait once more illustrates the extent of their failure to appreciate the strength of provincial commitment to the Empire and Great Britain. In British America, it trounced any appeal the Union may have as the latter represented the experiment Loyalists had repudiated by remaining true to the Crown. Such was American's belief in their own providential future that none of this resonated. The extent to which continentalism cannot be easily dismissed and remained latent in the American psyche can be seen in 1911 when negotiations for a new Reciprocity Treaty persuaded gung-ho Congressmen that the annexation of Canada was finally in sight.²⁰ When Canadians heard this, they quickly rejected the treaty, whatever their economic needs.

6. CONCLUSION

The impact of a persistent British America upon the evolution of the United States has been forgotten, but it cannot be ignored. British North America differed from all the other polities in the Western Hemisphere. It was no Mexico, Haiti, or any of the other Latin republican tearaways as it could not be disregarded and it could not be dismissed. Not disregarded because it was protected by the preeminent power of the time, the British Empire. In North America itself, the Empire could be prodded, but to provoke it overmuch would elicit global repercussions in terms of trade and maritime security that the USA was in no position to withstand. Even domestically, the economic fallout in terms of the withdrawal of British investment would prove devastating. It could not be dismissed because beyond the macro picture was the micro that was far more complex. In so many ways, British America looked, sounded and felt familiar to US citizens even as the provinces and the Union drifted ever further apart. More problematic, America remained umbilically tied economically, culturally and intellectually to the old Mother Country, and whilst that country was far away, British America was not. The brave New

²⁰ Stewart, *American Response to Canada since 1776*, 7.

World the Republic sought to assert was confronted by a persistent Old World on its doorstep.

The colonies that had been part of that Greater British North America in which all Anglophone colonists had so rejoiced in 1760 had rejected the republican experiment that the USA embraced after 1783. They were a consistent thorn. What is striking is the extent to which the embittered civil war that led to American Independence facilitated little understanding of the identities of those thousands of Loyalists driven to the remaining British provinces. Their stubborn adherence to a rejected British America was understandably repudiated by those committed to an innovative and untried federal experiment. Instead, Americans conjured for themselves a fantasy image of displaced relatives secretly yearning to come home. While this helped reassure Americans and bolstered their faith in the Republic they had built, it complicated their understanding of themselves and the space in which they lived. The perpetual notion that British Americans were would-be Americans clouded the American political imagination. It encouraged their reluctance, or even inability, to engage with or accept any political model other than their own. Even as borders were fixed, the geographic parameters of the nation remained opaque, further confused by the national demonym. British America remained a part of America, in both senses of the word, yet to be realised. Today, there is one way in which that realisation has been achieved. Despite Canada's success in establishing its own distinct national presence, such has been the cultural influence of the United States that often foreigners abroad, and even Americans at home, consider Canadians and Americans to be one and the same. This is a mistake that would never be made of Mexicans, Cubans, Argentinians or any other of the western hemisphere's myriad nationalities, particularly by Americans themselves. If anything, it demonstrates the continuing unique role of what-was-once British America in fostering the American identity, and the importance for historians of reclaiming those horizons we have lost.

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