

**‘I ain’ mad now and I know taint no
use to lie’: The Framing, Editing and
Manipulation of Emotions in 1930s
Ex-Slave Documents**

Thesis Submitted in accordance with the requirements of
the University of Liverpool for the Degree of Doctor in
Philosophy by *Beth Rachel Wilson*

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September 2019

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of numerous people along the way. I'd like to thank Stephen Kenny for his guidance throughout this project, for continually probing me to push my work further, and for reading endless drafts. Thanks also go to Deana Heath and Celia Donert who have provided generous support throughout my PhD, particularly in the final year, and who have widened my horizons by bringing new perspectives to the project. To the amazing friends I made at the Kluge Center, who made my days at the Library of Congress both exciting and productive, you helped to make my PhD a particularly rewarding experience!

I could not have finished this project without my amazing friends at the University of Liverpool – Emma, Tom, Ian, Louise, Joe, Mike, Nicholas, and Zoe - who have provided me with endless encouragement, advice, coffee and trips to the pub! I'd especially like to thank my flat mate Nick for getting me through the highs and lows of the last few years and providing me with endless laughs and a listening ear. Most importantly, to Mum, Dad and Lucy (and little Eva), I am forever thankful for your love, support and encouragement, I really could not have done this without you.

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Abstract

‘I ain’ mad now and I know taint no use to lie’: The Framing, Editing and Manipulation of Emotions in 1930s Ex-Slave Documents

Beth Rachel Wilson

This thesis explores how emotion was framed, performed, repressed and politicised in textual, oral and visual ex-slave documents produced in the 1930s in the United States: the Florida WPA interviews; sound recordings and photographs created by black American linguist Lorenzo Dow Turner; John Lomax's folklore recordings; and Ruby Lomax's photographs of former slaves. These sources often include profound emotional content, however, few sustained and explicit analyses of feeling within these documents have been undertaken. Building on methodological approaches developed in slavery studies, emotional history, visual studies, critical race studies and oral history; utilising a 'holistic' and integrated approach to the ex-slave documents; and paying particular attention to the personal, cultural and political dynamics at the moment of source creation, this thesis develops and models a critical methodology that can be used to reveal what can, and cannot, be understood in each set of documents about slavery and its emotional impact.

Utilising this methodology demonstrates that political battles over the memory of American slavery often interacted with the personal agendas and feelings of the interviewee, interviewer, photographer (and others responsible for producing the source) to shape the emotions that the former slaves expressed. John Lomax, for example, ensured that the former slaves he recorded repressed and performed emotion in accordance with both his belief that slavery was a benevolent institution and his nostalgia for the 'Old South'. In contrast, the 'New Negro' political ideologies held by Lorenzo Dow Turner were reflected in the way in which his Gullah informants framed their discussions and modelled their portraits to convey a message of pride and dignity. The former slaves also brought their own personal and political agendas to the encounters. Motivated by their campaign for pensions, for example, members of the Ex-Slave Club of Miami framed the feelings that they expressed to WPA interviewers to present themselves as deserving of financial aid. This study unearths the different forms of emotional labour that former slaves had to undertake when creating these sources, demonstrating not only the emotional manipulation that occurred, but also the former slaves' resistance to this and their own personal investment in giving their testimony.

Ultimately, this study exposes when emotion was performed and repressed by the interviewees, as is the case with John Lomax's recordings, and framed or edited by others involved in the source production, such as by those at the Florida Federal Writers' project. Similarly, it demonstrates when the situation was conducive to expressing more authentic emotion, for example, when Lorenzo Dow Turner recorded former slaves on his linguistic project. In doing so, this thesis provides an approach that can be used to unearth the complications of these source sets for providing clear access to the emotional experiences of the enslaved, and emphasises the importance of acknowledging the emotional labour, manipulation and performances that went into their production.

Introduction

From the memories and the lips of former slaves have come the answers which only they can give to questions which Americans still ask: What does it mean to be a slave? What does it mean to be free? And, even more, how does it *feel*?¹

Benjamin Botkin wrote this provocative ‘Introduction’ in his book *Lay My Burden Down*, published in 1945, describing the possibilities that interviews conducted with formerly enslaved people provided for those wanting to understand the lived experience of slavery. Discussing specifically the celebrated and large-scale collection of interviews by the Federal Writers’ Project (FWP) of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the late 1930s, Botkin listed the information that scholars could apparently glean about slavery from the lips of those who had experienced the institution, emphasising their emotions towards it. Probing Botkin’s assumption, it is the objective of this thesis to explore what scholars can learn from these documents about the former slaves’ emotion towards the institution. Through analysing the emotional content of not only WPA interviews but also underutilised sound recordings and photographs of the formerly enslaved, this study will outline the complex range of personal and political factors that shaped the production and content of the documents.² In turn, this thesis will reveal the different possibilities and limitations of these sources for writing about the emotional lives of the enslaved and the long-term emotional legacies of enslavement.

Interviews, sound recordings and photographs created in conjunction with elderly black Americans in the 1930s by writers, journalists, folklorists, linguists and amateur historians often include profound emotional content about slavery and elicit intense emotion in their readers. Whilst numerous studies have focused on the lived experience of slavery using the WPA interviews, scholars have often remained reluctant to explore formerly enslaved peoples’ feelings in relation to the institution and to use sound

¹ B. Botkin, *Lay my Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), reprinted by (New York: Delta, 1994), p.1.

² I will outline the definition of ‘emotional content’ for each set of sources in Chapter One.

recordings and photographs in their analysis. Using this range of documents, it is the goal of this thesis to provide a methodological framework that will aid in writing a critical historical account of the emotional lives of the enslaved, by uncovering the complex range of factors that shaped the emotional content of each set of sources. Building on the illuminating studies of Sharon Ann Musher and Catherine Stewart about the manipulation of WPA interviews and the racial politics of the FWP, this study widens this analysis to ask a new set of questions about the factors that shaped the emotional content of textual, oral and visual sources.³ These questions include: Who created these documents? What emotional, racial, personal, political and cultural dynamics shaped their content? How was emotion framed, shaped, manipulated and edited by the actors involved? And lastly, what was the former slaves' experience of telling their story?

By bringing together a range of different methodological tools to answer these questions incorporating slavery studies, emotional history, sociology of emotions, racial studies and visual methodologies, this thesis will develop five main arguments. Firstly, the following case-studies will reveal that battles over the cultural memory of slavery that raged in the 1930s heavily shaped the emotional content of these documents. At this time, groups with competing understandings of the institution were disputing and moulding national narratives of slavery. Some, often elite white southerners, still depicted slavery as a benevolent institution and attempted to shape historical and collective memory accordingly through depicting a romanticised 'Old South' in film, literature, text-books and 'professional' historical accounts.⁴ Others wished to show slavery for what it was - a brutal and inhumane regime - and

³ S. Musher, 'The Other Slave Narratives: The Works Progress Administration Interviews', in J. Ernest (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of The African American Slave Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); S. Musher, 'Contesting 'The Way the Almighty Wants It': Crafting Memories of Ex-Slaves in the Slave Narrative Collection', *American Quarterly*, 53.1 (2001), pp.1-31.; C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery: Representing Race in the Federal Writers' Project* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

⁴ For more information on collective memories of slavery see D. Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001); F. Brundage, *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005) and R. Cook, *Civil War Memories: Contesting the Past in the United States since 1865* (Baltimore; John Hopkins University Press, 2017). Although this thesis at points utilises concepts from memory studies, such as collective memory, trauma and 'composure', it is not primarily a study of memory formation but of the historical sources that contain the former slaves' testimony. Memory studies is concerned with why some events are remembered or forgotten by individuals and societies, whereas this thesis is focused on the communication of memories and how these may have been distorted in the process of representing them in a historical source.

demonstrate the suitability of black Americans for citizenship after the loss of the rights gained by some under Reconstruction. These battles shaped how interviewers and photographers framed and edited the emotional content of the sources they produced, including the source creators whose interviews, recordings and photographs this thesis explores: folklorist John Lomax, black American scholar Lorenzo Dow Turner, and Florida FWP interviewers and editors. Utilising the work of Barbara Fields, this essay defines race as an ideology ('a group's understanding of reality') that was produced at a specific moment for 'rationally understandable historical reasons' and that changes across time.⁵ Fields has argued that society must constantly re-produce and confirm the ideology of race and this essay demonstrates how the dominant Jim Crow era racial ideology shaped thinking about slavery and thus the content of ex-slave testimonies, but also how creators of the documents, such as John Lomax and WPA interviewers, produced and reinforced this ideology within the documents.⁶ In more recent years, Joe Feagin has argued that it is important to not only acknowledge and analyse the 'mental construction of race', but to understand how racial ideology manifests itself in everyday systemic, institutional, material and social racism, how this is enforced through 'ideologies, attitudes, emotions, images, actions and institutions', and how black Americans experienced this racism on a day-to-day level.⁷ As such, this essay also explores how black Americans experienced racist practices in the 1930s and argues that this heavily shaped their testimony.

Moving beyond this focus on race, however, this study will also demonstrate that racial politics was not the only determinant of the emotional content of these sources and each individual source creator brought their own agendas to the interview or photographic encounter. Photographer Ruby Lomax, for example, did not frame her images of formerly enslaved men and women to wholly conform to prevailing cultural narratives and stereotypes about black Americans. Similarly, moving beyond studies that focus on the racial politics that framed the actions of the interviewer or photographer, the following chapters will reveal that the source creator's personal feelings and private

⁵ B. Fields, 'Slavery, Race and Ideology in the United States of America', *New Left Review*, 181 (1990), p.101 & 112. Also see B. Fields, 'Of Rogues and Geldings', *American Historical Review*, 108.5 (2003), pp.1397-1405.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.112.

⁷ J. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), pp.xiii-xvi.

agendas often interacted with more political concerns to influence the emotional content of the source. ‘Lost Cause’ narratives, New Negro Movement political ideologies, concerns about white readership, a nostalgia for the ‘Old South’, stereotypes of black Americans and a wish to tell the truth about slavery all combined in contrasting ways to affect the framing of emotion in each document.

Most importantly, this thesis puts the formerly enslaved at the front and centre of each encounter, and will argue that the production of each set of sources was a two-way process. As the interviewers, editors and photographers had their own personal and political agendas, the elderly black Americans also had range of individual and group motives when telling their stories, including a wider campaign to fight for pensions, a wish to tell the truth about their experiences, and a desire to show their work ethic. The interviewees, therefore, consciously shaped the emotions that they presented to the interviewer or photographer accordingly. Lastly, although each individual who had been enslaved had a different reason for giving their testimony, performing a song or posing for a photograph, the following case-studies will reveal the differing levels of emotional labour that the men and women had to engage in at the interview or photographic encounter.⁸ Whether telling their story truthfully and processing the feelings that doing so triggered, driven by their own political agenda and purposely managing their emotional expressions, or engaging in emotional labour when performing to white expectations, this thesis will illuminate the former slaves’ emotional investment in the process of creating these sources.

Whilst this thesis focuses on emotion in these documents, I acknowledge that these sources give access to the emotion that the interviewees’ expressed and communicated about slavery at the time of the interview rather than any feeling they had prior to communication and whilst in bondage. Philosophers, scientists and historians have debated whether emotions exist as entities prior to their expression, and whether these can ever truly be recovered. Eric Shouse, for example, has suggested that emotions do exist prior to their communication, these being feelings that are determined by biographical and personal contexts. Making a distinction between feeling, emotion and

⁸ The term emotional labour will be defined in the methodology section of Chapter One. A. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling, 2012 Edition* (California: University of California Press, 2012), p.7.

affect, based on the work of Brian Massumi, he argued that ‘feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*.’⁹ Explaining this definition, Shouse wrote that ‘a feeling is a sensation that has been checked against previous experiences and labelled.’¹⁰ In contrast ‘an emotion is the projection/ display of feeling’ and ‘unlike feelings, the display of emotion can be either genuine or feigned.’¹¹ Utilising this definition, I acknowledge that in these sources – as is the case in any historical source – emotion or the display of emotion can be analysed, whilst feeling is highly elusive and perhaps even impossible to reveal.

Scholars can never know if the elderly black Americans communicated their ‘genuine’ feelings in their interviews and photographs, however, through an analysis of the situation in which the source was produced historians can discover when emotion was feigned or performed and when the interview situation was more conducive to the relaying of the emotions they wanted to display. For example, through demonstrating that Lorenzo Dow Turner had a robust interview technique and did not influence the Gullah informants to express any particular emotion, Chapter Four will show that in his recordings, scholars can get as close as possible to understanding how slavery felt to those who experienced it at the time of enslavement, as well as to the long-term emotional legacies of slavery. In contrast, through revealing when the source creators heavily manipulated or edited the emotional content of the source, this study also highlights the complications of different source sets for uncovering more about the emotional experiences of those who were in bondage. Although we can hear the voices of the formerly enslaved in John Lomax’s recordings, for example, Chapter Five will show that Lomax ensured that the elderly African Americans performed particularly positive emotional expressions and limited the display of any anger or hatred towards the institution. Through providing these case-studies, this thesis argues that historians must acknowledge that there are limitations to what scholars can learn from Lomax’s recordings about the emotional lives of the formerly enslaved performers that he recorded.¹²

⁹ E. Shouse, ‘Feeling, Emotion, Affect’, *M/C Journal* 8.6 (2005), p.2, available at <<http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php>> [accessed 10.10.18]

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.4.

¹² Saidiya Hartman has argued that acknowledging and ‘respecting’ the limitations of the slavery archive is important when exploring the lived experience of the enslaved, and in particular enslaved

Acknowledging the limitations and possibilities of the different sets of documents, to a greater extent than is traditionally provided, not only shows which sources can most effectively give access to the interior lives of the enslaved, but importantly also illuminates the emotional manipulation that went into the production of these sources, an aspect which is often overlooked by historians when using these 1930s sources. Historians, such as Saidiya Hartman, have already undertaken such an analysis in relation to sources produced during slavery and have questioned how we can write about the experiences of enslaved women who appear in the archives only as numbers, tallies, or nameless objects. In her important study, which uses the figure of 'Venus' to describe the enslaved women of the Atlantic world who appear silently in these documents, Hartman described why an understanding of how documents about slavery were created is vital. For Hartman it is important to 'mime the violence of the archive' and attempt to redress such violence through 'describing as fully as possible the conditions that determine the appearance of Venus and that dictate her silence.'¹³ The violence that led to the production of the archival documents created between the sixteenth and nineteenth century, such as the ship tallies or enslaver diaries that Hartman speaks of, was evidently not replicated when documents were generated in the 1930s. In these sources African Americans can speak; we do not have to extrapolate from numbers, tallies and the words of enslavers. Yet, others always mediated the voices we have access to, be it WPA interviewers, linguists or folklorists. In exploring the conditions that led to the final content of these sources, not only does this thesis demonstrate how emotion was politicised in these documents, but also illuminates the staging, manipulation and agency that are central to their production.

In providing this analysis of the complex factors that shaped the emotional content of a range of documents, this study's main objective is to provide and model a comprehensive methodology that historians can use to explore the limits and possibilities of other sets of historical sources for writing about the lived experience of slavery. The 6 case-studies provide a set of methodological tools and research questions, different for each medium, that scholars can use to probe the creation of

women. She observed that it can be 'tempting' to fill in the gaps in historical narratives. See S. Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, 12.2 (2008), p.8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.1.

diverse sets of sources, acknowledge the archival complications, and in turn write more critical histories of the institution. As such, this thesis will interject in long running debates about slavery's archive and how to both acknowledge and combat the limitations, silences and absences within it. Influenced by the work of Michel-Rolph Trouillot who emphasised the power that is inherent in the production of history and the silences this power creates, more recent historians such as Marisa Fuentes, Brian Connolly, Saidiya Hartman and Sasha Turner have all posed important questions in relation to how to acknowledge the silences in slavery's archive. Focusing particularly on enslaved women in the Caribbean whose lives and experiences represent one of these silences, they have written histories of the institution that recognise the power dynamics that are central to the production of this archive.¹⁴ This thesis develops and models a set of questions, methodologies and approaches that when applied to US slavery's archive can begin to uncover the power dynamics that went into the production of 1930s documents, and acknowledge and combat the silences and limitations that this created.

An integral part of this methodology involves applying a holistic approach to these sources; the following chapters reconnect WPA interviews that have been handed down through generations of historians to sound recordings and images, taken in the same years, that have been underutilised by many of these same scholars. It also explores the ex-slave sources alongside related photographs and manuscript documents from each project, such as field notes, letters and diaries. Archivists and historians have disaggregated many of these documents by placing them in separate archives, despite the source creators producing them to be part of one project, and this thesis brings these back together to interrogate the sources more thoroughly. For example, Sections Two and Three analyse sound recordings conducted by Lorenzo Dow Turner that the Library of Congress holds, alongside related photographs and field notes from this project that Turner's wife archived at the Anacostia Community Museum. Through exploring documents about the same projects and actors but held in different repositories, the

¹⁴ M. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995); B. Connolly and M. Fuentes, 'Introduction: From Archives of Slavery to Liberated Futures?', *History of the Present: A Journal of Critical History*, 6.2 (2016); M. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); S. Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts'; S. Turner, 'The Nameless and the Forgotten: Maternal Grief, Sacred Protection and the Archive of Slavery', *Slavery and Abolition*, 38.2 (2017), pp.232-250.

subsequent case-studies recombine materials that were originally intended to be connected parts of a holistic and thorough presentation of each formerly enslaved man and woman, in order to both fully interrogate the story of their creation and further humanise the individuals whose stories are documented.

Developing a methodology that scholars can apply more widely to explore the limitations and possibilities of different archival sets is integral, as when gaining glimpses of the formerly enslaved peoples' emotion in these documents, I do not attempt to make generalisations about how US slavery felt to all of those who experienced it. Within these sources the interviewees and interviewers often discuss 'slavery' and 'freedom' as distinct and overarching categories and appear to be discussing slavery as if it was a monolithic experience. Yet, the institution of slavery varied from state to state, plantation to plantation, and decade to decade. Due to the sources being produced in the 1930s, this study analyses documents produced with black Americans who experienced plantation slavery in Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi and Alabama in the 1840s, 1850s and early 1860s but also individuals who were in bondage in Virginia, North Carolina, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas and Louisiana. Similarly, whilst the interviewers ask questions about 'freedom' as a distinct category of experience, it is important to acknowledge that the legacies of the institution were ongoing and profound, and it is the long-term emotional legacies of the institution that this thesis explores.

To provide these conclusions, I have divided this analysis into seven chapters, beginning with a discussion that situates my work alongside other studies that utilise or discuss documents created with the formerly enslaved. Chapter One also outlines how the unique combination of methodological approaches that are applied to these documents in this study, utilising tools from slavery studies, emotional history, oral history and the sociology of emotions, will allow me to provide conclusions about the interplay of personal and political agendas that shaped the contents of each set of documents. I have then divided this project into three sections, comprising of two chapters each. Each section will focus on a different type of source - text, sound and image - and compare documents produced by white interviewers or photographers with those created by their black American counterparts. Section One, entitled 'Text', compares two sets of WPA interviews conducted by the Florida branch of the FWP.

These chapters demonstrate that numerous actors had contrasting political and personal agendas that shaped the emotional contents of WPA documents. The interviewees often had their own political or personal agendas that framed how they expressed their emotions at the interview encounter, including a campaign to fight for pensions and a personal motivation to tell the truth. At the write-up and editing of the interview, however, political considerations about what was appropriate to display to white readers interacted with the nostalgic and paternalistic beliefs of workers to ensure that stereotypical depictions of the formerly enslaved peoples' emotional character were inserted.

Sound recordings conducted by Lorenzo Dow Turner (Chapter Four) and John Lomax (Chapter Five) are the subject of Section Two, entitled 'Sound'. These two sets of recordings evidence how the source creator could frame the contents of testimony according to competing cultural memories of slavery and the debates about black American character that raged in the 1930s. Lastly, Section Three focuses on photographs produced by Turner (Chapter Six) and Ruby Lomax (Chapter Seven.) Whilst Harlem Renaissance imagery influenced Turner when he took his photographs, these chapters demonstrate that although Ruby Lomax framed her images in accordance to the paternalistic ideas that she held, she was much less motivated by the racialised understandings of black Americans as her husband when producing her photographs. Instead, she focused on documenting what was in front of her. Most importantly, these final chapters reveal the possibilities of these images for providing access to greater layers of understanding of each formerly enslaved individuals' self-fashioning, and the need for a holistic approach to these sources to provide more humanised histories of their emotional experiences.

This thesis explores slavery and the long-term emotional impact of the institution; it discusses the complex feelings that the formerly enslaved expressed in relation to their experiences of enslavement during the 1930s.¹⁵ Yet, this thesis is primarily a study of the framing of these emotions in the documents that historians use to write histories of the institution. It is an analysis of emotional manipulation and resistance, emotional

¹⁵ See H. Williams, *Help me to Find my People: The African American Search for Family Lost in Slavery* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), p.1, for a study that focuses on emotion and slavery.

performances, emotional investment and emotional labour. Moving through case-studies that include textual, oral and visual sources, the following chapters demonstrate that before scholars can understand the fear, joy, hope and despair that slavery triggered, they need to explore the many personal and political agendas that hide behind these seemingly ‘objective’ sources.¹⁶ It is only through acknowledging the many factors that shape the content of these documents that historians can know which sources provide the most unmediated access to the interior lives of the enslaved, and at the same time acknowledge the limitations of other source sets for providing this access. This thesis provides a set of tools that historians can use to reveal these multiple agendas, acknowledge the limits of different sets of documents produced in conjunction with the formerly enslaved, and in turn write more critical, humanised, and usable histories of their emotional lives.

¹⁶ Katrina Powell labels these ‘the layers of stories often hidden within archives.’ See K. Powell, ‘Hidden Archives: Revealing Untold Stories’, *Journal of American Studies*, 52.1 (2018), p.32.

Chapter One: Using Ex-Slave Documents to

Explore the Emotional Lives of the Enslaved:

Historical, Historiographical and

Methodological Discussions

This chapter places the analysis of the different sets of documents produced in the 1930s with the formerly enslaved within wider historical, historiographical and methodological contexts. To do so, the chapter begins with some brief information about textual, oral and visual documents produced in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with those who had been in bondage, to situate the sources analysed in this thesis within U.S. slavery's broader archive. It will then explore how these different types of sources have been analysed, outlining the extensive ways in which historians have examined the WPA interviews to write about the lived experience of slavery. Subsequently, this chapter discusses the relatively new field of the history of emotions and considers how scholars of slavery have begun to develop specific research about the emotional experiences of the enslaved.

The remainder of Chapter One will outline the different research and methodological approaches that this thesis utilises, and builds upon, to contribute to this literature about emotions and slavery. First, it will summarise the research of historians who have questioned how FWP workers created and edited the interviews. The following case-studies will build upon, and contribute to, this methodological literature by applying similar techniques to an analysis of the framing of emotion in documents produced with the formerly enslaved, in order to illuminate the various complications associated with using these documents to explore the interior lives of those who had been in bondage. Second, this methodological discussion will detail the relative neglect of the use of sound recordings and images of former slaves by slavery scholars when writing histories of the institution. The chapter explains how a 'holistic approach' to these sources which includes analysing underutilised visual and oral documents, allows for

more layered understandings of the elderly black Americans, and more humanised histories of their experiences.

This thesis not only contributes to literature about how best to write emotional histories of slavery, but will also argue that through focusing on the framing and manipulation of emotional content, this research will contribute to discussions about the racial and political dynamics that framed the work of FWP, by adding a more personal dimension to this discussion. Exploring a wider range of 1930s projects, this study will reveal the personal agendas and beliefs of numerous individuals who produced the documents and illuminate the many ways in which the formerly enslaved had to engage in emotional labour during the production of these sources. Lastly, this chapter will outline the methodological tools, drawn from a number of academic disciplines, that each case-study will use to aid the analysis of emotional content and the factors that shaped it. Through utilising a wide variety of tools, this thesis will develop a robust methodology that scholars can use to explore the limits and possibilities of a variety of other historical sources to write about the emotional experiences of the enslaved.

Historical Context: Sources Produced in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries with the Enslaved and Formerly Enslaved

The five case-studies in this thesis analyse WPA interviews conducted in Florida, recordings of the memories of elderly Gullah people by Lorenzo Dow Turner, sound clips of songs and testimony recorded by John Lomax, and corresponding photographs of formerly enslaved men and women captured by Turner and Ruby Lomax. I have chosen to focus upon sources produced in the 1930s due to the impetus of a variety of people in this era to collect the testimony of those who had been in bondage and the sheer amount that they produced. These documents, however, must be seen as part of a larger collection of material that was produced by or for former slaves, spanning hundreds of years. The collection of the memories of black Americans who had experienced enslavement, for example, began in the eighteenth century, when those who were or had been enslaved, such as Olaudah Equiano, documented in writing their

experiences.¹⁷ This was increasingly the case during the antebellum and Civil War era, when white abolitionists helped write and publish numerous accounts of black Americans who had escaped or gained their freedom such as Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.¹⁸ As Sharon Ann Musher has noted, these were often used to counter pro-slavery accounts; 'during the antebellum period, black and white abolitionists used slave accounts to challenge descriptions of slavery as benevolent and of slaves as Pollyannaish, passive and unselfconscious.'¹⁹ At this time, black intellectuals, such as Frederick Douglass, also wrote down their own testimony in autobiographical narratives.²⁰

Production of slave narratives dropped away in the latter years of the nineteenth century, as the slow death of slavery reduced the impetus of abolitionists to investigate the horrors of the institution. Black Americans, however, continued writing about their experiences after emancipation in a variety of different forms. For example, many recently emancipated men and women placed advertisements in black newspapers to search for family sold during slavery, including short descriptions of the person they were searching for.²¹ In contrast to the descriptions of slavery produced by the formerly enslaved in the antebellum and postbellum era, after the Civil War white southern memoirists also wrote reminiscences about the 'plantation days' that promoted a Lost Cause ideology, a genre that became increasingly popular at the end of the nineteenth century. Written after the Civil War, the memoirs of the South's planter class, according to David Anderson 'expressed an underlying urge to reconnect with the past and thus salvage and shore up personal and social identities' following the South's defeat in the Civil War and the changes Reconstruction brought.²² Nostalgic narratives about the antebellum era painted a picture of slavery that stood in direct opposition to abolitionist

¹⁷ O. Equiano, *Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (London: Author, 1789), available at <<https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/equiano1/summary.html>> [accessed 02.02.19]

¹⁸ H. Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself*, L. Maria Child (ed.), (Boston: Published for the Author, 1861), available at <<https://www.docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/jacobs/jacobs.html>> [accessed 02.02.19].

¹⁹ S. Musher, 'Contesting "The Way the Almighty Wants It"', p.5.

²⁰ F. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (Boston: The Anti-Slavery Office, 1845), available at <<https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglass/menu.html>> [accessed 10.12.18].

²¹ These advertisements are discussed in H. Williams, *Help me to Find my People*, p. 1.

²² D. Anderson, 'Telling Stories, Making Selves: Nostalgia, the Lost Cause, and Postbellum Plantation Memoirs and Reminiscences' in K. Deslandes, F. Mourion and B. Tribout (eds.) *Civil War and Narrative: Testimony, Historiography and Memory* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.22.

narratives of the horrors of slavery, and focused instead on a happy and paternalistic society, where faithful slaves and loving masters lived in complete harmony.²³

The fact that the formerly enslaved were becoming increasingly elderly, however, led to a new level of urgency in the 1920s and 1930s to record their memories. Indeed, the famous WPA interview project was not the first to interview African Americans about their experiences of enslavement. In 1929 and 1930, scholars at Fisk University in Charles Johnson's Social Science Institute conducted one hundred interviews with formerly enslaved black Americans who resided in Tennessee and Kentucky. The interviews were first published in 1945 in the collection *Unwritten History of Slavery* and were later made available alongside the WPA interviews in Rawick's landmark publication *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*.²⁴

Following on from Fisk's initial attempt to collect interviews with elderly black Americans who had been enslaved, the FWP was created in 1935 as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Programme. Led by Henry Alsberg as director, John Lomax as Folklore Editor between 1936-1938 and Benjamin Botkin in the same role from 1938, the remit of the Writers' Project was initially to produce a number of guidebooks about each state for the *American Guide Series*. In doing so, it would provide employment to out of work teachers, historians, writers and librarians. Only a limited number of those working for the FWP were black and they were often placed in separate and specific 'Negro Units', which was the case in Florida, Louisiana and Virginia. In his introduction to the *Slave Narrative Collection* - the final collection of interview manuscripts put together and held at the Library of Congress - Benjamin Botkin explained that in 1936 state level Writers' Projects in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina began to interview former slaves. In April 1937 a larger scale project to capture their memories became formalised when directions on how to conduct an interview were sent to all state editors by John Lomax.²⁵

²³ *Ibid.*, p.30.

²⁴ G. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography*, (Hereafter *TAS*) Volume 18, *Unwritten History of Slavery* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972).

²⁵ B. Botkin, 'Introduction' in *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves*, Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project Series, United States Work Projects Administration Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (hereafter FWP, WPA Collection, LoC) Administrative Files, available at <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn001/>> [accessed 30.04.18], p.v.

As Norman Yetman has explained, most interviews were conducted in 1937 and the first few months of 1938, and by 1939 interviewing had completely ended. Almost 2,300 interviews were sent to the Library of Congress, where the 'Library of Congress Project,' directed by Benjamin Botkin, processed, appraised and arranged the narratives into the *Slave Narrative Collection*.²⁶ This was then archived in the Rare Book Room at the Library of Congress, until George Rawick published the interviews, state by state, in *The American Slave*. WPA interviews contained in Volume 17 of Rawick's collection will be the focus of Section One of this thesis.²⁷ These were conducted at the Florida branch of the FWP, and because of the existence of a separate 'Negro Writers' Unit', allow for a comparison with a set of interviews conducted by white interviewers from the same Florida FWP branch.

For those wishing to record the memories of the formerly enslaved in the 1930s, writing them down was the most readily available and cheapest method. Yet, building upon this impulse in the 1930s to capture a fading culture, others began to record their memories of the institution. Ira Berlin *et al* have explained that 'pioneering men and women', such as anthropologists and folklorists John, Ruby and Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston, Roscoe Lewis and John Henry Faulk travelled around the South recording ex-slaves on 'primitive recording equipment.'²⁸ These folklorists made numerous recordings in 'the field', including interviews and recordings of 'folk songs,' religious songs and sermons. While for the most part it was folklorists and linguists who used sound recording machines, as opposed to the abolitionists or unemployed government workers who were involved in writing down slave narratives, there were overlaps in the actors involved. John Lomax for example, was an integral part of the FWP in its early stages, but also created his own sound recordings of songs, sermons and folklore for the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress.

²⁶ N Yetman, 'The Background to the Slave Narrative Collection', *American Quarterly*, 19.3 (1967), pp.552-553.

²⁷ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 17, Florida Narratives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972).

²⁸ I. Berlin et al, *Remembering Slavery: African Americans Talk About Their Personal Experiences of Slavery and Emancipation* (New York: The New Press, 1998), p.xvi.

Lomax's almost canonical Library of Congress recordings will be the focus of Chapter Five of this thesis.²⁹

To explain the wave of people in the 1930s using the phonograph to record formerly enslaved men and women, Catherine Stewart noted that 'many who became involved with the folk movement of the 1930s saw it as an unprecedented opportunity to explore the culturally and regionally diverse groups that made up the fabric of American identity.'³⁰ While the capturing of ex-slave voices was becoming an immediate concern because of the ageing population, 'the Negro problem' was also at the forefront of national discussions, as black Americans were leaving rural, southern areas for new lives in the North and West.³¹ As Marybeth Hamilton noted, in the context of this mass migration 'many whites – and not only southerners – liked to envision African Americans as an unspoiled peasantry. By the 1920s, it became clear that such an image, if it was ever accurate, belonged to a rapidly fading past.'³²

It was not just those who were funded by the Library of Congress or folklorists that recorded elderly African Americans on disc. Lorenzo Dow Turner, for example, was a black American linguist employed by the American Dialect Society to record and analyse language on the Gullah Islands of Georgia and South Carolina, and his recordings include snippets of former slaves discussing their lives. As they have not been as publicised as Lomax's recordings, despite also being held at the Library of Congress and including the testimony of those who had been enslaved, Turner's recordings will be analysed alongside Lomax's in Section Two of this thesis. Again, this allows for a comparison to be made between recordings conducted by black and white interviewers and will demonstrate the competing racial and political agendas that the two actors brought to the recording situation that framed the contents of each set of testimony.

²⁹ Others, such as Zora Neale Hurston, who worked as part of the Florida WPA Project also used a sound recording machine on some of her expeditions. I have chosen not to focus on Hurston's material, as the WPA interviews that Hurston did collect were not sent to Washington, and were not included in Rawick's collection. Instead of using her recordings, I have chosen to focus on another black American scholar, Lorenzo Dow Turner, whose recordings are less known than Hurston's by scholars of slavery, but equally illuminating.

³⁰ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.15.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² M. Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p.12.

As part of these different projects to record the memories of the formerly enslaved, some interviewers and folklorists also took photographs of those who they were working with. Whilst Lorenzo Dow Turner and Ruby Lomax were not professional photographers, their work was undoubtedly part of a longer-running tradition of capturing images of slavery and racialised others, which begun once Louis J. M. Daguerre created the first daguerreotype in 1839. Since the inception of this photographic technology, images of the enslaved were used to tell competing stories about slavery and freedom, as well as African American character, physiology and ‘race’. As Marcus Wood explained, both Brazil and the United States had ‘produced a substantial photographic archive that recorded slave life, the slave body, and to an extent both the self-image and the day-to-day operations of the slave power.’³³ It is worth noting that the slave body, as Wood wrote, had always been ‘confined and codified within the visual arts’, but from the late 1840s onwards, a ‘numerically significant’ archive of slave photographs was created.³⁴ He outlined a number of photographic genres that included depictions of the slave body created by whites, most notably family photos, scientific imagery and war photography.

Whilst photographers produced images of enslaved black Americans before the Civil War, a much larger number of photographs relating to Brazilian slavery exist. Slavery was abolished in 1888 in Brazil, 25 years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in the US, and during this time photographic technology vastly developed and improved. These advances allowed for more outside, action and mobile shots, leading to a much greater range of images of those who were enslaved in Brazil than were produced in the US.³⁵ For example, after the 1860s, Brazilian photographers such as Marc Ferrez took up the documentary style of photography and produced images of urban cities and industrial development that included black enslaved labourers.³⁶ Similarly, historian Robert Levine has shown that many photographers created portrait style images of urban enslaved street sellers to be sold to tourists. Photographer Christiano Júnior, for example, created at least seventy-seven portraits of enslaved

³³ M. Wood, *Black Milk: Imagining Slavery in the Visual Cultures of Brazil and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.191.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.193 and p.199.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.191.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.196.

women, men and children, which he captured in his urban studio.³⁷ Thus, this vast array of photographic images of the enslaved created in Brazil was not replicated in the US, where the majority of images that relate to slavery were taken during the Civil War or after the slavery had been abolished.

Taking as a precedent the early portrait photographs of well-known men and women who had been enslaved, such as Frederick Douglass and Harriett Tubman, however, black photography studios did take photographs of elite African Americans from the nineteenth century well into the twentieth century. Black organisations and newspapers often created these images, whilst New Deal federal relief projects also regularly used them.³⁸ Pictures were generally well-crafted and framed, explained Deborah Willis and Barbara Krauthamer, who argued that ‘African American photographers helped to re-image and reimagine their black sitters’ by documenting ‘the promise and hope of emancipation through the subjects’ framing, poses and dress.’³⁹ Black studio photographers who were influenced by the intellectual and artistic endeavours of the Harlem Renaissance regularly produced these images. Their images countered toxic white stereotypes of blackness, such as that of the ‘Sambo’, included in mass circulation magazines, films, and advertisements through presenting their sitters with pride, confidence and dignity.

At a similar time, white workers involved in New Deal Projects photographed the lives of people in both rural and urban areas of the southern states for government purposes. The FWP photographs will not be focused upon in this thesis as most were produced in Texas and not Florida, the WPA state branch that is the focus of this research. Instead, groups of images created by Ruby Lomax (who worked alongside John Lomax on his expedition) and Lorenzo Dow Turner, of those who they recorded on their projects, are the subject of Section Three of this study. This comparison will help to illustrate that to write more nuanced and humanised studies of the emotional lives of the enslaved, analysing testimony and photographs of the same individuals is essential. This analysis

³⁷ R. Levine, ‘Faces of Brazilian Slavery: The Crates de Viste of Christiano Júnior’, *The Americas*, 47.2 (1990), pp.128-131.

³⁸ N. Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1992), p.29.

³⁹ D. Willis and B. Krauthamer, *Envisioning Emancipation: Black Americans and the End of Slavery* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), p.23.

allows for a better picture to be built of the former slaves' self-fashioning within the images, their opinions and their memories.

The Use of Ex-Slave Documents to Research the Institution of Slavery

Understanding the Lived Experience of Slavery using WPA Interviews:

Despite the existence of numerous sound recorded interviews with those who had been enslaved and corresponding photographs, it is only the WPA interviews that have been analysed extensively from a variety of methodological and theoretical perspectives by historians. The use of any type of slave narratives in historical scholarship was, however, dismissed by many scholars in the early twentieth century. While black American intellectuals such as Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois had always utilised the voices of enslaved individuals in their arguments, white male professional historians failed to do so. For example, Ulrich B. Phillips, who did not utilise slave narratives in his study *American Negro Slavery*, also wrote in 1929 that 'ex-slave narratives in general, and those of Charles Ball, Henry Box Brown and Father Henson in particular, were issued with so much abolitionist editing that as a class their authenticity is doubtful.'⁴⁰

Between 1902 and 1972, John Blassingame noted that only three state-specific studies about plantation slavery drew on any type of slave testimony, out of a total of sixteen published works.⁴¹ Most historians focused on sources produced by white actors in the institution such as slaveholder diaries, plantation records, business reports and letters. As Marie Jenkins Schwartz has argued, in the early twentieth century these 'mainstream historians were reluctant not only to hear the views of black scholars but also the voices of the black Americans who had felt the full weight of bondage.'⁴² Until the 1970s, and even beyond, many historians focused exclusively on the weaknesses of WPA

⁴⁰ U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: Appleton & co., 1918); U. B. Phillips, *Life and Labor in the Old South* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1929), p.219.

⁴¹ J. Blassingame, 'Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves: Approaches and Problems', *The Journal of Southern History*, 41.4 (1975), p.473.

⁴² M. Schwartz, 'The WPA Narratives as Historical Sources', in J. Ernest (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of The African American Slave Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.91.

testimony and Schwartz has noted that the WPA narratives were placed under ‘special scrutiny’, particularly during the era of postmodernism, when scholars were urged to focus on the deconstruction of texts.⁴³ This scepticism surrounding the WPA interviews was also spurred by the concerns many historians had relating to oral history in this era; ‘many scholars believed issues of the reliability of memory over time hurt the usefulness of these testimonies.’⁴⁴

Racism has also played a part in the critical reaction to the testimony of the formerly enslaved by historians that continued into the twenty-first century. Defending his use of WPA interviews in *This Half Has Never Been Told*, Edward Baptist noted that sources produced with people who had been in bondage have been placed under much greater scrutiny than sources generated by whites, despite the fact that the writings by white men can include as much ‘conscious performance’ and ‘internal conflict’ as the WPA interviews.⁴⁵ Questioning why the diary of an enslaver, for example, is seen as more ‘epistemologically sound’ than ex-slave sources, Baptist explained that there is a ‘long history of certain professional historians’ attempts to silence the formerly enslaved, the colonized, the oppressed and the resistant’ noting racism and condescension as reasons for this.⁴⁶

Despite the early (and in some cases, continued) dismissal of any type of formerly enslaved testimony, from the Civil Rights Movement onwards black Americans were searching for sources to help undergird the development of a more usable past, which led to the re-examination of the value of these sources. This change in approach came at the same time as a number of oral history organisations were founded, which in turn ‘solidified the value of oral histories.’⁴⁷ Further aided by the publication of the WPA narratives in 1972 and their use by George Rawick in *From Sundown to Sunup*, other scholars such as Herbert Gutman and Eugene Genovese immediately began to utilise the testimony as the basis for their research.⁴⁸ Rawick analysed the WPA interviews

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁴⁴ S. Crew, L. Bunch and C. Price, *Slave Culture: A Documentary Collection of the Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project* (California: Greenwood, 2014) p.xxix.

⁴⁵ E. Baptist, ‘The Response’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 36.1 (2015), p. 193.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.194-195.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.xxxi.

⁴⁸ H. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1976); E. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

systematically for the first time to challenge the existing historiography that focused on ‘what went on from sunup to sundown’, attempting to shift the attention to ‘the creation of the black community under slavery, a process which largely went on outside of work relations.’⁴⁹ He combined the use of the WPA narratives with longer published slave autobiographies ‘to raise questions, to make what will eventually probably be seen as crude attempts to develop an appropriate methodology for such work, and to present a general outline of American slave society, community and culture.’⁵⁰

Rawick was correct when speculating that ‘the reading of the narratives ought to lead to fresh questions, new insights, a new historiography of slavery.’⁵¹ Within ten years of the publication of these sources a number of historians, such as Lawrence Levine and Deborah Gray White, used the WPA interviews to comprehensively analyse how the enslaved experienced the institution.⁵² Studies moved from highlighting damage wrought on black Americans, conclusions developed by Stanley Elkins and Kenneth Stampp, to work that focused on black resistance and survival.⁵³ Levine, for example, demonstrated that black Americans used song, folklore and humour to resist the dehumanising aspects of the institution and White, for the first time, provided a thorough account of the female experience of slavery. Since then, it has become common practice to use these documents and scholars have examined this testimony using a range of methodological tools to focus on a wide variety of themes, including: slave resistance; slave families; gendered experiences of enslavement; enslaver control mechanisms; violence; healthcare; religion and the slave body.⁵⁴ These important

⁴⁹ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 1, From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), p.xix.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.xx.

⁵¹ G. Rawick, *TAS Supplement Series 1, Volume 3, Part 1, Georgia Narratives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1977), p.xxxix.

⁵² L. Levine, *Black Culture, Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); D. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985).

⁵³ S. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959); K. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Antebellum South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1956).

⁵⁴ See this list of recent studies of slavery that utilise WPA interviews; S. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Slave Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); E. West, *Chains of Love: Slave Couples in Antebellum South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004); S. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); M. Jenkins Schwartz, *Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006); W. Dusinger, *Strategies for Survival: Recollections of Bondage in Antebellum Virginia* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009); H. Williams, *Help me to*

studies, that take divergent approaches to analysing WPA interviews, have provided the foundations upon which this research can be built.

Emotions and Slavery:

As part of this historiography of slavery, some early historians such as Ulrich B. Phillips developed theories relating to ‘slave psychology’. Heavily shaped by white racist assumptions and stereotypes prevalent in the United States, he stated that the slave personality type was inherently determined by race. Phillips argued that ‘the slaves were negroes, who for the most part were by racial quality submissive rather than defiant, light-hearted instead of gloomy, amiable and ingratiating instead of sullen, and whose very defects invited paternalism rather than repression.’⁵⁵ In 1959, Stanley Elkins, like Phillips, concluded that the enslaved had childlike, docile and ‘Sambo-like’ characteristics, yet argued that this was due to the ‘closed system’ of the institution and not because they were racially determined to have these personality traits.⁵⁶ As a backlash to these studies that reiterated toxic stereotypes of black American character, aforementioned historians in the 1970s focused upon how slaves resisted the dehumanising nature of the institution. Yet, debates about the psychological impact of slavery continued to revolve around this polarised debate begun by Phillips, and continued by Elkins. In 2002, Nell Painter acknowledged this, arguing that historians have avoided calculating slavery’s full psychological cost, due to worries about reinstating Elkins’ thesis.⁵⁷ Using the psychological concept of ‘soul murder’ to acknowledge slavery’s psychological impact, she analysed the anger and depression that can be seen throughout sources produced with formerly enslaved people, as well as African American methods of psychological survival.⁵⁸

Despite this focus on psychology, only a handful of historians have begun to provide explicit examinations of emotion in these documents, even though the ‘history of emotions’ emerged as a distinct field of research in the 1980s. Early historians of

Find my People; D. Ramey Berry, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, From the Womb to the Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2017).

⁵⁵ U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, pp. 341-342.

⁵⁶ S. Elkins, *Slavery*, pp.85-126.

⁵⁷ N. Painter, *Southern History Across the Color Line* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p.21.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.29-39.

emotion, such as Peter and Carol Stearns, William Reddy and Barbara Rosenwein all developed theories that became the basis of the history of emotions approach. At the core of these is the Stearns' concept of 'emotionology', defined as 'the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression' after noticing that historians have often confused the examination of emotional experience with the analysis of emotionology.⁵⁹ Both Reddy and Rosenwein built upon this 'emotionology' concept. Reddy introduced the idea of power into this framework using the concept of 'emotional regimes.' Explaining this theory, he argued that any stable political regime will have a 'normative order for emotions' and explores these within his monograph.⁶⁰ Rosenwein, on the other hand, introduced the idea of 'emotional communities'; 'groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions' to examine the emotional texture of different societies.⁶¹ Thus, all developed concepts to help historians expose the different emotional standards that existed in any given society or community.

Only a few historians of slavery have used emotional history theories to analyse the institution, and studies have taken divergent methodological paths. Erin Dwyer's 2012 PhD thesis used the emotional standards framework to gain a greater understanding of the politics of slavery.⁶² Using a range of sources including slave narratives, white diaries, newspapers and letters (but notably excluding WPA interviews, sound recordings or photographs) Dwyer explored how both whites and blacks within the institution navigated the emotional norms of slavery. She examined how these norms were learned, how emotions were used by enslavers to maintain the institution, and by the enslaved to resist it. Thus, Dwyer focused on emotions 'as performative.'⁶³

In comparison, other scholars attempted to access glimpses of how the enslaved actually felt. Heather Williams, in her 2012 monograph, aimed to recover traces of

⁵⁹ P. Stearns and C. Stearns, 'Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards', *American Historical Review*, 90.4 (1985), p.813.

⁶⁰ W. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling [electronic book]: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.124.

⁶¹ B. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), p.2.

⁶² E. Dwyer, 'Mastering Emotions: The Emotional Politics of Slavery', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 2012).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.11.

enslaved feelings, which stemmed from the forced separation from loved ones in the antebellum South.⁶⁴ Using the narratives of formerly enslaved people and 1,200 advertisements placed in black newspapers by newly emancipated African Americans to find their loved ones, she humanised the debate over the history of slavery by interpreting the documented feelings of individuals. She highlighted that the enslaved felt multilayered and complicated emotions in relation to these events, including grief, despair, hope, love and joy.⁶⁵ Historian Sasha Turner focused on one of these emotions - maternal grief in response to child death - in her study of the lived experience of slavery.⁶⁶ Of particular relevance to this thesis is that Turner acknowledged the archival issues that arise when focusing on grief in sources created about Caribbean slavery; ‘snippets of their lives, loves, and losses emerge from records imputed with the possibility of yielding profits.’⁶⁷ Acknowledging the archival problems, Turner urged scholars to develop creative methodologies to be able to uncover the grief experienced by enslaved mothers. In this case, she utilised Saidiya Hartman’s notion of rhetorical strategies and applied them to the fragments of the archive that are available.⁶⁸

Like Dwyer, I view emotions as ‘performative’ and question how feeling was performed, feigned, exaggerated or hidden in these various documents. Yet, I provide this analysis in order to be able to, like Turner, acknowledge the archival limitations when trying to access the lived emotional experiences of the enslaved. This thesis will thus contribute to this burgeoning literature about the emotional impact of slavery not by writing a comprehensive history of the emotional texture of enslaved life, but by developing and modelling a methodology that can be used to uncover the possibilities of different types of documents for writing these histories. By acknowledging when emotion was performed, shaped, framed and edited, I can better reveal the possibilities of Lorenzo Dow Turner’s sound recordings and limitations of John Lomax’s oral sources, for example, for providing access to these traces of the interior lives of the

⁶⁴ H. Williams, *Help me to Find my People*, p.3.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.1.

⁶⁶ S. Turner, ‘The Nameless and the Forgotten: Maternal Grief, Sacred Protection and the Archive of Slavery’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 38.2 (2017), pp.232-250.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.232.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.234.

enslaved. The next section will outline the methods and literatures I engage with to provide this analysis.

Building on Studies about the WPA Interviews

To come to conclusions as to how emotion was framed in each source produced in conjunction with formerly enslaved men and women, this thesis will analyse the many personal, political, cultural, and emotional agendas that actors brought to the source creation. To undertake this analysis, this study builds upon literature about the effect of the 1930s racial politics on the testimony gained by WPA interviewees. Many historians who wrote about the lived experience of slavery in the 1970s and 1980s provided methodological discussions about the problems surrounding WPA interviews. Issues that scholars discussed included the aged status of the interviewees and the impact of the time elapsed since slavery on their memories, the lack of representation across the interviews of age, occupation and place of enslavement and the racial situation at the interview encounter.⁶⁹ These understandings did not, however, curtail their use by historians of slavery as the interviews are one of the only sources created from the perspective of those who had experienced slavery. In the past couple of decades, however, there has been a renewed focus on exploring the role of the WPA testimony as historical documents. Scholars have begun to criticise the use of the interviews in an ad-hoc, ‘cut-and-paste’ manner, suggesting that academics who use these sources need to explore the context of the interviews more carefully before taking their content at face value.⁷⁰

For example, in 2001 Sharon Ann Musher criticised Genovese’s use of the WPA material in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*. In 1972 he published this account of slavery to arguably bolster his ‘paternalism theory.’ In this study, he argued that the Old South was a unique type of paternalist society, and that this paternalism ‘grew out of the necessity to

⁶⁹ See the following publications for early methodological discussions of this source; G. Rawick, *TAS From Sundown to Sunup*; J. Blassingame, ‘Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves’; N. Yetman, ‘Ex-Slave Interviews and the Historiography of Slavery’, *American Quarterly*, 36. 2 (1984), pp.181-210.

⁷⁰ S. Musher, ‘Contesting “The Way the Almighty Wants It”’; S. Musher, ‘The Other Slave Narratives’; C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*.

discipline and morally justify a system of exploitation.⁷¹ He further argued that this paternalism was accepted both by masters and slaves, and that ‘paternalism’s insistence upon mutual obligations – duties, responsibilities, and ultimately even rights – implicitly recognised the slaves’ humanity.’⁷² To critique his methodology, Musher noted that state directors often edited interviews to ‘illustrate that ex-slaves remembered slavery as having been a paternalistic institution.’⁷³ She claimed that Genovese did not take this into account, for example, when using the state edited edition of an interview with Charlie Moses to support his paternalism argument.⁷⁴ Musher has demonstrated that many WPA interviews were heavily shaped by the context in which they were created, and that care must be taken when using them as historical sources. Acknowledging the many stages of source production, Musher argued that the ‘WPA interviews might appear to have come literally out of the mouths of ex-slaves, but they do not represent unmediated reality.’⁷⁵ She further stated that ‘instead, it might be more accurate to consider them third-hand or even fourth-hand accounts.’⁷⁶ This is because they were edited at many stages of the production of the source: written up by the interviewer; typed up and modified; sent to Washington; and further organised and evaluated.

Catherine Stewart’s more recent monograph *Long Past Slavery* importantly explores the racial politics involved in the creation of interviews with the formerly enslaved at the FWP. Stewart analysed how the national directors, such as John Lomax, as well as black and white state interviewers shaped the production of the sources. Significantly, she also explored how the interviewees themselves managed to ‘create their own narratives about the legacy of slavery and African Americans’ past, present and future as citizens of the nation.’⁷⁷ Stewart compared the stories told by interviewees to white interviewers in Georgia to those interviewed in Florida by the Black Writers’ Unit. To undertake this comparison of how the racial dynamics of the interview situation affected the interview content, Stewart examined the interviews through the lens of ‘oral performance’, showing how the elderly black Americans utilised the tradition of

⁷¹ E. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, p.4.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.5.

⁷³ S. Musher, ‘Contesting “The Way the Almighty Wants It”’, p.14.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.25.

⁷⁵ S. Musher, ‘The Other Slave Narratives’, p. 106.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.10.

signifying, indirection and trickery to discreetly say what they wanted to.⁷⁸ Overall, through a focus on competing and collective memory, Stewart demonstrated that ‘the Ex-Slave Project became the site where competing visions of African American identity, past and present, vied for ascendance in the struggle to map the contours of black citizenship and the nation’s future.’⁷⁹

Both of these studies have heavily influenced the research in thesis, as this study utilises a number of their techniques for probing how the testimony of formerly enslaved men and women could be framed by the racial context in which it was taken and how the documents could be edited by the source-creators. This includes exploring, like Musher, how WPA interviews may have been edited at local and national level, and probing the cultural narratives about slavery and racial politics at play during the creation of the documents, as Stewart does in her research. This thesis, however, applies these techniques to focus specifically on how emotional content was framed across a more extensive range of sources produced in this era.

This focus on the shaping of emotion requires that across the following case-studies I ask a number of different questions about the dynamics of the source creation, often focusing more specifically on the personal agendas and beliefs of those creating the source, including the interviewees themselves. Whilst ultimately aiming to contribute to discussions about what can be heard in each document about the emotional experiences of the enslaved, this analysis will also contribute to Stewart and Musher’s methodological discussions by revealing more about the personal stakes involved in creating these documents. Specifically questioning why the formerly enslaved decided to include particular emotional memories can be illuminating, highlighting their motivations and feelings towards the interview encounter. Furthermore, the other actors involved in the source production came to the process with a personal history related to slavery, related feelings about the institution, and political or cultural agendas, and exploring emotional content in the documents can tell us more about the interplay between these political and personal dynamics. Similarly, a focus on emotion in these documents also highlights the emotional labour that the elderly black Americans had to

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.214-215.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

engage in when creating these documents and telling their stories. Sociologist Arlie Hochschild originally used the term emotional labour to describe the emotional work that people in public facing jobs had to engage in. She defined this ‘emotional labour’ as ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display.’⁸⁰ Expanding this concept to include the interview and photographic situation, this thesis uses the concept of emotional labour to reveal and describe the management of feeling that the formerly enslaved had to engage in when creating their sources.

The Case for a ‘Holistic Approach’

To further interject in discussions about the emotional lives of the enslaved and how to best write these histories, this thesis analyses underutilised visual and oral sources alongside more traditional WPA interviews, demonstrating the need for a holistic approach when researching this intimate aspect of the enslaved experience. At the time of their creation in the 1930s and 1940s scholars noted the benefits of recorded oral histories produced with black Americans who had experienced the institution. For example, Benjamin Botkin quoted an interviewer, who wrote that ‘since any written record of an interview is necessarily a visual arrangement, the reader should bear in mind that he “can’t get the whole story by reading the words” but has to “hear the tones and the accents, and see the facial expressions and bodily movements.”’⁸¹ The existence of some recordings of former slaves located at the Library of Congress is acknowledged by historians of slavery, as both Marie Jenkins Schwartz and Sharon Ann Musher write about these oral sources in the footnotes of their studies, but they have rarely been utilised by scholars to understand more about their experiences of the institution.⁸²

Some recordings of formerly enslaved people did begin to attract attention from linguists and historians in the 1980s, but they used them primarily to study the Black English Vernacular. The *Emergence of Black English*, for example, includes transcripts

⁸⁰ See A. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p.7. Hochschild also uses the terms ‘emotion work’ and ‘emotion management’ synonymously with emotional labor to describe emotional acts in private settings, and these words will be used interchangeably in this thesis.

⁸¹ B. Botkin, *Lay my Burden Down*, p.5.

⁸² M. Schwartz, ‘The WPA Narratives as Historical Sources’, p.99 and S. Musher, ‘The Other Slave Narratives’, p.105

of 11 recordings held by the Library of Congress, notably excluding the Turner interviews that will be explored in Chapter Four. While the authors of this book used the recordings primarily for linguistic purposes, within this volume, historians Joe Graham and Paul Escott did also examine the lived experience of slavery. These essays are, however, limited in scope.⁸³ It was not until 1998, when the landmark volume *Remembering Slavery* was published, that slavery historians again analysed these important recordings, despite the surge in studies that focused on the experience of the institution in the 1980s. Recognising the importance of this type of source, Ira Berlin *et al* wrote that the interviews ‘had great value’ and explained that ‘through the medium of the spoken word, the slaves’ memory exploded out of the archives into the here and now.’⁸⁴ Within this study, the historians used sound recordings held in the Archive of Folk Culture at the Library of Congress to examine the interviewees’ experiences of enslavement and freedom, but again, did not include the recordings conducted by Lorenzo Dow Turner.⁸⁵ *Remembering Slavery* blended the oral testimony and WPA interviews together to examine themes such as relationships between the enslaved and their oppressors, work, family life, slave culture and the Civil War, all fundamentally grounded in an analysis of the words of the enslaved.

Like the authors of *Remembering Slavery*, Shane and Graham White acknowledged the importance of hearing the voices of people who had been in bondage in their study of the soundscape of the slave plantation. Questioning the usefulness of this source, they stated that ‘it most definitely is not as though a tape recorder had been left on in the woods near the plantation on which Frederick Douglass toiled as a slave, but these recordings bring us about as close as we are ever going to get to hearing some of the familiar – and to white ears often “weird” and “unforgettable” – sounds of slavery.’⁸⁶

⁸³ P. Escott, ‘Speaking of Slavery: The Historical Value of the Recordings with Former Slaves’ in G. Bailey, N. Maynor, and P. Cukor-Avila (eds.), *The Emergence of Black English: Text and Commentary [electronic book]* (Amsterdam: J Benjamins Pub. Co. 1991), p.130.

⁸⁴ I. Berlin *et al*, *Remembering Slavery*, p.xxii.

⁸⁵ Both John Henry Faulk and Roscoe Lewis were collectors of folklore. Faulk conducted field trips in Texas, working as an interviewer/folklorist for the Archive of Folk Song, Library of Congress. Roscoe Lewis worked as part of the Virginia Writers’ Project, directing a group of black American writers who interviewed former slaves, culminating in *The Negro in Virginia*. Many of the interviews were also more recently published in C. Perdue, T. Barden and R. Phillips (eds.), *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves, Paperback Edition* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1992).

⁸⁶ G. White and S. White, *The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History through Songs, Sermons and Speech* (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2005), p.xxii.

Focusing on recordings of songs produced by John and Alan Lomax, they examined the music that the enslaved created, as well as other sounds of the plantation and city. As part of this study, White and White created a CD that includes examples of work songs, prayers and sermons. Similarly, the authors of *Remembering Slavery* also created a two-part documentary, with ‘excerpts from rare audio recordings of former slaves and dramatic recreations of written narratives by some of the nation’s leading actors.’⁸⁷

While the public gained access to these important recordings via this radio documentary, and many (though not all) have been digitised and are available to listen to at *Voices From the Days of Slavery*, they still remain un-tapped as historical sources.⁸⁸ As these recordings have not been utilised fully as sources to explore the lived experience of slavery, methodological discussions of the issues surrounding their use remain even more limited. Indeed, *Remembering Slavery* presented the words of the formerly enslaved with little critical reflection on how the sources were made and the people involved in their creation. Only Paul Escott has provided some brief conclusions about what these sound recordings tell us about the creation of ex-slave documents.⁸⁹

Likewise, photographs produced in the 1930s of elderly black Americans who remembered slavery have also rarely been analysed to further our knowledge of slavery, nor have they been used in a significant manner to further our understanding of how U.S. slavery’s archive was created. Historians have, however, produced overviews of images and photographs taken during slavery and the Civil War, as well as studies of specific sets of these. The production, content and use of ‘famous’ photographs produced during the nineteenth century, such as those of Frederick Douglass and the slave ‘Gordon’ have been extensively analysed, as have Aggasiz’s ethnographic photographs of slaves, to tell us more about slavery and the role of photography in producing differing theories of race and narratives about the institution.⁹⁰ Many federal

⁸⁷ I. Berlin et al, *Remembering Slavery*, p.279.

⁸⁸ *Voices From the Days of Slavery*, available at <<https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/index.html>> [accessed 8.8.18]

⁸⁹ P. Escott, ‘Speaking of Slavery’, pp.130-131.

⁹⁰ For examples of analyses of specific photographs or sets of photographs see D. Silkenat, “‘A Typical Negro’: Gordon, Peter, Vincent Colyer, and the Story Behind Slavery’s Most Famous Photograph”, *American Nineteenth Century History*, 15.2 (2014), pp.169-186. ; M. Rogers, *Delia’s Tears: Race, Science and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); J. Stauffer, Z. Trodd and C. Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass: An Illustrated Biography of the*

agencies, such as the Works Progress Administration and Farm Security Administration created images of former slaves and their lives in the 1930s, yet these seem to be used all too readily to illustrate other projects, without rigorous critical analysis. For example, Norman Yetman's *Voices from Slavery* included a number of photographs of former slaves with no commentary on when, where or why they were created.⁹¹ One exception to this is Deborah Willis and Barbara Krauthamer's thorough analysis of photographs of black Americans taken between the 1850s and 1930s.⁹² Through engaging with 150 photographs produced in this era as historical representations, and reproducing a wide range of images from this period, Willis and Krauthamer show that photographs of black Americans are important sources that can be used to explore how both white and black Americans understood slavery and freedom. Willis and Krauthamer did not, however, analyse each photograph individually, leaving a comprehensive exploration of the production, content and use of each photograph yet to be provided.

By placing WPA interviews alongside less well-known sound recordings and photographs that were created in the same era, this thesis demonstrates that firstly, this 'holistic approach' will allow for a more sustained and informed reconstruction of the creation of each type of document by placing them in their proper historical context. The projects of the Lomaxes and Lorenzo Dow Turner exemplify why this is so important. Both Turner and Ruby Lomax took photographs of the people they recorded as part of their projects, yet in both cases, the photographs and recordings are held in different archives. By finding information about the same men and women in separate archives and included in different types of source, this study is able to foreground the voice and actions of the formerly enslaved when discussing the creation of these documents, showing their agency in adapting to different creators of the sources and mediums of collection. In comparing a photograph that Ruby Lomax took of Billy McCrea with the recording of him by John Lomax, for example, Chapter 7 will reveal the different approaches of the Lomaxes when they interacted with their subjects, and

Nineteenth Century's Most Photographed American (New York: Liverlight Publishing Corporation, 2015).

⁹¹ N. Yetman (eds.) *Voices from Slavery: 100 Authentic Slave Narratives* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970) reprinted by (New York: Dover Publications, 2000).

⁹² D. Willis and B. Krauthamer, *Envisioning Emancipation*.

how McCrea was able to adapt during both encounters to present the version of himself that he wanted to.

Most importantly, through questioning how underutilised sound recordings and photographs were created and the emotional content within them, this thesis will highlight the *different* limitations, possibilities and insights that various types of sources can provide about the former slaves' emotional experiences. Schwartz, in her discussion of WPA narratives argued that 'no one source or type of source gives a complete picture of the past on its own, and historians do best when they recognise that all sources are problematic and need to be interpreted carefully.'⁹³ She discussed how placing WPA interviews alongside interviews with enslavers in Alabama, she 'was able to understand better both sets of actors in the paternalistic drama that characterized antebellum slavery.'⁹⁴ This thesis takes on board Schwartz's message, and demonstrates that analysing these different sets of sources together, particularly if they were created on the same project, can add nuanced layers to our understanding of each formerly enslaved individual, their agendas and memories.

Analysing Emotional Framing, Manipulation and Editing: A Combination of Methodological Tools

Thus far this chapter has outlined the broad literatures upon which this thesis is building and to which it is contributing. As in this thesis I am also developing a methodology that can be used to assess the limitations and possibilities of a variety of ex-slave documents, the next section will discuss the specific methodological tools that it utilises to do so. Throughout the case-studies, the first step taken is to outline the 'emotional content' within each set of documents. Throughout, I use the term 'emotional content' to describe any traces of emotion in the documents, including in the words, phrases, metaphors, silences, pauses, vocal tones, facial expressions and bodily stances. Of course, this content depends on which medium the document is in. In the case of sound recordings, I use the term 'emotional content' to describe other indicators of emotion

⁹³ M. Schwartz, 'The WPA Narratives as Historical Sources,' p.93.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.95.

such as the pauses, tones and pace of their speech. In relation to the WPA interviews, in contrast, the words and metaphors used are not evidence of the former slaves' emotions in and of themselves, and the language used in the texts is an attempt at depicting and bearing a trace of their expressions. I use the term 'emotional content' to describe these linguistic depictions of the interviewees' emotional communication. The second methodological phase involves probing how this emotional content may have been framed, edited or manipulated. The following case-studies use a different combination of methodological tools to uncover this manipulation. The approaches used in this thesis are fundamentally grounded in methods from slavery studies, but I combine these traditional ways of analysing WPA interviews with tools taken from emotional history, visual studies, critical race studies and oral history to assess the many factors that shaped emotional content in textual, oral and visual sources.

WPA Interviews:

To explore the emotion included in the WPA interviews, Chapter Two and Three use techniques developed by historians of emotion who have created methodologies to analyse how emotion is historically and socially constituted within different historical eras. For example, Rosenwein coined the term 'emotional communities' to denote groups of people who have the same emotional value system. She explained that she 'seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling, to establish what these communities (and the individuals within them) define and assess as valuable or harmful to them (for it is about such things that people express emotions); the emotions that they value, devalue, or ignore; the nature of the affective bonds between people that they recognize; and the modes of emotional expression that they expect, encourage, tolerate, and deplore.'⁹⁵ To study an emotional community she suggested that the historian should use documents from several voices from one group, 'problematize emotion words', 'read the silences', 'read the metaphors' and 'read the ironies.'⁹⁶ Although this section does not explicitly focus upon whether these interviewees constituted an 'emotional community', I am interested in uncovering commonalities and differences in emotional expression across and within the sources, which an application of Rosenwein's

⁹⁵ B. Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions', *Passions in Context* 1.1 (2010), p.11.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.13-18.

methodology reveals. The use of Rosenwein's methodology will also begin to reveal how the interview encounter may have shaped the formerly enslaved people's emotional expression, through highlighting which emotions were acceptable for the former slaves to display within the wider Jim Crow era, and the expectations the white community at the WPA project placed on the elderly black Americans relating to their emotional expression.

To further analyse why different patterns of emotion occur in the WPA source sets, I begin by utilising the important work undertaken by historians of slavery who have analysed the effect that the interviewer's race and the Jim Crow context had on what interviewees included in their testimony. Blassingame, for example, demonstrated that the presence of a white interviewer led to less truthful answers from those giving their testimony. The interviews were conducted in the Jim Crow era and as Blassingame stated 'the black man's vulnerability to white oppression was painfully evident in the Depression South', as between 1931 and 1935 more than seventy black people were lynched.⁹⁷ Compounding this, Rawick has noted that many of the white interviewers were related to the local elite. In contrast, the black Americans being interviewed regularly relied on welfare due to extreme poverty, and many believed that white interviewers could help them gain more financial assistance. This combination of vulnerability to white oppression and dependence due to poverty, according to Rawick, meant 'they would more than likely play down the worst aspects of slavery, thus showing themselves worthy of money.'⁹⁸ Recognising the racial dynamics of the interview can therefore help to uncover why the elderly black Americans expressed or repressed certain emotions.

Whilst the race of the interviewer could influence the emotional responses given by interviewees, each interviewer was also an individual with differing methodologies, beliefs, attitudes, emotions and 'emotional intelligence', factors that could also shape which emotions the former slaves were willing or able to display. These factors could affect the emotional content of the interviews not only at the interview encounter, but at the write-up, editing and evaluation stage of source production. Section One utilises

⁹⁷ J. Blassingame, 'Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves', p.482.

⁹⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS Supplement Series 1, Volume 3, Part 1, Georgia Narratives*, p.xxxii.

theories from oral history, the sociology of emotions and critical race theory to aid in discovering these unspoken and personal dynamics. For example, oral historians are continually developing guidelines about the best interview techniques, and have discussed the importance of not asking leading questions and conducting an interview in a suitable environment for each interviewee.⁹⁹ I take these observations as a starting point for my analysis, and attempt to uncover the questions that the interviewers in these case-studies asked, and the place where the FWP conducted the interview. Oral historians have also explored the way in which emotion affects the interview encounter. For example, Jenny Harding has argued that ‘feelings play a creative role in interview dynamics.’¹⁰⁰ She highlighted the importance of empathy during the interview noting that ‘empathy may be a crucial ingredient in producing “thick dialogue” in oral history and other forms of qualitative interviewing.’¹⁰¹ In order to unearth the emotional relationship between the interviewee and interviewer and editor, this chapter also utilises other writing by the interviewer, editors and appraisers to try to uncover their beliefs about slavery and the stereotypes they may hold about black Americans.

Other sociological theories that focus on framing, race and emotions help to illuminate some of these feelings and beliefs that were brought to the encounter and the reasons for the patterns of emotional content. Joe Feagin’s concept of the ‘white racial frame’, which documents the narratives, emotions and stereotypes that shape how white Americans view society, will be used to explore the mind-set of interviewers, editors and appraisers.¹⁰² Simultaneously, concepts from the sociology of emotions, including that of Hochschild’s ‘emotional labour’, which illustrates how people control their emotions in work settings, is adapted to explore the emotions that the formerly enslaved people brought to the encounter.¹⁰³ These tools help to uncover the personal stakes and agendas that those creating the source brought to the encounter, and how these interacted with political agendas and collective narratives to shape the emotional content of the source.

⁹⁹ For a useful overview of methods in oral history, see R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁰⁰ J. Harding, ‘Talk about Care: Emotions, Culture and Oral History’, *Oral History*, 38.2 (2010), p.36.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.33.

¹⁰² J. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁰³ A. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p.7.

Sound Recordings:

I ask similar questions and use some of the same concepts when analysing sound recordings in Section Two, yet a major difference in approach is needed when exploring the emotional content in the source. Of course, words and metaphors can be analysed using Rosenwein's methodology. Sound recordings are unique, however, in that we can also *listen* to the interviewee's voice, providing new possibilities for the analysis of emotional content. Oral historian Alessandro Portelli has described the distinct opportunities that a careful listening to oral histories provides; 'writing represents language almost exclusively by means of segmentary traits (graphemes, syllables, words and sentences).'¹⁰⁴ He continued to explain that 'language is also composed of another set of traits, which cannot be contained within a single segment but which are also bearers of meaning.'¹⁰⁵ Portelli's work reminds us of the significant meanings that can be attributed to traits such as vocal tone and volume range, pauses and rhythm in these sound recordings. Indeed, he noted that 'by abolishing these traits, we flatten the emotional content of speech down to the supposed equanimity and objectivity of the written document.'¹⁰⁶

Listening to changes in vocal tone and volume, stutters and silences also aids historians in gaining access to the embodiment of feeling or affective responses. Margaret Wetherell has argued that 'affect seems to index a realm beyond talk, words and texts, beyond epistemic regimes, and beyond conscious representation and cognition.'¹⁰⁷ She also explained that exploring the 'realm beyond talk' allows us to 'expand the connotation of affect beyond the familiar emotion palettes.'¹⁰⁸ To provide this analysis of affect, she noted that 'above all else, it is clear that coming to terms with affect implies coming to terms with the body.'¹⁰⁹ While I cannot see affective, embodied practices such as crying and dancing (as I could do in videos or even photographs) I can hear some of these embodiments in the voice, giving us access to further layers of

¹⁰⁴ A. Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998), p.65.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.66.

¹⁰⁷ M. Wetherell, *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012), p.19.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.6.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.10.

often unconscious emotional responses. Thus, alongside analysing language, exploring these embodied indicators of emotion is particularly important when attempting to bring to light more hidden emotional content in these sources, and again will provide an indication of why former slaves may hide or repress feelings in different situations.

Furthermore, when analysing how the emotion may have been framed or manipulated, it is important to acknowledge that unlike in textual sources, sound recordings were not edited after their creation. Therefore, these chapters focus solely on the interview encounter. Aspects of this interview encounter can also be probed more extensively as many dynamics of it, such as the interview questions, can be heard. As Escott has argued, this allows for a deeper exploration of the interview context; ‘hearing an interview helps one understand its dynamics and subtleties in a way that analysis of the written words cannot.’¹¹⁰

Photographs:

The analysis of photographs of formerly enslaved men and women requires a completely different methodological approach to that which I apply to textual and oral sources. To find patterns in the emotional content of this source, evidently, words and phrases cannot be read or listened to. The subjects do not tell us how they felt, nor how they are feeling as the photographer created their image. We can, however, look at their facial expressions and bodily postures as indicators of emotion; smiles, frowns, and various postures can all indicate certain emotions and are used by people to communicate their feelings. The emotional expression on the face of the person being photographed is not the only way, however, in which emotion is portrayed or communicated in an image. Similarly to the way in which an interviewer could ask leading questions to elicit certain emotional responses, the producer of the photograph may use different props or frame the image in certain ways to emphasise or minimise an emotion, such as pride or confidence.

¹¹⁰ P. Escott, ‘Speaking of Slavery’, p.124.

To analyse how emotional content was shaped by the photographer, I use Gillian Rose's important critical methodology for analysing photographs, which ensures that analyses of photographs focus on four sites of the image: the site of production; the site of the image; the site of circulation; and the site of audiencing.¹¹¹ Focusing mainly on the site of production, these chapters explore the emotion that the photographer wished to portray in the image, and how they created this through the use of certain technologies and genres. An understanding of photographic genres that were popular at the time and the photographer's beliefs about slavery will aid in this analysis. I also question how the former slave themselves self-fashioned within the image, utilising other critical approaches to visual sources such as Tina Campt's methodology of 'listening' to images.¹¹²

Finally, although other chapters briefly outline how the interviews and sound recordings have been used by historians and the public in the 'Text' and 'Sound' sections of this thesis, an exploration of the photographs' circulation and viewing will formulate a more extensive part of my methodology in this 'Image' section. To truly understand how the photographer framed the emotional content in an image, it is vital to explore the response it elicited and how this changed as different people, across different spaces, viewed the image. To do so, I utilise the work of Tina Campt and Elizabeth Edwards who view photographs as emotion-laden objects.¹¹³ In using this wide variety of methodological tools, and the most suitable for each source type, this thesis therefore provides conclusions as to how emotion was framed and what the sources can tell us about the emotional experiences of the enslaved, but also importantly develop and model a methodology to do so in other sets of historical sources.

Conclusions: Developing a New Methodological Framework to Study the Emotional Lives of the Enslaved

¹¹¹ G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*, 4th ed. (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2016).

¹¹² See T. Campt, *Listening to Images* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

¹¹³ T. Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); E. Edwards, 'Objects of Affect: Photography Beyond the Image', *The Annual Review of Anthropology*, 41 (2012), pp.221-234.

This chapter has placed this thesis, and the case-studies that follow, in historical, historiographical and methodological context. First, this chapter has shown that the collection of testimony and images of formerly enslaved people in the 1930s was part of a longer history of writing down the words and capturing photographs of the enslaved. Second, this historiographical overview has discussed how historians have utilised their testimony, the themes and methodologies in the literature that structure my own exploration of these documents, and outlined this study's methodological approach to these sources. Overall, the research in this thesis builds heavily upon both Stewart and Musher's important contributions to the literature about the WPA project, using both studies as a model for uncovering more about the production of these sources. Both historians have shown how it is possible to unearth more about the dynamics at the interview encounter, as well as the editing stage of the source creation. As this chapter has shown, however, this thesis applies this approach to a study of the emotional content of ex-slave documents to contribute to the historiography about the emotional lives of the enslaved. It also builds upon Ira Berlin's model in *Remembering Slavery* by providing a holistic approach to these documents, bringing together sound recordings, interviews and images into one project to aid in writing more humanised histories of the lived experience of slavery. Lastly, this chapter has provided a brief overview of the combination of analytical tools and approaches that I have developed to provide this analysis.

From the interviewer to photographer, local to state director, archivist to reader and most importantly, the formerly enslaved people themselves, the six case-studies in this thesis will uncover the emotions, motivations, agendas and beliefs as well as the overarching cultural, social and political frameworks that shaped how every person interacted with the source at each stage of its creation. Through analysing these documents in such a sustained and critical manner, this thesis contributes to methodological literature about how ex-slave sources were produced by teasing out the interaction of political and personal agendas that went into their creation. However, most crucially the following case-studies will show the possibilities and complications of each source set for telling us more about slavery and its emotional legacies, by outlining how emotion in these documents could be framed and manipulated. Thus, this research will speak to debates within slavery studies about the emotional experience of slavery.

Chapter Two: The Emotional Dimensions of

WPA Interviews With The Formerly Enslaved:

A Florida Case-Study

Whether the narrators relate what they actually saw and thought and felt, what they imagine, or what they have thought and felt about slavery since, now we know why they thought and felt as they did.¹

Writing about the collection of almost 2000 interviews conducted with the formerly enslaved in the *Slave Narrative Collection*, in the introduction to this volume, Botkin questioned what the WPA interviews could tell the reader about slavery and the documented feeling within the interviews. Did the interviewees recount how they actually felt during slavery, or the emotions they experienced towards the institution when the FWP conducted the interviews in the 1930s? Did they shape their own emotions at the interview encounter based on what they imagined? The following two chapters will compare and analyse the emotional content of two different sets of interviews conducted by the FWP in Florida; 44 interviews produced by the Negro Writers' Unit (NWU), a group of exclusively black interviewers and nine interviews that were conducted by a white interviewer(s) - Stetson Kennedy and/or Cora Mae Taylor - with members of the Ex-Slave Club of Miami.² Comparing the emotion within the interview sets will reveal that the interviewees, interviewers, editors and appraisers of the documents all heavily shaped, framed, manipulated and edited the emotion that was documented in these sources based on their own personal and political agendas.

To provide this analysis, this first chapter will outline the emotional content that is included in the two sets of sources. Using Barbara Rosenwein's method of analysing the words, metaphors and silences in historical documents, this analysis will illuminate the significant differences in the types of emotions that the interviews suggest the two interview groups expressed.³ The following case-study will reveal that the elderly black

¹ B. Botkin, 'Introduction,' p.ix.

² G. Rawick, *The American Slave: A Composite Autobiography, Volume 17, Florida Narratives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972). Hereafter *TAS* v.17.

³ B. Rosenwein, 'Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions', pp.1-32.

Americans interviewed by the NWU recounted a range of complex, multifaceted, short and long-term emotional reactions to their experiences of enslavement, including love, fear, resentment, anger, relief and joy. In contrast, the Ex-Slave Club seemed to constitute what Rosenwein has termed an ‘emotional community’ at the time of the interview, as the emotions that the interviewees expressed painted a consistent picture. Club members recounted one-dimensional feelings of nostalgia for the institution and fondness of their enslavers, and not one described fear, anger, misery or hate. To present this analysis, this chapter will begin by providing more information about the Florida FWP and will subsequently analyse the formerly enslaved peoples’ emotions in relation to their enslavers, punishment and forced breeding, and emancipation.

Florida Federal Writers’ Project

The Florida branch of the FWP was set up in 1935, under the direction of Dr Carita Doggett Corse. Stetson Kennedy, who worked at the Florida Writers’ Project as part of the state editorial staff and head of Folklore collecting, has provided extensive information about the workings of the branch. As he explained at the ‘In the Nick of Time’ Conference about Florida folklore in 1989, there were around 200 workers who reported to offices across the state, including Tampa, Miami and Jacksonville. Six or eight state editors were stationed in offices in Jacksonville, alongside Corse. Describing Corse’s role as director, he stated that ‘she was a meticulous editor and read every scrap of copy that came in from all over the state and made voluminous notations of editorial directives to us on the editorial staff of what to check out and elaborate on.’⁴ According to Kennedy, most of the interviewees worked from their homes and were often poorly educated housewives. He noted, however, that they had ‘vast amounts of enthusiasm and interest in their community.’⁵

Of the initial 200 staff, ten black members of the FWP formed the Negro Writers’ Unit. They worked separately to the white staff, ‘in the heart of the Jacksonville slum’, and never set foot in the State offices.⁶ At its peak, according to Kennedy, the Writers’ Unit

⁴ S. Kennedy, Conference Paper, In the Nick of Time Conference, Florida Folklife Collection, State Archives of Florida, 5 1576, Box 25, CB9.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

included: Martin Richardson, Alfred Farrell, James M. Johnson, Samuel Johnson, Rebecca Baker, typist Ruth B. Boltin, Viola Muse, Pearl Randolph, John A. Sims and Robert T. Thomas.⁷ Between 1936 and 1938, however, quotas quickly decreased. This resulted in only three black writers being employed in Florida. Despite this decrease, the number of black staff was fairly exceptional, as Mormino has noted that ‘blacks constituted only 106 of the Federal Writers’ Project’s 4,500 employees.’⁸ In contrast to the poorly educated white workers at the branch, Stewart has noted that most of the NWU workers were ‘representative of an educated and aspiring black middle class.’⁹ Although little is known about most of the interviewers, Stewart has discovered that Alfred Farrell obtained a degree at Lincoln University before joining the NWU, and at the time, he was working at a college in Jacksonville. After World War II he also gained a doctorate at Ohio State University and worked as a professor at Lincoln University. Stewart also argued that most of the male interviewers were more educated than their female counterparts, excluding Viola Muse who gained a degree from Indiana University in the 1920s.¹⁰

Though the NWU created numerous interviews, the group’s main purpose was to produce a chapter on black Americans in Florida for the State Guide, as well as prepare a book on this material entitled *The Florida Negro*.¹¹ Despite the fact that the NWU created numerous manuscripts of chapters for *The Florida Negro*, it was not published at the time as national editors argued that ‘there is no place where such a volume would fit in with our publishing schedule.’¹² Significantly, a similar situation occurred at the Louisiana branch of the FWP. A black unit was created in New Orleans in 1936, which was sponsored by Dillard University, a black college. Seven black Americans worked in this unit, and as part of their duties created a manuscript about the black experience in this state during slavery and the Reconstruction era entitled ‘The Negro in

⁷ S. Kennedy, ‘Florida Folklife and the WPA: An Introduction’,
<https://www.floridamemory.com/onlineclassroom/zora_hurston/documents/stetsonkennedy/>
[accessed 19.04.16]

⁸ G. Mormino, ‘Florida Slave Narratives’, *The Florida Historical Quarterly*, 66.4 (1988), p.402.

⁹ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.179.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.179-180.

¹¹ S. Kennedy, ‘Florida Folklife and the WPA’.

¹² Editors, quoted in G. McDonogh, *The Florida Negro: A Federal Writers’ Project Legacy* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), p. x.

Louisiana.¹³ As in Florida, however, this was never published, highlighting the depth of mistrust and criticism afforded to black writers, and animosity towards black life, culture and history in these two states.

Seventy-two interviews were published in Rawick's collection of the Florida interviews, but not all of these were conducted by the NWU. To analyse the NWU testimony exclusively, I have therefore excluded any testimony that was conducted by white interviewers, or where the race was not known. I have also excluded any interviews with informants who had not been enslaved, and any interviews that were reproduced more than once.¹⁴ This left 44 ex-slave interviews (one taken with a husband and wife), conducted by known members of the NWU, that will be analysed in this chapter and are included in Table 1 below.

¹³ J. Redding, 'The Dillard Project: The Black Unit of the Louisiana Writers' Project', *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association*, 32. 1 (1991), p.47.

¹⁴ This means I have excluded interviews contained in G. Rawick, *TAS v17* conducted with: Cora Mae Taylor (white); Jules Frost (race unknown); combined interviews (interviewer unknown); interviewees who were not slaves (Edward Lycagrus); and those included twice.

Table 1: Table of the Year of Birth, Age, Interviewer and Location(s) of Enslavement of NWU Interviewees.

| Name of Interviewee(s) | Year of Birth (circa) | Age at the time of interview (years old, circa) | Name of interviewer | Location(s) of Enslavement |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|----------------------------|---|
| Samuel Simeon Andrews | 1850 | 87 | Rachel A. Austin | Bullock, Al. Bibb, GA. Hancock, GA. Beaufort, S.C. |
| Bill Austin | 1837 | 100 | Martin Richardson | Greene, GA. Hancock, GA. |
| Frank Berry | 1858 | 78 | Pearl Randolph | Alachua, FL. |
| Matilda Brooks | 1858 | 79 | Alfred Farrell | Edgefield S.C. |
| Titus T. Bynes | 1846 | 91 | Alfred Farrell | Clarendon, S.C. |
| Florida Clayton | 1854 | 83 | Rachel A. Austin | Leon, Fl. |
| 'Father' Charles Coates | 1829 | 108 | Viola B. Muse | Chesterfield, VA. Washington, GA. |
| Irene Coates | 1859 | 78 | Viola B. Muse | Chatham GA. |
| Neil Coker | 1857 | 80 | Martin Richardson | Clay, FL. Putnam, FL. |
| Young Winston Davis | 1855 | 82 | Rachel Austin | Dale, Al. |
| Douglas Dorsey | 1851 | 86 | James Johnson | Suwannee, FL. |
| Ambrose Douglass | 1845 | 92 | Martin Richardson | Suwannee, FL. Harnett, N.C. |
| Willis Dukes | 1854 | 83 | Pearl Randolph | Brooks, GA. |
| Sam and Louisa Everett | 1851 1847 | 86 90 | Pearl Randolph | VA. |
| Duncan Gaines | 1853 | 84 | Pearl Randolph | N/A |
| Clayborn Gantling | 1848 | 89 | Rachel Austin | Terrell, GA. |
| Arnold Gragston | 1840 | 97 | Martin Richardson | Mason, KY. |
| Harriett Gresham | 1838 | 99 | Pearl Randolph | Barnwell, S.C. |
| Bolden Hall | 1853 | 84 | Alfred Farrell | Jefferson, FL. |
| Charlotte Martin | 1855 | 82 | Alfred Farrell | Madison, FL. |
| Sarah Ross | 1858 | 79 | Alfred Farrell | Benton, MS. |
| Rebecca Hooks | 1847 | 90 | Pearl Randolph | Jones, GA. |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------|-----|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Rev Squires Jackson | 1841 | 96 | Samuel Johnson | Madison, FL. |
| John Henry Kemp | 1857 | 80 | Rebecca Baker | Oktibbeha, MS. |
| Randall Lee | 1854 | 83 | Viola Muse | Kershaw, S.C. |
| Amanda McCray | N/A | N/A | Pearl Randolph | FL. |
| Henry Maxwell | 1859 | 78 | Alfred Farrell | Lowndes, GA. |
| Della Bess Hilyard | 1858 | 79 | Alfred Farrell | Darlington, S.C. |
| Taylor Gilbert | 1846 | 91 | Alfred Farrell | Randolph, GA. |
| Christine Drummond Mitchell | 1853 | 84 | Martin Richardson | St. Johns, FL. |
| Lindsey Moore | 1850 | 87 | Martin Richardson | Forsyth, GA. |
| Mack Mullen | 1857 | 80 | J. M. Johnson | Sumter, GA. |
| Louis Napoleon | 1857 | 80 | J. M. Johnson | Leon, FL. |
| Margrett Nickerson | 1847 | 90 | Rachel A. Austin | Leon, FL. |
| Douglass Parish | 1850 | 87 | Rachel A. Austin | Jefferson FL. |
| George Pretty | 1852 | 85 | Viola B. Muse | TN. |
| Anna Scott | 1846 | 91 | Viola B. Muse | SC. |
| William Sherman | 1842 | 95 | J. M. Johnson | SC. |
| Samuel Smalls | 1853 | 84 | Martin Richardson | Suwannee, FL. |
| Acie Thomas | 1857 | 80 | Pearl Randolph | Jefferson, FL. |
| Shack Thomas | 1834 | 103 | Martin Richardson | Leon, FL. |
| Luke Towns | 1835 | 102 | Rachel A. Austin | Lee, GA. Talbot, GA. |
| Willis Williams | 1856 | 81 | Viola B. Muse | Leon, FL. |
| Claude Augusta Wilson | 1857 | 80 | James Johnson | Columbia, FL. |

Note: These details are drawn from H. Potts, A Comprehensive Name Index for the American Slave (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997).

Table 2: Table of the Year of Birth, Age and Location of Enslavement of the Ex-Slave Club Interviewees.

| Name of Interviewee | Year of Birth (circa) | Age at the time of interview (years old, circa) | Location of Enslavement |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| Annie Trip | N/A | N/A | Thomas, GA. |
| Millie Sampson | 1862 | 75 | Clarendon, S.C. |
| Annie Gail | 1861 | 76 | Butler, Al. |
| Jessie Rowell | N/A | N/A | Jasper, MS. |
| Margaret White | 1853 | 84 | Federal, N.C. |
| Priscilla Mitchell | 1858 | 79 | Macon, AL. |
| Fanny McCay | 1864 | 73 | N/A |
| Hattie Thomas | 1859 | 78 | Custer, GA. |
| David Lee | N/A | N/A | Cusper, GA. |

Note: These details are drawn from H. Potts, *A Comprehensive Name Index for the American Slave* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1997).

The interviews produced by the NWU will be compared to another group of interviews included in Rawick's collection, those conducted by white staff in Florida with an 'Ex-Slave Club' located in Miami (see Table 2). These are included at the end of Rawick's Volume 17, meaning the Florida FWP sent them Washington, but the editors presented them in a slightly different format as they are much shorter than the NWU interviews. Information about this Club, and the interviews conducted with them, is fragmented. Only this limited detail is provided about these interviewees in Rawick's reproduction of them:

There is a unique organization in the colored population of Miami known as the 'Ex Slave Club'. This club claims twenty-five members, all over 88 years of age and all of whom were slaves in this country prior to the Civil War. The members of this interesting group are shown in the accompanying photograph. The stories of their lives as given

verbatim by these aged men and women are recorded in the following stories.¹⁵

The interviewer of the members was not identified in Rawick's collection, but two different interviewers have been suggested elsewhere. At the 1989 Florida Folklore Conference (at which Stetson Kennedy was a delegate), Gary Mormino stated that in September 1939, Stetson Kennedy and photographer Robert Harrison Cook, as representatives of the Florida FWP, took a recording caravan to Liberty City in Miami. Here they interviewed 25 members aged in their eighties or nineties.¹⁶ Mormino also wrote, in an article in 1988, that 'in Miami in 1939, Stetson Kennedy conducted extensive interviews at the Ex-Slave Association of Greater Miami. Located in the Liberty City District, a large black neighbourhood, the Club included twenty-five octogenarians and nonagenarians.'¹⁷ Significantly, Mormino then quoted one of the members, Annie Gail; 'I worked hard when I was a slave,' lamented Annie Gail, 'but not as hard as I do now', a phrase that is included in the published interviews.¹⁸ In the footnote to this, he explained that he obtained this information from an interview he conducted with Stetson Kennedy in December 1, 1986. This suggests that Kennedy conducted the interviews that were subsequently sent to Washington and published by Rawick.

Yet, a number of the interviews that are included in Rawick's volume were also reproduced in *The Florida Slave*, which was collated by Stetson Kennedy.¹⁹ Strangely, here the interviews are ascribed to Cora Mae Taylor, a white Florida field worker, who apparently interviewed these individuals on February 8, 1936 at a meeting of the Miami Ex-Slave Club or at other locations in the same year.²⁰ Whether the interviews published in Rawick came from the testimony collected by Taylor in 1936 or Kennedy in 1939 is unclear. Yet, it is evident that whoever interviewed and wrote up these narratives, Kennedy was highly involved in the latter stages, as he wrote an article in

¹⁵ G. Rawick, *TAS v17*, p. 374.

¹⁶ G. Mormino, Conference Paper, In the Nick of Time Conference, Florida Folklife Collection, State Archives of Florida, 5 1576, Box 25, CB9.

¹⁷ G. Mormino, 'Florida Slave Narratives', p.400.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ S. Kennedy and J. Kennedy (eds.) *The Florida Slave: Interviews with Ex-Slaves WPA Writers Project, 1930s and Testimony of Ex-Slaves Joint Congressional Committee Jacksonville, 1871* (Cocoa, Florida: Florida Historical Press, 2011).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.255-259.

the 1939 volume of *Opportunity* about the Club.²¹ Indeed, it is highly likely that the final narratives that appear in the Rawick collection were an amalgamation of the two interview situations, with both actors involved. Throughout this chapter, therefore, I will consider both Kennedy and Taylor as being involved in creating these WPA interviews.

In his article, Kennedy provided more detail about the Club. He wrote that the Ex-Slave Association of Greater Miami, Florida, was initially created in 1932. By 1936 they had 25 formerly enslaved members who were between the ages of 88 and 97. Discussing the interview encounter, Kennedy explained that ‘although many of the association members were but small children during the last days of chattel slavery, some were old enough to have vivid recollections of plantation life and Emancipation Day.’²² He also explained that ‘most of the other members of the association are a little vague in their recollections of slave days.’²³ Importantly, he also gave further information about the purpose of the Club; ‘one of the primary objects of the Ex-Slave Association is to secure pensions for its members, as most of them are destitute.’²⁴

To explain the Club’s desire to gain pensions, it is important to acknowledge that black Americans in the South were hit hard by the Great Depression and as Roger Biles has argued ‘victimized by an omnipotent racial caste system and saddled with the lowest paying jobs, blacks suffered disproportionately from the ravages of the economy’s collapse.’²⁵ In 1932, more than 25% of people in the United States were unemployed, but this rose to 50% in black communities, and even higher in urban areas.²⁶ Explaining the situation in the inner cities, Biles noted that 80% of the black Americans who lived in the rural South were sharecroppers or farmers. Due to inadequate relief and the collapsing prices of farms, a huge number of black Americans migrated to the cities.²⁷ As not one of the Ex-Slave Club members had been enslaved in Florida, it seems that they all had migrated to Miami, sometime between emancipation and the 1930s.

²¹ S. Kennedy, ‘Ex-Slaves of Miami Organize’, *Opportunity*, XVII.1 (1939), pp. 271 and 287.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 271.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

²⁵ R. Biles, *The South and the New Deal, Paperback Edition* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2006), p.103.

²⁶ C. L. Greenberg, *To Ask for an Equal Chance: African Americans in the Great Depression* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), p.44-45.

²⁷ R. Biles, *The South and the New Deal*, p.104.

Compounding the poverty that black Americans experienced in urban areas, Biles argued that ‘the federal government supplied a modicum of relief, but always under the watchful eye of local authorities.’²⁸ This lack of adequate support likely hit elderly black Americans hardest – those who could not work, and did not have pensions. This was the position that the Ex-Slave Club Members were in when they took part in the interviews.

Taylor provided further information about the Ex-Slave Club in 1936 and a copy of this can be found in Kennedy’s book. Most of the information provided in Taylor’s writing is similar to the paragraph found in Rawick (with slightly different wording) apart from the following additional information: ‘The ex-slave club of Miami, Florida was organised at a meeting called by Rev J.W. Drake, pastor of St John’s Baptist church, and Major Alfred Christopher Goggins, in the year 1932.’²⁹ Taylor also wrote that ‘the charter membership of eighteen members grew to twenty-five [in 1936] under the presidency of Major Goggins.’³⁰ The interviews themselves also provide us with some information about the African Americans who gave their testimony. Of the nine interviewees, not one was enslaved in Florida. The nine interviewees were held in bondage across the South including Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Alabama and Mississippi. It is significant, furthermore, that most of the Club members who gave their testimony were young when emancipation was declared, making the average age of this sample younger than that of the NWU interviewees. Lastly, only one interviewee was male.

Recollections of Enslavers by the Formerly Enslaved

On 22 April 1937 John Lomax, FWP Folklore Director, sent a letter to the various State Directors of the project with a list of 20 questions that the interviewers should ask each interviewee. One of the questions was ‘tell about your master, mistress, their children, the house they lived in, the overseer or drivers, poor white neighbors.’³¹ Despite

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.103.

²⁹ S. Kennedy, *The Florida Slave*, p.289.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ ‘Supplementary Instructions #9-E To the American Guide Manuel’ in *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves*, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC. Administrative Files, available at <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn001/>> [accessed 30.04.18].

sending out this list of questions, in the same set of instructions, John Lomax also wrote that ‘it will not be necessary, indeed, it will probably be a mistake, to ask every person all of the questions.’³² As the questions that each interviewer asked at their interviews were, for the most part, not included in the published interviews, it is difficult to deduce whether each FWP worker strayed from this list. In this case, however, it seems that both the NWU and Ex-Slave Club interviewers chose to ask about the informants’ enslavers. Alongside simply describing their master and mistress, the formerly enslaved people, in both sets of testimony, also regularly discussed their opinions and feelings towards them.

The individuals interviewed by the NWU recounted a range of emotions about those who held them in bondage, including a love for their owners. Describing his feelings towards his enslaver John Dukes, Young Winston Davis, who was enslaved on a large plantation in Alabama, stated that ‘consideration for his slaves, made them love him.’³³ Similarly, enslaved to work for the mistress of a plantation in Dive City, South Carolina, Anna Scott’s interviewer described her feelings towards her owner when she was a young girl; ‘a kindred love grew between the slave girl and her mistress.’³⁴ Louis Napoleon, a slave born in Florida, allegedly felt proud of his enslaver, as his interviewer wrote that ‘he proudly tells you that his master was good to his ‘niggers’ and cannot recall but one time that he saw him whip one of them and that when one tried to run away to the Yankees.’³⁵

In complete contrast to these feelings of pride and love, those who had been held in bondage across the South described being fearful of their enslavers for a number of reasons. ‘Prophet’ Kemp, an eighty-year-old formerly enslaved man, described both the fear and misery that his master, John Gay, engendered in his slaves in Oktibbeha, Mississippi. In the write-up of his interview with Rebecca Baker, she wrote that ‘according to Kemp - Gay was one of the meanest plantation owners in the entire section, and frequently voiced his pride in being able to employ the cruellest overseers that could be found in all Mississippi.’³⁶ After discussing a ‘blood-curdling tale’ of

³² *Ibid.*

³³ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.86.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.279.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.184-185.

punishment, Kemp is also recounted as saying that ‘so great was the fear in which Gay was held’ that ‘life on the plantation held nothing but misery for the slaves of John Gay.’³⁷ The fear that Kemp felt was evidently intimately linked to the violence that he experienced at the hands of his enslaver, and this violence was at the very core of most of the testimony that the elderly black Americans gave. There are, according to Edward Baptist, ‘thousands of stanzas of an epic of forced separations, violence, and new kinds of labour.’³⁸ This violence, and the emotions that the formerly enslaved detailed during their interviews in response to it, will be explored in the next section.

Kemp’s interview also hints at another core mechanism of the institution, the sexual violence against enslaved women, and details the emotions that stemmed from this abuse. Discussing how historians write about the sexual violence inflicted against enslaved women, Stephanie Jones-Rogers has explained that they ‘recognize a spectrum of actions’, which include ‘non-consensual sex with and fondling of female slaves by male masters, overseers or community members’, forced breeding, and ‘the eroticized acts of stripping and then whipping enslaved women’s naked, bleeding, writhing bodies.’³⁹ She also expanded this understanding of sexual violence to include ‘white women’s complicity in and acceptance of white men’s sexual violation of their bodies.’⁴⁰ Within Kemp’s testimony, he describes Gay as his ‘father’ highlighting that his mother was, more than likely, sexually abused by this enslaver. Kemp was not alone in relaying this to his interviewer; historian Andrea Livesey has demonstrated that around 10% of those who gave their testimony to the Louisiana FWP mentioned that a white man was their father or grandfather.⁴¹ What is particularly significant in Kemp’s interview is that he held back from fully detailing the fear that his enslaver caused due to Gay being his father. Baker observed that ‘“Prophet” Kemp will tell you that he hates to tell these things to any investigator, because he hates for people to know just how

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.186.

³⁸ E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), p. xxii.

³⁹ S. Jones Rogers, ‘Rethinking Sexual Violence and the Marketplace of Slavery: White Women, the Slave Market, and Enslaved People’s Sexualized Bodies in the Nineteenth- Century South’, in D. Ramey Berry and L. Harris (eds.) *Sexuality and Slavery* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018), p.111.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.112.

⁴¹ A. Livesey, ‘Conceived in Violence: Enslaved Mothers and Children Born of Rape in Nineteenth-Century Louisiana’, *Slavery and Abolition*, 38.2 (2017), p.374.

mean his ‘fahter’ really was.’⁴² The fact that Kemp did not want the interviewer to know that his father was a white man, or indeed that his mother was sexually abused by him, reveals not only his fear of Gay, but also the shame that he felt about these experiences and memories.

Other interviewees detailed different reasons for the fear they felt towards their enslavers. Having been held in Florida by Judge Wilkerson, eighty-two-year-old Charlotte Martin described to her interviewer that ‘Wilkerson was very cruel and held them in constant fear of him.’⁴³ Similarly, Sam Everett who was enslaved on the plantation of ‘Big Jim’ McClain in Virginia and interviewed alongside his wife Louisa, explained that his family ‘lived in constant fear that their master would confiscate most of their vegetables; he so often did.’⁴⁴ This is because his parents were ‘field hands who spent long back-breaking hours in the cotton fields and came home at nightfall to cultivate their small garden.’⁴⁵ Significantly, both Sam and Louisa Everett also described horrific whippings, rape and forced breeding, but it was in relation to their home-cultivated vegetables that they described this fear. To explain this, Everett’s testimony must be considered in relation to ideas of space and agency on the plantation. Discussing enslaved women’s resistance, Stephanie Camp observed that the enslaved created their own “‘rival geography” – alternative ways of knowing and using plantation and southern space’ and that this was able to ‘provide space for private and public creative expression, rest and recreation, alternative communication, and importantly, resistance to planters’ domination of slaves’ every move.’⁴⁶ Significantly, she argued that ‘space mattered: places, boundaries, and movement were central to how slavery was organized and to how it was resisted.’⁴⁷ Evidently space mattered to Sam and Louisa Everett and their families. The fact that their garden was the place in which they carved out some level of independence after their adherence to a strict work regime could therefore account for this mention of fear in their testimony. Furthermore, despite the varying reasons given for this emotion towards their enslaver, each reason is based

⁴² G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, pp.185-186.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.166.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.126.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ S. Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p.7.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.6

upon a fear of the power that the master held to physically and mentally abuse and dehumanise these individuals.

Those interviewed by the NWU also expressed anger in their interviews, which can be seen most explicitly in Margrett Nickerson's testimony. Before explaining that her master was always threatening to sell her, and describing witnessing the punishment of her uncle George Bull, she stated that she had 'got all de malice out o' my heart'.⁴⁸ This anger that she evidently felt whilst in bondage (and that had reduced by the 1930s) must be considered in relation to her enslaver and the punishment that he enforced, but also the threats of sale that she received; she stated that 'he wuz allus tellin' me he wuz gonna sell me but he never did – he sold my pa's fust wife though.'⁴⁹

In his study on the domestic slave trade Michael Tadman has evidenced the sheer extent of human sales that took place in the antebellum period; in each decade between 1820 and 1860 around 200,000 enslaved people were sold from one region and one plantation to another.⁵⁰ Within this general trend, however, those in specific states were more likely to have experienced separation. Nickerson was enslaved in Leon County, a county situated in Middle Florida that was only acquired by the U.S. in 1821. With the expansion of the plantation system to Middle Florida in the antebellum era, by 1860, this section of Florida had 75,000 residents, with over half being enslaved black Americans.⁵¹ As Baptist has argued, many slaves formed part of this migration, suggesting that 'enslaved African Americans had little choice in their forced removal to the plantation frontier, which exposed them to repeated disruptions and dangers.'⁵² While Nickerson was not sold herself, the fact that migration and separation was central to the formation of the county in which she was held suggests that older members of her plantation would have experienced being forcibly moved. Indeed, this was the case, as in her interview she described that 'my mother and uncle Robert and Joe wuz stol' from Virginia and fetched here.'⁵³ In knowing this information, Baptist has concluded

⁴⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.252.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.253.

⁵⁰ M. Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves: Masters, Traders, and Slaves in the Old South* (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p.5.

⁵¹ E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South: Middle Florida's Plantation Frontier Before the Civil War* (Chapel Hill; The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p.2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.9.

⁵³ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.251.

that ‘before Emancipation, African American parents described their separated families and distant places of birth to their children.’⁵⁴ It is thus likely that Nickerson was all too aware of the threat of sale, as her mother and Uncle told her about their experience in Virginia.

Furthermore, Tadman has described the many emotional responses that both the threat and reality of sale could lead to; ‘the fear of being torn from the closest of kin, the agonies of separation, and the long run reaction to that experience never ceased to echo and re echo through the slave states.’⁵⁵ While Nickerson presented in her testimony an anger towards the continual threats of sale that she received from her enslaver, Heather Williams has also discovered a much larger range of emotions that stemmed from familial separations, including grief, anger, pain, loneliness and hope.⁵⁶ It is possible that Nickerson had felt some of these other emotions - grief, confusion and pain - in relation to the continual threat of sale, but these had lessened during the 70 intervening years, as she explained in her interview that her anger had diminished over time.

Alongside the evident change in Nickerson’s feelings over time, other interviewees included multilayered, complex and often contradictory emotions in their discussions of their memories of their owners. A number of the black Americans who gave their testimony apparently labelled their owners - in simplistic and generalised fashion - as ‘kind’ or ‘good’, but then described episodes of punishment, fear and misery. According to Escott, this can be seen across the whole set of WPA interviews; ‘in most Federal Writers’ Project narratives, even those who were harshly critical of their former masters often found something complimentary to say about them first.’⁵⁷ For example, Rachel Austin interviewed Clayborn Gantling, who was born in 1848 on a plantation in Georgia, about his experiences. Describing Gantling’s memories of his enslaver, Austin wrote that ‘Judge Williams owned 102 heads of slaves and was known to be ‘tolable nice to ‘em in some way and pretty rough on ‘em in other ways’ says Mr Gantling.’⁵⁸ He then described enslaved men and women being sold, and instances of

⁵⁴ E. Baptist, *Creating an Old South*, p.84.

⁵⁵ M. Tadman, *Speculators and Slaves*, p.163.

⁵⁶ H. Williams, *Help me to Find my People*, p.1.

⁵⁷ P. Escott, *Slavery Remembered: A Record of Twentieth-Century Slave Narratives* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1979), p.9.

⁵⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.139.

horrific punishment. Ambrose Douglass, who had been born free in Detroit but was re-enslaved in North Carolina, provided a more explicit and emotionally complex statement. When he recounted being sold from North Carolina to an enslaver named Harris in Suwannee, Florida, who was known for beating and starving his slaves, he stated that ‘I never had a better master. He never beat me, and always fed all of us.’⁵⁹ In contrast to this, however, he is also documented to have said that ‘he was so good, and I was so scared of him, till I didn’t ever run away from his place.’⁶⁰ The various reasons for these contradictory feelings will be discussed in Chapter Three.

The range of complex emotions expressed in relation to white enslavers in the NWU interviews is not echoed in the Ex-Slave Club interviews. Emotion is rarely mentioned, and when feelings were presented, only love and pride were expressed. For example David Lee, who was enslaved near Cusper in Georgia on the ‘Barefield’s fahm’ stated that he ‘is proud of his ‘missus’ and the training he received on the plantation’ and that ‘ah loved mah Missus just as good as ah did my own mothah.’⁶¹ Another member of the Club, Priscilla Mitchell, remembered that ‘I wuz my Massy’s pet. No, no he wouldn’t beat me. Whenever ah’s bad or did little things that my mother didn’t want me to do and she’d go to whip me, all I needed to do was to run to my Massy and he’d take me up and not let my mother git me.’⁶² At the end of this description of her enslaver, the interviewer wrote that ‘this is a sample of the attitude that very many have toward their masters’, suggesting that perhaps other Ex-Slave Club members during these interviews also expressed emotions of love or pride towards their enslavers.⁶³

Exploring the metaphors within this sentence is important, as it perhaps indicates more hidden emotion. In this, Mitchell describes herself as her ‘Massy’s pet’, linking her own treatment to that of a domestic animal. Many former slaves discussed their inhumane treatment using animal imagery in their testimony and Mia Bay has argued that ‘exslaves remembered being fed like pigs, bred like hogs, sold like horses, driven like cattle, worked like dogs, and beaten like mules.’⁶⁴ She further wrote that ‘the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 378- 379.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.376

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ M. Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.119.

prevalence and variety of references to domestic animals in slave testimony suggests that exslaves found animal husbandry to be the single most useful metaphor for understanding the intricacies of the slave-master relationship.⁶⁵ In contrast to those who described inhumane treatment by their enslavers and the feelings that this led to using animal imagery, Mitchell suggests that her master treated her with a level of affection through the use of the term ‘pet’, not allowing her to be beaten or punished.

Despite the affection that this phrase indicates, in using this imagery, it must be acknowledged that Mitchell is also suggesting that she was treated in a dehumanised manner. Bay has explained that although the formerly enslaved did not always criticise the institution in their WPA interviews, ‘many more exslaves simply recalled that they were treated like animals, without expressly condemning the institution of slavery.’⁶⁶ This phrase therefore gives an indication that there are more layers to her feelings towards her owner than are immediately suggested in her positive recollections of her enslaver. Yet, the interview does not give any indication of why she used this term, or the emotional consequences of this dehumanised treatment. Furthermore, Mitchell’s use of the term ‘pet’ is the only indication in all nine Ex-Slave Club interviews that the men and women felt any emotions of anger, fear, misery or hatred towards their enslavers. In contrast to the emotional complexity that is displayed across the NWU interviews towards their enslavers, including love, pride, fear and anger, the absence of these feelings in the Miami interviews and more consistent display of love and pride leads to an impression of benevolent and kind enslavers. The reasons for these absences of emotion will also be explored in Chapter Three.

The Emotional Aftermath of Punishment and Forced Breeding

Punishment was another topic that was discussed, in emotional terms, by those interviewed by the NWU, and asked about on the questionnaire.⁶⁷ The interviewees, almost without exception, described to their interviewers the various types of punishments that occurred on their plantations, a theme that according to Gary

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.129.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.138.

⁶⁷ ‘Supplementary Instructions #9-E To the American Guide Manuel’ in *Slave Narratives*.

Mormino was rarely discussed in as much detail in interviews from other states.⁶⁸ Charles Coates was one of the oldest men interviewed by the NWU and claimed to be 108 at the time of the interview. He was born on a plantation in Richmond, Virginia, but was sold a number of years before the Civil War to a plantation in Washington County, Georgia, owned by W. B. Hall. Coates is documented as providing the following harrowing description about the punishment inflicted on the enslaved on his plantation:

On the Hall plantation there was a contraption, similar to gallows, where the slaves were suspended and whipped. At the top of this device were blocks of wood with chains run through holes and high enough that a slave when tied to the chains by his fingers would barely touch the ground with his toes. This was done so that the slave could not shout or twist his body while being whipped. The whipping was prolonged until the body of the slave was covered with whelps [sic] and blood trickled down his naked body.⁶⁹

The vast majority of the other interviewees also described punishments and whippings in similar detail, or at least recounted being beaten or seeing punishments being inflicted upon others.⁷⁰

At the same time as describing the violence they endured, the interviewees also recounted important differences in how they felt about these punishments in the short and long-term, including the immediate emotional, bodily reactions. For example, Coates remembered the loud screams of his fellow slaves; ‘the neighboring slaves screamed so loudly while being whipped.’⁷¹ Similarly, William Sherman remembered hearing the moans and groans of agony of those on other plantations, while Henry Maxwell who was ‘just a tot when the Civil War gave him and his people freedom’ could still recount the cries of a mother who lost her son to a severe whipping.⁷² The responses of groans and screams to this violence, which of course are immediate responses to pain, must also be seen as affective, often unconscious reactions to the feeling of fear. Joanna Bourke has urged historians to acknowledge the bodily nature

⁶⁸ G. Mormino, ‘Florida Slave Narratives’, p.409.

⁶⁹ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, pp.66-67.

⁷⁰ For other vivid descriptions of violence see G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p219; pp.127-128.; pp.168-169.

⁷¹ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.68

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.291; p.219

of fear as an emotion, noting that we must not ignore ‘fear’s body’ as ‘although there are no *consistent* visceral responses to fear, we all remember the ‘feeling’ of being afraid.’⁷³ These visceral responses can often be seen by others or communicated to them, because as Bourke notes ‘the emotional body rapidly gives forth a multitude of signs: the heart pounds faster or seems to freeze, breathing quickens or stops, blood pressure soars or falls.’⁷⁴ These screams, groans and cries must be understood as communicated bodily responses to the pain and fear of punishment.

The fear and misery that the formerly enslaved interviewees felt in relation to this violence was also more explicitly recounted throughout the interviews. For example, Coates, the man who recounted an extremely vivid description of punishment, stated that; ‘the treatment given by the overseer was very terrifying’ while Arnold Gragston, who also spent much of his young adult life in bondage in Kentucky, explained that ‘nobody in the world ever got a chance to know as much misery as a slave that had escaped and been caught.’⁷⁵ Others described how they reacted to and coped with this threat of physical violence and the subsequent fear they felt. In contrast to Young Winston Davis’ description of his love for his enslavers, he also explained that punishments could have a profound but individualised mental impact, stating that ‘many slaves ran away; others were forced by their treatment to do all kinds of mean things.’⁷⁶ Recounting another coping mechanism, Douglas Dorsey remembered the immediate anger that he felt on watching his enslaver beat his mother, explaining that after witnessing this event, he decided to kill his mistress.⁷⁷ Shack Thomas, who was enslaved into his thirties in Florida coped with these punishments in a different way; ‘the most he would give us was a ‘switching’, and most of the time we could pray out of that.’⁷⁸

Alongside the short-term reactions to punishment, the interviews indicate that this violence could have a longer-term emotional impact, still influencing the interviewees at least seventy years after slavery had ended. Numerous formerly enslaved informants

⁷³ J. Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (London: Virago Press, 2005), p.7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ G. Rawick, *TAS* v.17, p.67; p.151.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.89.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.95.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.336.

described that they remembered punishments vividly and recounted them in explicit detail, suggesting these events had a lasting emotional impact on them. Interviewer Alfred Farrell wrote that Taylor Gilbert, who was held in Georgia by an enslaver named David Ferguson, ‘recalls vividly the cruel lashings and other punishments meted out to slaves’ while Viola Muse wrote that ‘Charles Coates remembers vividly the cruelties practiced on the Hall plantation.’⁷⁹ Indeed, Douglas Dorsey, who reacted angrily when he saw violence enacted on his mother, could not ignore his memory of this violence; ‘Dorsey recalls an incident that is hard to obliterate from his mind.’⁸⁰

Questioning the meaning of similar vivid descriptions, oral historian Lindsey Dodd has suggested that a careful analysis of the language used in an interview, correlated with an understanding of the symptoms that are linked by the US psychiatric diagnostic category to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), can uncover ‘trauma signals’ in testimony. For example, in her work that explores childhood trauma in French narratives of World War II bombing, she argued that phrases that suggest interviewees relived their experience years after the event correspond to the symptom of ‘intrusion.’⁸¹ Furthermore, she also focused on interviewees who ‘were able to give the vivid, sensory descriptions which Jane Robinett associated with traumatic events: as though time stands still, and all details are recorded in a flash.’⁸² The black Americans who the NWU interviewed undoubtedly gave similar vivid descriptions of the violence that they experienced, which like Dodd argued, are indicative of the traumatic and long-term emotional consequences that resulted from such violence.

Specifically analysing the trauma that stemmed from child abuse, sexual abuse and violence wrought on the enslaved in the U.S., Nell Painter utilised the concept of ‘soul murder’ that psychologists have used to describe the anger, depression and low self-esteem that stemmed from this violence. Although Painter was careful not to transplant twentieth century psychological concepts onto this historical period, she explained that this term is useful to explore slavery’s emotional and psychological costs, as ‘in slave

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.223; p.66.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.94.

⁸¹ L. Dodd, “‘It did not Traumatise me at all’: Childhood ‘Trauma’ in French Oral Narratives of Wartime Bombing” *Oral History*, 41:2 (2013), p.42.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p.41.

societies, neglect was routine, abuse was rampant and anger was to be suppressed.⁸³ Describing the immense psychological effects, she argued that ‘there is evidence that the child abuse of slavery imposed enormous costs’ and that ‘ex-slave narratives also bear witness to much psychological hurt. What today’s psychologists call anger, depression, and problems of self-esteem come through ex-slave narratives.’⁸⁴ Although psychological concepts of PTSD and depression are hard to discern from the piecemeal testimony, from analysing the NWU testimony in relation to the physical violence that many of these formerly enslaved men and women experienced in their childhoods, short-term anger and fear is evident, whilst their vivid descriptions suggest that the emotional consequences of violence were profound and continued way into the 1930s.

Forced breeding and sexual abuse were also discussed in this set of interviews, a form of violence that was spoken about less frequently by WPA informants than physical abuse. Escott has rightly argued that both forced breeding and rape had profound emotional consequences, writing that ‘there were abuses worse than whipping – abuses which caused much greater mental anguish because they disrupted the private lives of bondsmen.’⁸⁵ Sam and Louisa Everett, who met as children enslaved on the McClain plantation near Norfolk, Virginia, suggested that this was the case. Their interview described in explicit terms the sexual abuse that they endured:

If their master thought that a certain man and woman might have strong, healthy offspring, he forced them to have sexual relation [sic], even though they were married to other slaves. If there seemed to be any slight reluctance on the part of either of the unfortunate ones ‘Big Jim’ would make them consummate this relationship in his presence ... He enjoyed these orgies very much and often entertained his friends in this manner; quite often he and his guests would engage in these debaucheries, choosing for themselves the prettiest of the young women. Sometimes they forced the unhappy husbands and lovers of their victims to look on.⁸⁶

Furthermore, Louisa Everett also explained that she was forced to have sexual relations with her future husband, Sam, while their enslaver watched, holding a bull-whip. Such sexual abuse was not uncommon in the US South; Emily West has drawn on numerous

⁸³ N. Painter, *Southern History Across the Color Line*, p.24.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.25; p.29.

⁸⁵ P. Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, pp.43-44.

⁸⁶ G. Rawick, *TAS* v.17, p.127.

WPA interviews to demonstrate that enslavers often forced enslaved women into marriages chosen by them, and that many of these women endured years of rape within these forced relationships.⁸⁷ For example, West described how formerly enslaved woman Rose Williams was sent by her enslaver to live with a man, named Rufus, at age 16 and was sexually assaulted by him.⁸⁸

The intense emotional pain that this sexual abuse caused is undoubtedly presented in Everett's description, as she explained that she 'tried to hide my face so I couldn't see Sam's nakedness, but he made me look at him anyhow' and that 'I never had another man forced on me, thank God.'⁸⁹ After analysing a more extensive range of WPA interviews, Gregory Smithers identified this emotional pain caused by forced breeding throughout the testimony. He argued that 'when formerly enslaved women spoke about violence, sexual exploitation and "breeding," they generally focused on the physical and emotional pain that they or their ancestors were forced to endure during slavery' and that 'the sense of grief and sadness that accompanied memories of slave breeding was manifold.'⁹⁰

Although the traumatic nature of this sexual abuse is evident in Louisa Everett's testimony, both the complex nature of the coping mechanism that she used, and incredible emotional resilience that she displayed, in response to this abuse is detailed when she stated that 'Sam was kind to me and I learnt to love him.'⁹¹ For the enslaved across the South, family networks were a vital mechanism for resisting the dehumanising nature of the institution, and it seems that Louisa Everett found a way to create this familial stability out of the horrific instances of sexual abuse that she endured. West has argued that this resignation to developing feelings of love is 'incredibly important', and is demonstration of the pragmatism of enslaved women. Not only Everett, but other enslaved women developed feelings of love for the men who they were forced into relationships with, showing 'nuance, understanding, and

⁸⁷ E. West, 'Reflections on the *History and Historians* of the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves: Enslaved Women and Intimate Partner Sexual Violence', *American Nineteenth Century History*, 19:1 (2018), p.9.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.10-12.

⁸⁹ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.128.

⁹⁰ G. Smithers, *Slave Breeding: Sex, Violence, and Memory in African American History* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), pp. 108- 109

⁹¹ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.128.

pragmatism' when accepting and surviving their situation of 'dual sexual exploitation'.

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It was not only the direct victims of sexual abuse that described the emotional impact of it in their interviews. As Livesey has noted, 'rape under slavery was never an act of violence between two people, but impacted all enslaved people in terms of perceived threats to themselves and to loved ones.'⁹³ Eighty-seven-year-old Samuel Simeon Andrews suggested that the sexual abuse of his mother had a long-term emotional impact on him. His interviewer wrote about the emotional expression on his face when he discussed this abuse; 'with a face full of frowns, 'Parson' tells of a white man persuading his mother to let him tie her to show that he was master.'⁹⁴ Similar memories of seeing female relatives sexually assaulted can be seen in longer nineteenth century narratives. Frederick Douglass, for example, vividly recounted witnessing his Aunt Hester punished in a particularly sexual manner. He relayed the profound impact it had on him when writing that:

I remember the first time I ever witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force.⁹⁵

Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman has discussed the sexual abuse that Douglass implied within this scene, arguing that this susceptibility to sexual abuse shaped the subjectivity of the enslaved people who experienced it.⁹⁶ Andrews' long-lasting memory of seeing his mother abused undoubtedly highlights how this abuse could profoundly shape the lives of enslaved people, and have emotional consequences even 70 years after it occurred.

Young Winston Davis, who worked as a preacher and pastor once emancipated, described a different reaction to seeing sexual abuse inflicted on women on his plantation. After explaining that 'some negro women were forced into association,

⁹² E. West, 'Reflections on the *History and Historians* of the Black Woman's Role in the Community of Slaves,' pp.10-11.

⁹³ A. Livesey, 'Conceived in Violence', p. 382.

⁹⁴ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.13.

⁹⁵ F. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, p.6.

⁹⁶ A. Abdur-Rahman, "'This Horrible Exhibition": Sexuality in Slave Narratives', in J. Ernest (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of The African American Slave Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p.237.

some were beaten almost to death because they refused' he described the male response to this. He is documented to have stated that 'the Negro men dare not bother or even speak to some of their women.'⁹⁷ In another case, he remembered a man crying because his owner threatened his 'sweetheart'.⁹⁸ Analysing similar emotional responses of enslaved men to the sexual abuse and forced breeding that women endured, Smithers has argued that there appeared to be 'an underlying tone of masculine regret mixed with tales of sexual boasting, the focus eventually falling on the emotional pain caused by being unable to adequately protect 'our' women from sexual exploitation.'⁹⁹ An undercurrent of this tone of masculinity, regret and pain in both the short and long-term can also be seen in Davis' and Andrews' recollection of abuse.

Moving to explore the Ex-Slave Club members' interviews, a very different picture of punishment and sexual violence is painted. An analysis of their interviews highlights that three out of nine of these Club interviewees are recorded as mentioning physical punishments in their interviews. This is a much smaller percentage than the almost three-quarters of NWU interviewees who spoke about these experiences. What is more significant, however, is that all three Ex-Slave Club members who discussed violence suggested that it was not inflicted upon them, in contrast to only two NWU interviewees explicitly stating that they were not punished. For example, eighty-four-year-old Margaret White recounted that 'they liked me and wouldn't let me be sold. He never whipped me, for I was a slave, you know, and I had to do just as I was told', Priscilla Mitchell explained that she was not beaten, and David Lee described only being hit with a thimble.¹⁰⁰ These explicit statements about not being punished are also an exception to the trend in the wider set of WPA interviews, as Escott has estimated that across the testimony, 688 narratives included discussion of punishment. Of this, only 34 suggested that they were never abused.¹⁰¹ Thus, in contrast to the multifaceted, varied and long-term emotions that the NWU interviewees described in relation to violent events, despite only being a sample of nine interviews, it is significant that not

⁹⁷ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.90.

⁹⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.90.

⁹⁹ G. Smithers, *Slave Breeding*, p.108.

¹⁰⁰ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p. 376; p.376; p.379.

¹⁰¹ P. Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, p.42.

one of the Ex-Slave Club members recounted being punished or sexually abused, or the fear and misery that resulted from it.¹⁰²

Short and Long-Term Feelings Towards Emancipation

The WPA interview project was mainly designed to encourage those giving their testimony to discuss their memories of being in bondage. Three questions, however, asked them to recount their experiences of the Civil War. Question 15 stated ‘what do you remember about the war that brought your freedom? What happened on the day news came that you were free? What did your master say and do? When the Yankees came what did they do and say?’ Question 16 focused on the year after emancipation: ‘tell what work you did and how you lived the first year after the war and what you saw or heard about the KuKlux Klan and the Nightriders. Any school then for Negroes? And land?’ Lastly, the questionnaire told interviewers to ask about their overall opinions of slavery; ‘Now that slavery is ended what do you think of it?’¹⁰³ The interviews conducted by the NWU in Florida include large amounts of detail about the Civil War, the moment of emancipation, and the interviewees’ feelings during that turbulent time.

The Civil War brought uncertainty, according to the NWU interviewees, with some even remembering feeling fearful for their enslaver’s wellbeing.¹⁰⁴ Yet, within the NWU interviews, what stands out is that numerous individuals recounted how they felt immediately after hearing about emancipation. Even those who were fearful for their owner’s safety consistently remembered the feelings of joy, happiness and celebration when emancipation was announced. Harriett Gresham, who was in her mid-twenties when she was emancipated from bondage in Barnwell, South Carolina, described feeling worried about her mistress, and stated that ‘many slaves were mad with fear’ during the storming of Fort Sumpter.¹⁰⁵ She also, however, recounted the communal joy and relief that she and others felt when they were freed:

¹⁰² The reason for this pattern will be the focus of Chapter Three.

¹⁰³ ‘Supplementary Instructions #9-E To the American Guide Manuel’ in *Slave Narratives*.

¹⁰⁴ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p. 160; p.281; p.140.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.160-161.

One and all they remembered to thank God for their freedom. They immediately began to hold meetings, singing soul stirring spirituals. Harriet recalls one of these songs. It is as follows:

T'ank ye Master Jesus, t'ank ye,
T'ank ye Master Jesus, t'ank ye,
T'ank ye Master Jesus, t'ank ye,
Da Heben gwinter be my home.
No slave'ry chains to tie me down,
And no m' driver's ho'n to blow fer me
No mo' stocks to fasten me down
Jesus break slave'ry chain, Lord.¹⁰⁶

This description of the moment of emancipation not only highlights the joy that the enslaved felt on her plantation upon hearing about freedom, but also that this event was often infused with religious significance. During the antebellum era, Dusinger has noted that a number of enslaved people thought that their master's power was not absolute because God had greater authority over both themselves and white enslavers.¹⁰⁷ This song highlights that Gresham and her fellow slaves adhered to this theology, as she described that they believed Jesus had delivered them their freedom, leading to emotions of joy and relief, as well as feelings of gratitude towards God for this. Indeed, earlier in her interview, it states that 'the slaves held secret meetings and had praying grounds where they met a few at a time to pray for better things.'¹⁰⁸ It is evident that Gresham had prayed for 'better things' or freedom, and it is within this context that her feeling of thankfulness towards God should be understood. Other NWU interviews also explain the reasoning behind the joy and relief felt by the enslaved when emancipation occurred, mentioning prayer and religion. Patience Campbell explained that emancipation was 'the thing they desired most', while both Squires Jackson and Claude Augusta Wilson remembered praying for emancipation whilst they were enslaved.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ W. Dusinger, *Strategies for Survival*, p.127. For more on the spread of European Christianity and the moulding of this religion to the black world-view see A. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978) reprinted (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) and S. Fett, *Working Cures: Healing, Health and Power on Southern Plantations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.159.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 60; p. 178; p.360.

The description of the members of Gresham's plantation singing 'soul stirring spirituals' also highlights that their joy was expressed through the medium of song. Slave spirituals were sung at times of both joy and sorrow to express and communicate these feelings. The lyrics often described pain, fear, sorrow, hope and, in this case, a level of joy and relief that they were no longer enslaved. The lyrics of the song also indicate the aspects of slavery that the formerly enslaved were most relieved to have ended – the harsh work regimes and punishments. There are a number of similar examples of songs and/or spirituals that were sung by those in bondage, that highlighted their joy, gratitude, and relief at emancipation, as well as the sorrow that enslavement wrought. For example, the lyrics of 'Slavery Chain Done Broke at Last', recorded by the Hampton Institute, explicitly presented a multitude of emotions towards slavery and emancipation:

Slavery chain done broke at las', Goin' to praise God 'til I die.
Way up in a dat valley, pray-in on my knees/ tellin' God a-bout my
troubles, an' to he'p me e-fa He please
I did tell Him how I suffer – In de dungeon an' de chains/ an' de days I
went wif head bowed down, an' my broken flesh an' pain.¹¹⁰

Many other interviewees described similar emotions of joy, relief and happiness towards emancipation in their interviews. Samuel Simeon Andrews stated that 'emancipation came and with it great rejoicing', Ambrose Douglass recounted that 'I guess we musta celebrated 'Mancipation about twelve times in Hornett County' while William Sherman, who was in his mid-twenties when he was emancipated explained that 'everybody celebrated (except the Southerners), the slaves were free.'¹¹¹ Kemp, who was much younger than Sherman - being around 10 when he was freed from bondage in Mississippi - focused on the relief he felt, stating that 'relief for the hundreds of slaves of Gay came at last with the declaration of freedom for them.'¹¹²

It is highly significant that the emotions documented in relation to emancipation were virtually consistent throughout the NWU interviews. Yet, a significance also lies in the fact that so many of the formerly enslaved informants even chose to recount the

¹¹⁰ R. Dett (ed.) *Religious Folk Songs of the Negro as Sung at Hampton Institute* (Hampton: Hampton Institute Press, 1927), p.112.

¹¹¹ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p, 16.; p. 103; p.296

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 187.

emotions that they felt in the immediate aftermath of hearing the news about emancipation. Escott has suggested that this focus on the ‘the Civil War [and] their desire to be free’ was less common in other sets of interviews.¹¹³ Indeed, discussion of the moment of emancipation was completely absent in the Ex-Slave Club interviews, as was the joy that this moment brought. Instead, they used any mention of emancipation to present enslavement as better than freedom. Margaret White’s discussion was typical of the Ex-Slave Club interviews, stating that ‘I am now 84 years old, for I was 13 when the Emancipation Proclamation was made. It didn’t make much difference to me. I had a good home and was treated very nicely.’¹¹⁴ Hattie Thomas, who was enslaved until age six by Bob Morris in Georgia, presented the same sentiment in her interview; ‘we stayed on after de ‘mancipation an’ ah wants t’ tell y’ah worked hard in dose days. Of course, ah worked hardest after Peace was declared.’¹¹⁵ Annie Trip even explicitly told the interviewer how she wanted to be back in slavery: ‘wish I wuz dare right now. I had plenty of food then. I didn’t need to bother about money.’¹¹⁶ Millie Simpson and David Lee echoed this sentiment, suggesting that they lived well in slavery, with plenty to eat, clothes to wear, and time to play. Indeed, Lee stated that ‘ah had hit good.’¹¹⁷

Conclusions: Contrasting Patterns of Emotional Content

This introductory chapter to the Florida WPA case-study has attempted to provide a thorough and extensive analysis of the emotional content of two sets of interviews conducted in Florida, addressing a gap in the literature for an explicitly emotional analysis of this source. Utilising Rosenwein’s ‘history of emotions’ methodological approach, which involves exploring words, phrases, figurative language and silences, this chapter has demonstrated that starkly different patterns of emotional content exist in the NWU and Ex-Slave Club interviews. The Ex-Slave Club constituted (at least for this set of interviews) what Rosenwein has termed an ‘emotional community’, or a group that valued the same emotional expressions. The emotions that the formerly

¹¹³ P. Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, p.10.

¹¹⁴ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p. 376.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.375; p.379.

enslaved Club members expressed were apparently one-dimensional, as some were recorded as describing fondness or nostalgia for slavery and others expressed pride or love for their enslavers who treated them well.

What is perhaps more significant, however, is that not one of the Ex-Slave Club members seems to have mentioned fear, misery or anger about their treatment or about their enslavers, instead, the majority did not mention violence and punishment, and when they did, they explicitly stated that it did not happen to them. Together, these interviews - and the emotion within them - present a narrative of slavery as a benevolent institution. This contrasts starkly with the multilayered and complex range of emotions recounted by the NWU interviewees, where feelings of love, pride, anger, hate, joy, fear, resentment and misery were recounted. Both the short-term bodily emotional responses and the complex long-term emotional impact of punishment and sexual assault were described, as were the variety of emotional coping mechanisms they used to endure these abuses. This set of interviews suggests that each individual experienced and emotionally reacted to the diverse experiences of enslavement in different ways. General similarities, however, relating to the fear and misery that punishment led to, as well as the joy felt when emancipated, have been uncovered.

Chapter Three: The Shaping, Framing and Manipulation of the Florida WPA Interviews

This chapter will explore why starkly different patterns of emotion exist in the NWU and Ex-Slave Club interviews produced at the Florida FWP by asking the following questions about the source production: Were the emotions expressed, repressed or performed for a specific purpose by the interviewees? Did interviewers or editors edit, change and manipulate the emotional content? and how did the appraiser of these documents receive the emotional content included in the interviews? Numerous scholars since the 1970s have discussed how WPA interviewers and editors moulded, manipulated and edited their interviews with the formerly enslaved, and have focused on the race and gender of the interviewer, the racial politics of the Jim Crow era and the age of the informant.¹ Building upon and furthering these analyses using theoretical concepts focused on race and emotion, this chapter moves beyond previous studies that have focused solely on racial and political contexts, to reveal that the individual beliefs and agendas of those creating the source also framed the interview encounter, such as members of the Florida FWP's nostalgia for the 'Old South' and a formerly enslaved woman's wish to be honest about her experience.² These personal agendas often interacted with political considerations, including the Ex-Slave Club's campaign for pensions and the editor's concerns about white readership, to ultimately frame the questions the interviewers' asked, the responses the interviewees' gave, how the interview was formed into prose, how FWP staff edited the interviews, and the way in which appraisers evaluated them. This array of personal and political agendas account for the stark differences in emotional content.

Divided into three sections, this chapter will analyse how the actors involved in the source creation shaped, framed or manipulated the emotional content at three stages of the source creation: the interview encounter; the write-up and editing phase; and the evaluation stage. In presenting this analysis of every stage of production, this case-study not only highlights the

¹ See the following publications for discussions of this source; G. Rawick, *TAS, Volume 1, From Sundown to Sunup*; J. Blassingame, 'Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves', pp. 473 – 492; N. Yetman, 'Ex-Slave Interviews and the Historiography of Slavery', pp.181-210; S. Musher, 'Contesting "The Way the Almighty Wants It"', pp. 1-31; S. Musher, 'The Other Slave Narratives'; C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*.

² For the concept of 'emotional framing' see K. Gross and L. D'Ambrosio, 'Framing Emotional Response', *Political Psychology*, 25.1(2004) pp. 1-29. For discussion of 'racialized labour' see L. Evans and W. L. Moore, 'Impossible Burdens: White Institutions, Emotional Labor, and Micro-Resistance', *Social Problems*, 62.3 (2015), pp.439-454. Lastly, see, J. Feagin, *Racist America* for the concept of the 'white racial frame'.

complex interplay of personal and political agendas that impacted upon the contents of these documents, but demonstrates the need to probe each interview carefully and systematically before using them to write histories of the lived experience of slavery. In fully analysing the emotional content of a selection of WPA interviews for the first time, this chapter will reveal the limits of the Ex-Slave Club interviews, and possibilities of the NWU testimony, for providing a window onto the formerly enslaved interviewees' feelings during, and after, enslavement. In doing so, however, it will demonstrate how important it is to consider the many power dynamics that framed these documents before utilising them as historical sources to discover more about the lived experience of slavery.

The Interview Encounter

The age of the interviewee, place of enslavement, type of slaveholding, and behaviour of their enslaver can begin to account for some of the range of emotions and experiences recounted by the NWU. Smaller children may have remembered less cruelty and severe work regimes, and it seems that many of those who recounted love and pride in relation to their enslaver were young when emancipation occurred.³ Furthermore, the interviewees who were involved in the NWU interview project were enslaved in states across the South, with only 19 out of the 44 informants having experienced enslavement in Florida. Even those enslaved within Florida could have had different memories of enslavement; those on larger plantations in Middle Florida (such as five of the NWU interviewees who were enslaved in Leon County) are likely to have had different experiences to those enslaved in East Florida on smaller slave-holdings.⁴ Even if two individuals did have similar experiences or were enslaved on similar types of plantations, they may well have reacted to this in emotionally different ways, explaining the complexity and range of emotion recounted by the NWU informants. For example, Louis Napoleon and Margrett Nickerson were both held in bondage in Leon County, on plantations with 90 and 100 slaves respectively, yet had very different experiences of punishment and feelings towards their enslavers. Napoleon stated in his interview that 'his master and mistress were very kind to the slaves and would never whip them.'⁵ In contrast, Nickerson explained

³ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.86; p.347; p.242.

⁴ See L. Rivers, *Slavery in Florida: Territorial Days to Emancipation* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009) and T. Lockley, *Lines in the Sand: Race and Class in Lowcountry Georgia, 1750-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), for more on the particulars of slavery in Florida.

⁵ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.243.

that her uncle used to be punished ‘fur nothing’ and her interview suggests that she felt anger at her enslaver because of this.⁶ This, in part, explains why the NWU interviewees recounted such a range of emotions.

Why, then, did every Ex-Slave Club member describe the same emotions and experiences of enslavement? To some extent the young age of the sample could account for the similarity in experiences recounted. Millie Sampson, for example, stated that ‘I di’n’t have nothin’ to do ‘sept play with the white children and have plenty to eat’, Annie Gail described that ‘I didn’t do anything. I just runned ‘round’ and Jessie Rowell suggested that ‘I was just a little tot running ‘round.’⁷ Yet, those who the NWU interviewed, such as John Henry Kemp, remembered the fear and misery that his enslaver engendered, even though he was under 10 when emancipation occurred.⁸ Thus, to explain the conformity across the Ex-Slave Club interviews we have to consider the context of the interview, the interviewer’s beliefs and methodologies, and the purpose that the interviewees’ ascribed to giving their testimony.

First, the type of interview that took place must be considered. In contrast to the interviews conducted by the NWU that appear to be extended individual encounters between an interviewer and interviewee, some of the Ex-Slave Club members seemed to be interviewed on the same day – perhaps at the same time – in a less formal setting. There are also small snippets of information in the published narratives that suggest that the interviews were shorter in length and less standardised. Describing how the interview with Annie Trip ended, the interviewer wrote that ‘and Annie walked away complaining about rheumatism and no money, etc. before her exact age and address could be obtained.’⁹ Similarly, documenting the encounter with Fannie McCay, the interviewer explained that she was ‘one of those who ‘didn’t have too much time to talk too much.’”¹⁰ Thus, to account for the pattern of emotion within the Ex-Slave Club interviews, it must be considered that in a less formal, shorter and perhaps communal interview, the elderly black Americans would be less likely than the NWU interviewees to describe incidents of violence and the fear and anger that stemmed from them.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 252-253.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 375.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 184-189.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 374.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

Second, it is important to explore the racial context in which these interviews were conducted, as countless historians have noted that black interviewers elicited more candid responses from their interviewees than their white counterparts. The interviews were produced in the 1930s, at the height of the Jim Crow era. In the post-emancipation South, Jennifer Ritterhouse has contended that black Americans ‘still had to be careful of what they said, how they moved, where they rested their eyes.’¹¹ This strict everyday racial etiquette could influence what interviewees said about slavery, as well as the feelings they expressed, particularly in front of white interviewers. Blassingame, for example, wrote that during the interview encounter there was a ‘high premium placed on giving the ‘right’ answers to such questions as: “was your master kind to you?”’ and that white interviewers would often not accept answers to questions that included reference to cruel masters.¹² Interviews conducted in South Carolina by a team of white field workers, for example, stated that they ‘were well treated, bountifully fed and clothed, and rarely overworked by kind masters’, whilst ‘most of them longed for the old plantations days.’¹³ Conducted with a similar white interviewer – black interviewee racial dynamic, the Ex-Slave Club members painted an almost identical picture of benevolent masters and nostalgia for the institution. According to Blassingame, the interviews produced by black project workers revealed much more about the ‘internal dynamics of slave life’, with the formerly enslaved discussing topics such as family life, punishment, forced separations and resistance.¹⁴ The comparison of the two sets of interviews supports this assessment, as the NWU interviewees discussed punishment, forced breeding and the range of emotions that these acts of violence resulted in.

Despite this overall pattern, the racial dynamics at play in the 1930s South also seemed to affect the responses given in the NWU interviews. Many of the formerly enslaved interviewees qualified any critical statements or emotions they recounted with more positive ones, comparing their kinder enslaver to other cruel whites.¹⁵ Discussing why this was the case, Escott wrote that ‘of the other professions of love for the master that appear in the slave narratives, many represented only gestures to the expectations of a segregated society and were contradicted by the rest of the slave’s story.’¹⁶ Focusing specifically on the Florida FWP,

¹¹ J. Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow: How Black and White Southern Children Learned Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p.38.

¹² J. Blassingame, ‘Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves’, p.482.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.488-489.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.489.

¹⁵ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, pp.11-12; p.146; p.102.

¹⁶ P. Escott, *Slavery Remembered*, p.22

Stetson Kennedy explained that Jim Crow etiquette constrained all people; ‘white as well as black writers and editors were keenly aware that ‘Editor-in Chief’ Jim Crow was looking over their shoulder – and governed themselves accordingly.’¹⁷ The fact that some of the black American informants were still in contact with, or lived near, descendants of their former enslavers compounded this need to conform to the emotional etiquette enforced by white society, even in the presence of a black interviewer. For example, Harriett Gresham, who was enslaved into her mid-twenties in South Carolina, explained to her interviewer that ‘she still corresponds with one of the children of her mistress, now an old woman living on what is left of a once vast estate at Barnwell, South Carolina.’¹⁸ Detailing their relationship, the interviewer wrote that ‘the two old women are very much attached to each other and each in her letters helps to keep alive the memories of the life they shared together as mistress and slave.’¹⁹ Perhaps this contact with her enslaver stopped her being able to speak about her negative experiences of enslavement, and thus explains this description of ‘love’ and fondness for her mistress in the interview.

While numerous scholars have explored the racial dynamics of the interview encounter and the Jim Crow System, it is still possible to delve deeper into the emotional consequences of this. Sociological theories and studies of racialised emotional work and emotional labour, for example, can help us to uncover the management of feeling that the interviewee had to engage in at the interview encounter. Furthering Arlie Hochschild’s concept of emotional labour - ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’ - sociologists Louwanda Evans and Wendy Leo Moore explored the racialised nature of this emotional management.²⁰ They produced a modern day study of people of colour in law firms and aviation industries, probing ‘the connections between white institutional spaces, emotional labor and resistance.’²¹ Conducting interviews with those who worked in white dominated work places, Evans and Moore concluded that ‘participation in white institutional spaces requires particular forms of emotional labor and management of emotions from people of color, resulting from the stark contradiction between their racialized experiences in these institutions,

¹⁷ S. Kennedy, *The Florida Slave*, p.3.

¹⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p. 163.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ A. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p.7; L. Evans and W. L. Moore, ‘Impossible Burdens’ pp.439-454.

²¹ L. Evans and W. L. Moore, ‘Impossible Burdens’, p.439.

on the one hand, and the dominant discourse that minimizes and delegitimizes their experiences on the other hand.’²²

Though Evans and Moore analysed modern day experiences of the workplace, their demonstration of unequal emotional labour in white institutions undoubtedly extends to the WPA interview encounter. The WPA interviews were not a traditional workplace, yet, the interviewees were engaged in a type of labour, as they were telling their stories to an unknown audience at a time of extreme racial segregation. Furthermore, though black interviewers conducted the NWU interviews, the wider FWP must be seen as a white institutional project, dominated in the most part by white state and national editors and ideological frameworks. As Evans and Moore demonstrated that people of colour must engage in emotional performances when in white institutional spaces, when giving their stories to both white and black interviewers as part of the white dominated FWP, the formerly enslaved also had to engage in ‘emotional performances’ or ‘emotional labour’. In both sets of interviews, therefore, the interviewees’ expressions of love and affection towards their enslavers should be seen as an example of the racialised emotional management that they had to engage in whilst giving their testimony, as part of this white institutional project.

Within the boundaries of the Jim Crow system, which required a general level of emotional management from all of the black Americans giving their testimony, not all white interviewers shared the same beliefs about slavery that they brought to the interview encounter, purposes ascribed to conducting the interviews, or interview methodologies. Musher, for example, has argued that white interviewers entered the interview encounter for various reasons; ‘interviewing ex-slaves may have been a way to pay the bills, learn about a world different from their own, recall nostalgically the black ‘mammy’ who had raised them or their parents, prove that their ancestors did not mistreat their slaves, or a combination of these.’²³ These are factors, beyond race, that could lead to different levels of emotional censorship from the interviewees, but have traditionally been ignored by WPA historians.

The questions that each interviewer asked, for example, may have differed based on these agendas, leading to contrasting emotional responses. Indeed, Musher has explained that ‘black

²² *Ibid.*, p.441.

²³ S. Musher, ‘The Other Slave Narratives’, p. 109.

interviewers not only recorded different answers to the same questions that their white counterparts asked but also asked the ex-slaves different questions.²⁴ The questions that the interviewers asked could act as a type of framing device, used by the interviewer to present their own narrative of slavery during the encounter and elicit responses that conformed to this narrative. Exploring the theory of ‘framing’, political scientists Kimberly Gross and Lisa D’Ambrosio have argued that ‘framing studies typically are concerned with how people’s opinions are affected by opposing ways of presenting, or framing, an issue or event.’²⁵ To understand the effect of this framing device, Gross and D’Ambrosio questioned ‘whether different frames also lead to different patterns of emotional response’, arguing that ‘just as frames alter the accessibility or importance of various considerations brought to bear in formulating opinion, they also alter the considerations available when formulating emotional response.’²⁶

If Cora Mae Taylor conducted the interviews, she may well have framed the interview questions in order to elicit positive patterns of emotional expressions from the Ex-Slave Club members towards the institution. This is evidenced by one interview that Taylor conducted with Salena Taswell, who was born in 1844 and enslaved in Georgia.²⁷ Significantly, in Kennedy’s *Opportunity* article, he wrote that Taswell was an Ex-Slave Club member, even though her interview was published as a stand-alone interview and not included in the testimony of the Club.²⁸ In this interview, the questions Taylor asked Taswell are included (which is fairly exceptional for the WPA interviews) and the fourth question was ‘was your master kind to you’, a question that Blassingame argued was important to answer in the ‘right way’ when in the presence of a white interviewer.²⁹ Taswell’s answer further suggests that this framing occurred, as she replied in a particularly positive manner. Answering the leading question about her master, Taswell is documented as stating that ‘yes; I was the pet.’³⁰ If Taswell was interviewed by Taylor at a similar time as the other Ex-Slave Club members, it seems likely that she framed the questions she asked in a similar way when interviewing the other Club members, leading, in part, to the positive patterns of emotion and absence of fear, hate or misery.

²⁴ S. Musher, ‘Contesting “The Way the Almighty Wants It”’, p. 13.

²⁵ K. Gross and L. D’Ambrosio, ‘Framing Emotional Response’, p.1.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.1-3.

²⁷ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, pp.303-310.

²⁸ S. Kennedy, ‘Ex-Slaves of Miami Organize’, p. 287.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.303 and J. Blassingame, ‘Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves’, p.482.

³⁰ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.303.

It would be unwise, however, to ignore the possibility that Stetson Kennedy conducted these interviews, or at least was involved in the process. The fact that Taylor interviewed Taswell does not mean that she produced the interviews with the other Ex-Slave members that are analysed here, particularly as the type of testimony is so different.³¹ Exploring Kennedy's beliefs, it is unlikely that he entered the interview encounter with the Ex-Slave Club with the purpose of furthering white centric narratives of slavery (as other white interviewers did) or framed the encounter to push the interviewees to present this narrative. Kennedy had a long career working as a journalist, during which he wrote several books and articles exposing the Jim Crow system, segregation and racism. Kennedy wrote *The Klan Unmasked*, a description of the period in which he infiltrated the Georgia branch of the KKK.³² According to the curator of the Jim Crow Museum, David Pilgrim, 'he donned the Klan hood and robe, burned crosses, gave racist speeches and clandestinely collected information about Klan activities.'³³ He wrote about their rituals, activities and members and 'sent the evidence he gathered to prosecutors, journalists, human rights organizations.'³⁴ Exploring the impact of his work in the Klan, Pilgrim argued that 'by revealing everything from local Klan gossip to the Klan's organizational structure and code words, the program stripped the Klan of its air of mystery and hurt Klan recruiting and membership.'³⁵

It would be wrong to suggest that the presence of Kennedy at the interview - as a white person - did not affect how the formerly enslaved responded. They likely framed their answers to suit this white audience. Yet, Kennedy's campaigns against racism suggest that at the interview encounter he would not frame the questions to present a white-centric narrative of slavery. Furthermore, even if Taylor conducted these interviews, it seems that Kennedy was heavily involved in the work created about the Ex-Slave Club. He wrote an article on the group in 1939 and was the folklore editor for the Florida FWP, the heading under which these interviews sit.³⁶ As an editor, Kennedy was acutely aware of how paternalism and racism could influence the work of white FWP workers. Writing retrospectively about the Florida FWP, he explained that

³¹ It is possible that Taylor conducted the longer interview with Taswell during her visit to the Club in 1936, and Kennedy conducted the remaining, shorter interviews during his visit in 1939.

³² S. Kennedy, *The Klan Unmasked: With a New Introduction by David Pilgrim and a New Author's Note* (Tuscaloosa, Ala: The University of Alabama Press, 1990).

³³ D. Pilgrim, 'Superman Busts the KKK' in S. Kennedy, *The Klan Unmasked: With a New Introduction by David Pilgrim and a New Author's Note* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), p.1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p.2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.3.

³⁶ G. Rawick, *TAS* v.17, p.374.

‘Jim Crow kept watch over the shoulders of white and black writers alike, giving rise to varying degrees of pejorative and paternalism on pages produced by the former and sometimes deference and ingratiation in the pages of the latter.’³⁷ Kennedy also spent his time as editor in Florida attempting to diminish the racism that was evident in the manuscripts produced by white editors; ‘the tone reeked of all the chauvinism, stereotyping, condescension, and paternalism characteristic of white attitudes at the time. I took the manuscript under my wing, resolved to do what I could with it.’³⁸ Thus, due to Kennedy’s involvement in the Folklore Project, his anti-racism work and his beliefs about slavery, it seems unlikely that he would allow Taylor to frame her interviews in such an explicit way.

Whoever interviewed the Ex-Slave Club members, these interviews were a two-way encounter and the role that the elderly African Americans played in shaping this narrative must also be considered. As interviewers could enter the interview situation with a specific purpose, so too could the interviewees. As a group, the Club was formed to fight for pensions, and this political objective may have shaped the answers that the members gave. In the context of the Great Depression, The Federal Emergency Relief Administration was formed to give out direct financial aid to those hit hardest and historian Cheryl Lynn Greenberg has suggested that ‘relief proved critical for the survival of hundreds of thousands of African Americans and their families.’³⁹ Various other agencies were created to provide relief and jobs, and the WPA (the umbrella organisation under which the interviews were conducted) was one such project. 750,000 black families in the South at the end of the 1930s gained financial support from the WPA and a much higher number received benefits ‘than ever before.’⁴⁰ Describing the effect that this increase in relief under the New Deal had on black perceptions, Biles concluded that ‘blacks came to see the New Deal as a generous benefactor.’⁴¹ It was within this context of New Deal Project relief that the Ex-Slave members were providing their stories.

It is likely that the Ex-Slave Club members believed that the white interviewers, who worked for the WPA as government officials, were able to help them obtain relief or a pension. This was the case with many formerly enslaved persons, according to Blassingame, who has noted that many black Americans interviewed by whites believed that they were here to ‘help them

³⁷ S. Kennedy, ‘Florida Folklife and the WPA’.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ C. L. Greenberg, *To Ask for an Equal Chance*, p.49.

⁴⁰ R. Biles, *The South and the New Deal*, p.120.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.121.

obtain the coveted pension', and that in turn, the white interviewers did not correct this assumption.⁴² That the Club's stated mission was to organise for pensions, it is even more likely that the formerly enslaved informants viewed the white interviewer(s) as officials here to help them with this mission. Through stating that they were well fed, clothed and housed during slavery to their interviewer, therefore, the Club members were able to contrast this to their present situation of poverty. The feelings of nostalgia presented, alongside the failure to mention any misery, fear or anger they felt and violence they experienced, could be seen as a deliberate group attempt to show themselves as worthy of pensions. The Club also had a leader named Major Goggins, whom Kennedy described as 'president and guiding spirit of the Ex-Slaves, with his stately form, soldierly carriage, bushy gray hair and flowing beard, has been a familiar and striking figure in Miami for the past 20 years.'⁴³ Perhaps, under the 'guiding' leadership of Goggins, the Club members decided as a group to use this opportunity to present their case. This accounts for the consistent narrative of slavery that was portrayed.

It is also possible to account for the Ex-Slave Club members consistent nostalgic descriptions of slavery by contrasting the lives of elderly enslaved people when in bondage with the black Americans' experience of old age in the 1930s. Stacey Close has argued that a tradition emerged on U.S. plantations, originating in Africa, where elderly enslaved men and women taught and advised younger generations, instilling social values of support and cooperation, which 'helped to develop a positive perception of elderly African Americans within the slave community.'⁴⁴ Elderly enslaved men, for example, looked after children, provided healthcare and gave religious guidance, and were therefore seen as worthy of respect.⁴⁵ Of course, not all elderly enslaved people had the same experiences; David Doddington has shown that enslaved men in particular did not always view ageing positively, as the reduced level of work and status as a labourer could impact upon their sense of masculinity.⁴⁶ Furthermore, many men and women had to continue to engage in hard labour despite their age, or were granted a form of freedom where they were sent away from their family and community.⁴⁷ The Ex-Slave Club interviewees who were telling their stories in the 1930s, however, were living in extreme poverty and were evidently looking for both financial and community support, as evidenced by

⁴² J. Blassingame, 'Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves', p.483.

⁴³ S. Kennedy, 'Ex-Slaves of Miami Organize', p. 271.

⁴⁴ S. Close, *Elderly Slaves of the Plantation South* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp.9-10.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁴⁶ D. Doddington, "'Old Fellows": Age, Identity, and Solidarity in Slave Communities of the Antebellum South', *Journal of Global Slavery*, 3 (2018), p.299.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.295-296.

their decision to join a community of other elderly black Americans. Perhaps, then, because of their experience of the Great Depression, the formerly enslaved were looking back nostalgically at the ‘fun’ they had playing as children on the plantation, and focusing on the communal respect offered to elderly slaves that they remembered, whilst excluding memories of punishment and work that were central to the lives of most enslaved adults.

While some Ex-Slave Club interviewees may have utilised this opportunity to present their political and personal case for more relief funds, some who were interviewed by the NWU were motivated to tell the truth about their experiences, perhaps accounting for the range of emotions presented in this set of interviews. Coming back to Margrett Nickerson’s interview, that details her views of her Floridian enslaver William Carr, the importance that she placed on telling the truth is explicitly illustrated when she stated:

Now jes lis’en, I wanna tell you all I kin, but I wants to tell it right; wait now, I don’ wanna make no mistakes and I don’ wanna lie on nobody – I ain’ mad now and I know taint no use to lie, I takin’ my time. I done prayed and got all de malice out of my heart and I ain’ gonna tell no lie fer um and I ain’ gonna tell no lie one um.⁴⁸

It seems that telling her story was both a personal and emotional process. Nickerson, who was ninety-years-old at the time of the interview, associated her decision to tell the truth with her own emotional processing of her experiences and the reduction in anger that she felt. This phrase also shows that truth-telling was difficult - she had to take her time. Sam and Louisa Everett’s interview, that detailed their experiences of sexual abuse on the plantation of ‘Big Jim’ McClain in Virginia, also highlights how difficult talking about painful experiences was; ‘both are pitifully infirm but can still remember the horrors they experienced under very cruel owners. It was with difficulty that they were prevailed upon to relate some of the gruesome details recorded here.’⁴⁹ Stewart has interpreted these descriptions of the former slaves’ difficulties when speaking about slavery’s horrors as truth-telling strategies, included by the interviewers to show that they did not interfere in the interview process.⁵⁰ In contrast to Stewart, I argue that it is important to take these statements literally and not just see them as included by interviewers as truth-telling strategies. It is not surprising that when talking about traumatic experiences of sexual abuse and violence, Everett and Nickerson found this an

⁴⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p. 252.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁵⁰ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.182.

emotionally painful experience, and had to take their time. When the interviewer wrote that Sam and Louisa Everett found it hard to talk of their experiences, it is crucial to acknowledge their emotional investment in giving their testimony and the emotional labour that may have been required of them to manage their feelings when describing their experiences.

That these phrases indicate the long-term emotional pain that slavery inflicted does not take away from the fact that the formerly enslaved men and women were also engaging in an act of resistance when they told their interviewers about their horrific experiences of slavery. These interviewees were engaging in another form of emotional management, choosing which stories and emotions to express to the interviewer as part of this racialised project. By even choosing to speak to their questioners, they were helping the officials of the FWP to present a new, democratic, history of slavery. Exploring the beliefs of the FWP national directors, Jerrold Hirsch has concluded that they ‘rejected the pervasive assumption that the culture of the dominant educated group – the group most likely to leave written records that were preserved – represented the culture of the whole.’⁵¹ When the formerly enslaved participated in this project, and told stories that countered the hegemonic collective white narrative of slavery, they made a political statement about their role in shaping the collective national memory of slavery.

Evans and Moore have described this process of resistance, and the emotional management that it entails as in itself difficult, describing it as an ‘emotionally laborious process of decision making about how and when people of color will respond to racist institutional arrangements.’⁵² Thus, the fact that Nickerson had to take her time and the Everetts’ found it difficult to tell their story, must be taken literally, and understood within the multifaceted context of speaking honestly about their traumatic experiences, when also engaging in a method of resistance. Thus, as the Ex-Slave Club members may have used their opportunity to present themselves as worthy of a pension, it must be recognised that some of the NWU interviewees utilised their interview with a black interviewer to tell their story and engage in resistance despite the emotional pain and emotional labour this may have required. Thus, exploring the reasons for the starkly different patterns of emotion in these interviews reveals both the personal and political agendas that the formerly enslaved interviewees and black and

⁵¹ J. Hirsch, *Portrait of America: a Cultural History of the Federal Writers' Project* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p. 108.

⁵² L. Evans and W. L. Moore, ‘Impossible Burdens’, p.449.

white interviewers brought to the encounter, as well as the emotional labour required of those giving their testimony.

The Write-up and Editing Process

It was not only at the interview encounter that emotional content could be framed, shaped, or manipulated. The published documents that scholars analyse today are not transcripts of the testimony given, but written impressions of the interview by the interviewer, that could also be edited at state level. To re-emphasise Sharon Ann Musher's important argument; 'the WPA interviews might appear to have come literally out of the mouths of ex-slaves, but they do not represent unmediated reality' and instead, 'it might be more accurate to consider them third-hand or even fourth-hand accounts.'⁵³ After being transcribed and shaped into narrative form by the interviewers, typists had to interpret the hand-written drafts. These typed documents were then given to state editors who made changes to the drafts. Once in Washington the national administrators 'evaluated and organized the interviews.'⁵⁴

First, then, the write-up stage of the Ex-Slave Club interviews must be considered. The published interviews are much shorter than the NWU interviews, so it is possible that the interview encounter was in fact much longer, and the Club members expressed a larger range of emotions than were actually documented in the final, published, WPA interview. Particularly if Cora Mae Taylor wrote the interviews, she may have chosen to only include the positive emotional content, excluding any mention of fear or hatred towards slavery or their enslavers. While there is no evidence of anything so drastic, slightly different versions of the interviews exist, suggesting decisions were made about how long these interviews should be, and what to include. In Kennedy's article in *Opportunity*, for example, there are some quotations attributed to the formerly enslaved that are not included in Rawick's published interviews, some that are worded in slightly different ways, and a few that are the same.

In *Opportunity* Priscilla Mitchell is quoted as stating that 'I was eight years old and picking cotton on Emancipation Day.'⁵⁵ Including similar information (except for the age), in Rawick's

⁵³ S. Musher, 'The Other Slave Narratives', p. 106.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ S. Kennedy, 'Ex-Slaves of Miami Organize', p.271.

published interviews, she is documented to have said that ‘Y’see, ah wuz oney 7 years old when ah wuz ‘mancipated. I can ‘member pickin’ cotton, but I didn’t work so hard, ah wuz too young.’⁵⁶ Furthermore, Kennedy’s book *The Florida Slave*, in three cases, incorporates slightly different variations of the interviews that were published in Rawick’s collection, showing that subtle changes to the interviews took place.⁵⁷ In both Annie Gail and David Lee’s interviews an extra line was included at the end of each interview in the Rawick version. In all of these cases, however, the difference in wording does not drastically alter the overall narrative of the testimony. Thus, although decisions about what to include in the write-up of the interviews were undoubtedly made, the words of the interviewees were not entirely fictional and the patterns in emotional content in the Ex-Slave Club testimony were not simply a product of this stage of the source production.

At times at the Florida branch, however, subtle additions and descriptions that were included in the interviews did alter the general picture presented in an interview, and this can be seen in the NWU interviews. It is evident that each NWU interviewer had different writing styles, and subtly added, excluded, exaggerated or played down certain statements or emotions when they wrote about the interview encounter. In analysing *The Florida Negro* manuscript, Gary McDonogh observed that the differences in writing styles between workers at the Florida branch were very distinct; ‘the extensive drafts saved in Florida archives indicate the individualism of the authors and show patterns of choice and editing that are rarely even suggested in other Writers’ Project volumes.’⁵⁸ For example, the descriptions of emancipation included in the interviews conducted by Johnson are more detailed and emotion-laden than other sets of interviews. In his write-up of eighty-year-old, Georgia born Mack Mullen’s interview, Johnson wrote that ‘Mullen vividly recalls the day that they heard of their emancipation ... the slaves on hearing this good news of freedom burst out in song and praises to God.’⁵⁹ In a similar description of Louis Napoleon’s memories of emancipation, who was under 10 when this occurred, he wrote that:

The roads were quickly filled with these happy souls. The streets of Tallahassee were clustered with these jubilant people going here and there to get a glimpse

⁵⁶ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.376.

⁵⁷ S. Kennedy, *The Florida Slave*.

⁵⁸ G. McDonogh, *The Florida Negro*, p.xvii.

⁵⁹ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, pp.238-239.

of the Yankees, their liberators. Napoleon says it was a joyous and unforgettable experience.⁶⁰

Without sound recordings of the interviews we cannot know how far these phrases represent the words of the interviewee. The descriptions, however, do not seem to be word-for-word transcriptions of what the former slaves said, as the phrases written by Johnson are written in the third person and are not the choppy, unstructured words of someone being interviewed. In emphasising the joy that the enslaved felt when they found out about freedom, through the wording he used, Johnson utilised Mullen's emotional statement to in turn counter the widely held narrative about the benevolent and patriarchal nature of slavery.⁶¹

As Johnson presented the importance of freedom through using language to emphasise the joy of the interviewees' within the testimony, he also did this in his description of the interviewees' emotional character. For example, Johnson again stressed the importance of the end of the institution in his description of Claude Augusta Wilson:

Claude Augusta Wilson, a man along in years has lived to see many changes take place among his people since The Emancipation which he is proud of. A peaceful old gentleman he is, still alert mentally and physically despite his 79 years. His youthful appearance belies his age.⁶²

Similarly, Johnson's creative description of Mack Mullen uses his emotion to critique the Jim Crow system and continuing situation of poverty. For example, after writing that 'Mack Mullen is tall, grey haired, sharp featured and of Caucasia strain (his mother was a mulatto) with a keen mind and appearance that belies his 75 years' he concluded that 'he laments that he was freed because his master was good to his slaves; he says "we had everything we wanted; never did I think I'd come to this – got to get relief."⁶³ Whilst the emotion presented in this character description at first glance seems to present slavery in a positive light, at second inspection, he is also using the emotion of his interviewee to critique the Jim Crow System and the poverty that the elderly black Americans lived in.

Many of the black interviewees at the NWU also wrote about the former slaves' emotional

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.246.

⁶¹ These creative enhancements must also be seen to have been shaped by the calls for 'human interest' and 'colour' in the interview by national editors at the beginning of the project.

⁶² G. Rawick, *TAS* v.17, p.362.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

expression to give an impression of character. Some used emotion to subtly describe the elderly men and women as possessing dignity and a lack of resentment. For example, Pearl Randolph described Frank Berry, who after emancipation became a state and federal government contractor, a United States Marshall and a Registration Inspector, in the following terms:

Although small of stature and almost disabled by rheumatism, he has the fiery dignity and straight back that we associate with men who have ruled others. At the same time he might also be characterized as a sweet old person, with all the tender reminiscences of the old days and the childish prejudices against all things new.⁶⁴

Pearl Randolph again wrote about emotion in her description of Amanda McCray. Randolph described her as wise, and not possessing any resentment towards slavery, stating that ‘there was nothing resentful in this expression; only the patient weariness of one who has been dragged through the boundaries of a yesterday from which he was inseparable and catapulted into a present with which he has nothing in common.’⁶⁵ Indeed, Stewart has interpreted these descriptions as significant as they portray ‘African Americans as the natural possessors of the qualities deemed necessary for citizens of the Republic, namely, the dominance of the rational mind over the instinctual drives and the capacity of governing oneself.’⁶⁶

Other NWU interviewers, however, described the emotional character of the formerly enslaved men and women in particularly white-centric stereotypical terms. Alfred Farrell, for example, wrote that Titus T. Bynes was ‘reminiscent of Harriett Beecher Stowe’s immortal ‘Uncle Tom’ and Joel Chandler Harris’ inimitable ‘Uncle Remus’ with his white beard and hair surrounding a smiling black face.’⁶⁷ Rev. Squires Jackson was also described with an exaggerated smile, in a ‘happy-go-lucky’ manner; ‘this handsome bronze piece of humanity with snow white beard over his beaming face.’⁶⁸ Shack Thomas was labelled by Martin Richardson as ‘beady-eyed, grey whiskered, black little Shack Thomas’ and explained that he was ‘full of humorous reminiscences about most of those years.’⁶⁹ Lastly, Rachel Austin played on stereotypes of black American childlike emotion when she stated that ‘at this party, he showed all the joys and pleasures of a child.’⁷⁰ These echo a description of Ex-Slave Club member Margaret

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.29-30.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.212.

⁶⁶ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.185.

⁶⁷ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, p.52.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.182.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

White, who was labelled as ‘one of those happy creatures who doesn’t look as if she ever had a care in the world.’⁷¹ The stereotypical descriptions enhance the narrative already presented by the Ex-Slave Club interviewees, but confuse the picture painted in the NWU set. Complex, multifaceted emotions are expressed by the formerly enslaved in the interviews, yet are concluded with descriptions of their simplistic and childlike emotional character.

This inclusion of stereotypical descriptions is perhaps surprising given that these interviews were created by black interviewers, yet we must consider that the interviewers were working as part of a Writers’ Unit, and were likely constrained by what white editors wanted to see included in these interviews. Catherine Stewart has revealed that Carita Doggett Corse, Director of the state branch, became a member of the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) at the end of 1939, and had been linked to the organisation since 1937 when she published one of her essays in the *Southern Magazine*.⁷² As an organisation, the UDC was concerned with presenting slavery as a benevolent institution and espoused a pro-southern interpretation of the Civil War.⁷³ Stewart argued that this seeped into their work at the FWP, and alongside Rose Shepard - another UDC member - ‘these women recognized that the Lost Cause argument regarding slavery as a benevolent institution would carry more weight if it came from the mouths of former slaves.’⁷⁴ Whether written by the black interviewers - who were aware of Corse at their shoulder - or the white editors themselves, these character sketches must be considered within the context of what Joe Feagin calls ‘the white racial frame’. Describing what this means, Feagin argued that ‘white Americans have developed a strong racial frame that interprets and defends white privileges and advantaged conditions as meritorious and accents white virtues as well as the alleged inferiority and deficiencies of those people of color who are oppressed.’⁷⁵ He further explained that the ‘white racial frame has provided the vantage point from which whites and others have regularly viewed and interpreted this society’ and is built upon racial stereotypes, racial narratives and interpretations.⁷⁶

The descriptions included in the interviews, that play on the ‘inferior’ childlike and happy emotions of the formerly enslaved, are undoubtedly a product of this racial world-view based on anti-black stereotypes and narratives of the slavery institution. More significantly, however,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 375-376.

⁷² C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.207.

⁷³ For more on the UDC see K. Cox, *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville : University Press of Florida, 2003).

⁷⁴ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.207.

⁷⁵ J. Feagin, *Racist America*, p.25.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

although the character sketches attempt to give an impression of the emotional character of the interviewee, they actually provide perhaps more evidence of the feelings of the writer towards black Americans and slavery. Feagin has also argued that ‘from the seventeenth century to the present the white framing that justifies antiblack oppression, while overtly verbal-cognitive and legally enshrined, has had a very strong *emotional* character.’⁷⁷ He further stated that ‘antiblack stereotyping, images, and actions have long been linked to such emotions as hate, fear, guilt and repulsion.’⁷⁸ Within these character descriptions the emotionally charged white racial mind-set is reflected, but with emotion-laden ideas of paternalism, romanticism and nostalgia seen throughout, a cornerstone of the feelings and the beliefs upheld by the UDC organisation.

Alongside the stereotypical beliefs and paternalistic feelings that these sketches reveal about the editors, the contradictory tone of the NWU narratives expose the struggle between the NWU interviewers and white editors at the Florida branch. Gary McDonogh, after an extensive analysis of the previously unpublished manuscript of *The Florida Negro*, detailed the racial dynamic often at play in this, arguing that ‘the struggles of black voices, straightforward and ironic, against white domination is important to the reading of this text.’⁷⁹ Most importantly, McDonogh explained that the message in *The Florida Negro* was often contradictory due to the prospect of a white readership; ‘at times, stereotypes are presented in what seems to be an appeal to white readers of the period; at others a more critical voice is raised, even if a cogent argument for change is scarcely voiced.’⁸⁰ This struggle evidently did not just play out when writing *The Florida Negro*. The inclusion of both stereotypical descriptions of African American character, as well as descriptions of dignity and wisdom and multifaceted feelings towards the institution in these NWU interviews, should be seen as a result of this conflict between making documents appeal to white readers, and presenting the black voice.

Lastly, it cannot be discounted that editors, such as Corse, changed the interviewers’ initial write-up of the interviews to infuse them with stereotypical character sketches and notions of nostalgia and paternalism. Kennedy has suggested that editing did occur to the drafts of *The Florida Negro* which ‘bore all the earmarks, in tone and content, of being the creation of white

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.66

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ G. McDonogh, *The Florida Negro*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.xxvii.

rewrite artists on the state editorial staff.’⁸¹ Explaining why this was the case, he argued that ‘to the best of my recollection, there was not one word about segregation, discrimination, lynching, the Ku Klux Klan, health, or civil rights’ and concluded that ‘the tone reeked of all the chauvinism, stereotyping, condescension, and paternalism characteristic of white attitudes at the time.’⁸² As Kennedy has argued that Corse ‘read every scrap of copy that came in from all over the state and made voluminous notations of editorial directives’ there is a possibility that she also edited content of the WPA interviews, in particular the descriptions of the interviewees’ character, to present African Americans in a stereotypical manner.⁸³

Whether the interviews were indeed edited to the same extent as *The Florida Negro* is hard to uncover. Yet, because many of the interviews included in Rawick’s collection have the label FEC in the top right hand corner, we do know that it had been touched up and retyped by an editor.⁸⁴ To my knowledge, no two written versions of the same NWU interview exist, to show whether the emotional content in the interviews was edited to any great extent when it became a FEC copy, apart from in the Ex-Slave Club cases already described. In the case of the Ex-Slave Club interviews, the addition of one line does not alter the narrative of the interview. Musher, however, has uncovered two versions of an interview with Charlie Moses. In this, an addition of emotion by the editors significantly alters the narrative presented in the interview.

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In the first version of Moses’ interview, he stated that ‘God almighty nevah meant human beings to be lak animals. Us niggahs has a soul, an’ a heart, an’ a mine an we isn’t lak a dawg or a horse.’⁸⁶ Yet, Musher has argued that state editors changed the interview before it was sent to Washington and ‘tamed Moses’ criticism of slavery by adding the following words to his assertion: “if all marsters had been good like some, the slaves would a-been happy. But marsters like mine ought never been allowed to own Niggers.”⁸⁷ Through including this new phrase about Moses’ emotions, Musher concluded that ‘they implied that Moses’ experience

⁸¹ S. Kennedy, ‘Florida Folklife and the WPA: An Introduction’.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ S. Kennedy, Conference Paper, In the Nick of Time Conference.

⁸⁴ S. Kennedy, ‘Florida Folklife and the WPA: An Introduction’. According to Kennedy ‘Whenever FC passed through a FWP district office--such as those in Tampa and Miami--and an editor therein touched it up and had it retyped, this fact was made known by changing the label to FEC, and the editor's name was written in the upper right-hand corner of the first page.’

⁸⁵ S. Musher, ‘Contesting “The Way the Almighty Wants It”’, p.1.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p.2

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

departed from the more typical paternalistic and consensual relationships between slaves and masters'⁸⁸ Significantly, the editors inserted an example of emotion felt by some enslaved people – a happiness created by a good relationship with their enslavers – to negate Moses' angry and critical statements about the institution. In turn, they made the interview conform to this paternalistic narrative of slavery in subtle ways, using emotion as a tool to do so. It is possible that editors in Florida did the same, adding stereotypical emotional character descriptions to make the interview conform to their own notion of black American character and a harmonious vision of race relations under slavery.

It is therefore evident that historians must take the write-up stage of the production of these sources heavily into account when exploring the content of the sources. While it seems that the Ex-Slave Club's positive descriptions of slavery were not entirely made up, different versions of the testimony show that choices were made about what information to include. More significantly, in the NWU interviews, the decision to insert or emphasise emotion when the interviews were written-up could subtly adapt the narrative that was presented. The character sketches of the interviewees are a perfect example of this adaptation. Emotion seems to be creatively enhanced, in some cases, to emphasise the former slaves' joy at emancipation and wise and dignified character. In other cases, however, the interviewees' emotional expressions were described in stereotypical terms, presenting them as overly emotional and childlike in their expressions. The interviewers were working as part of a state team who consistently oscillated between presenting the black voice and appealing to white readers, with workers who held beliefs about slavery as diverse as members of the NWU who experienced racist discrimination first-hand, Kennedy who infiltrated the KKK, and UDC member Carita Doggett Corse who espoused a narrative of slavery as a paternalistic institution. These character sketches thus reveal more about the personal beliefs about black Americans of the white editors at the state branch, the political considerations about white readership that guided their work, and the competition between the black and white voice at the state branch, than the actual emotional character of the black Americans who gave their testimony.

The Evaluation of the Interviews

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

As editors at the Florida FWP framed the emotional content in these narratives to appeal to white readers, this final section will explore some of the readers' reactions to these interviews. This can be achieved, in part, by exploring the appraisers and national editors' comments on the drafts of the interviews. Once the interviews were developed at state level, the typed documents were sent to Washington to be evaluated as part of the 'The Writers' unit of the Library of Congress Project.' In the introduction to the *Slave Narrative Collection*, Botkin explained the purpose of this project; it 'processes material left over from or not needed for publication by the state Writers' Project.'⁸⁹ Further describing what they aimed to do with these documents, he stated that 'the purpose of the Project was to 'collect, check, edit, index and otherwise prepare for use WPA records, Professional and Service Projects.'⁹⁰ As part of this process, before being included in *The Slave Narrative* the interviews were appraised for their suitability for incorporation into, what was described in the appraisal sheets as a 'proposed book of ex-slave narratives based on a questionnaire designed "to get the Negro thinking and talking about the days of slavery."' ⁹¹

The appraisers did not have the authority to edit the content of the interview, but they did evaluate them. They provided reports on the 'reliability and value of material', the 'method of handling material' and its 'style.' They then gave a list of 'suggested revisions and corrections' and provided examples of 'suggested uses or development', although this feedback was never incorporated. Only some of the NWU interviews were evaluated, and no interviews conducted with the Ex-Slave Club of Miami were appraised.⁹² Exploring how the NWU interviews were viewed, however, highlights what the appraisers and other workers in Washington saw as valuable and interesting in an interview, as well as how they reacted to the candid emotional memories of those interviewed by black interviewers. In turn, it also gives an indication of how others in the 1930s would respond to this testimony.

If state editors attempted to 'frame' the narrative of slavery presented in the Florida interviews to cater to white readers, the appraiser was not convinced by this. The majority of interviews conducted in Florida were judged critically, for three main reasons. First, it seems that J.C. Rogers, the appraiser, did not value any creative inputs from the interviewers, particularly when

⁸⁹ B. Botkin, 'Introduction', p.vi.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Appraisal Sheets, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

⁹² From the selection of appraisal sheets held in the archive, it seems that for each state only a selection of interviews were evaluated.

they were written in the third person. Rogers criticised the ‘the opioniated editionalizing [sic]’ in Rebecca Hooks’ interview.⁹³ Similarly, he critiqued Pearl Randolph’s interview with Amanda McCray, writing that ‘the story of an ex-slave is retold by an interviewer, who uses a few touched-up idiomatic quotes by the informant in a vain attempt to give the narrative a personal flavour’, and he also labelled it ‘sophomoric.’⁹⁴ This opinion of third-person narratives was not echoed throughout Washington. A sheet was added to Matilda Brooks’ appraisal form that stated ‘the applicability of the term ‘sophomoric’ to the article (a frequent usage of the present appraiser) is doubtful and opens up the question of ‘standards’ for third-person narratives.’⁹⁵ Thus, this shows how the evaluation of the interviews was highly subjective.

⁹³ Rebecca Hooks Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

⁹⁴ Amanda McCray Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

⁹⁵ Matilda Brooks Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC., box A897.

C. Project

WPA WRITERS' PROGRAM RECORDS
Appraisal Sheet

Title: (Thicker Than Water)

2. Place and date of origin: Lake City, Fla. January 14, 1937

3. Compiler or field worker: Pearl Randolph.

4. Editor: Unnamed. *Miss [unclear]; Dr. Corita B. Case.*

5. Description:

(a) number of pages: 6

(b) condition of manuscript: Edited at Florida Writers' Project.

(c) purpose: Proposed book of ex-slave narratives based upon a questionnaire designed "to get the Negro to thinking and talking about the days of slavery."

(d) status of the study: Approximately 2000 interviews collected. Dormant since 1938.

6. Sources: Interview with Rebecca Hooks 1604 N. Marion St., Lake City.

7. Reliability and value of material: The interpretation of the informant's story by the interviewer is not always reliable. Many of the statements seem exaggerated and some opinionated editorializing by the interviewer is at variance with facts. There are some credible references to herb remedies, slave education and family life on a small estate.

8. Method of handling material: An ex-slave's story retold by the interviewer, with additional (and unnecessary) explanatory comments by the interviewer.

9. Style: Sophomoric.

10. Suggested revisions and corrections: Slight revision, with the deletion of all unnecessary comments would greatly improve the narrative.

11. Suggested uses or development: *resulting from misinterpretation*
Usable as reference material for descriptions of unusual situations in regard to family life on a plantation, the education of slaves, herb remedies, and conditions after the war.

Figure 3.1: Rebecca Hooks Appraisal Sheet.

Federal Writers' Project: Slave Narrative Project Series, United States Work Projects Administration Records, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, box A897.

12. Correspondence consulted:

13. Collation:

14. Abstract or outline: Rebecca Hooks was born on William Lowe's plantation in Jones County, Ga. Her father was a mulatto and her mother was the daughter of Lowe's slave mistress, who was part Cherokee. Her parents were house servants-treated kindly and cruelly by turns. There was no overseer, as "Ole Tom was devil enough himself when he wanted to be". Rebecca claims the Lowes were not wealthy, although the plantation, as described, seems elaborate and self-sufficient. Rebecca received a lot of punishment because of her resemblance to a daughter of her master and retaliated by tormenting the white girl. Her father bought her school books with money he earned from the sale of corn whiskey and she was educated along with the white children. The midwife was more important than the doctor and several herb remedies are mentioned. Rebecca read the newspapers and learned of the war before other slaves - she does not recall any fighting in that section, but believes the Lowe slaves were kept on the plantation "a long time after they had been freed."

15. Recommended: Yes No Reasons: Usable as general reference material for plantation life and slave customs before freedom.

Rogers 12/12/40
signature of appraiser date

B. B. [unclear] 1/14/41
signature of supervisor date

OK BW.

Figure 3.1 Continued.

Second, throughout the appraisal sheets, the NWU interviewers were critiqued for not providing colour, something that George Cronyn and other national advisors wanted in the narratives.⁹⁶ During the early days of the project, it is evident that national personnel wanted the interviews to be interesting and saw them as relevant to ‘local color’ creative writers. In a letter to Eudora Richardson, the acting state director in Virginia, George Cronyn wrote that ‘we have received from Florida a remarkably interesting collection of autobiographical stories by ex-slaves.’⁹⁷ Explaining the uses of these interviews he noted that ‘such documentary records by the survivors of a historic period in America are invaluable, both to the student of history and to creative writers.’⁹⁸ Though he explained that he wanted the interviews to be ‘largely in the words of the person interviewed’ instead of a ‘literary account’, this was because ‘the color and human interest will be greatly enhanced.’⁹⁹ This focus on the ‘human interest’ in the interview can be seen in other letters from national directors. John Lomax, in September 1937, wrote to Cronyn about two ‘worthwhile’ interviews, because they ‘are mainly (one entirely) in dialect and abound in human interest touches.’¹⁰⁰

The term ‘color’ must be considered in relation to the late nineteenth century ‘local color’ literary genre that flourished after the Civil War. ‘Local color’ literature, according to Anne E. Rowe, ‘was regionally, and often rurally, based and usually took the form of short stories intended for mass consumption, [and] met a need for stories about simpler times and faraway places.’¹⁰¹ Furthermore, she has argued that southern local colour fiction was nostalgic in nature and often incorporated Lost Cause ideology; ‘in many stories written about life in the antebellum South, there was an idealization of the way things were before the war; the South was often pictured in these stories not as it actually had been but as it “might have been.”’¹⁰² Moving into the 1930s, regionalism as a genre, which was closely aligned to ‘local color’ literature, resurfaced as an intellectual movement.¹⁰³ This resurgence further suggests that this

⁹⁶ Letter from George Cronyn to Eudora Richardson, April 1, 1937, in *Slave Narratives*.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Letter from John A. Lomax to George Cronyn, April 9, 1937, in *Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in the United States From Interviews with Former Slaves*, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, Administrative Files, available at <<https://www.loc.gov/item/mesn001/>> [accessed 30.04.18].

¹⁰¹ A. Rowe, ‘Regionalism and Local Color’ in T. Inge (ed.), *The New Encyclopaedia of Southern Culture Vol 9: Literature* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p.138.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.139.

focus on colour emerged from these genres and referred to these literary tropes of nostalgic and romanticised story-telling.

The appraiser of the Florida interviews did not see the colour and human interest asked for by the national editors within them. For example, Sam and Louisa Everett's interview was described as being 'matter-of-fact reportage, interesting without color.'¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Henry Maxwell's narrative was appraised alongside the interviews of Taylor Gilbert, Titus T. Bynes and Della Bess Hilyard. Rogers again wrote that the style is 'factual reportage, generally lacking in color and human interest.'¹⁰⁵ All four interviews included descriptions of miscegenation, punishment, and the emotions that stemmed from these. This pattern of critiquing the interviews as uninteresting or unreliable emerges across the other appraisal sheets. Sarah Ross's interview was appraised by Rogers alongside Bolden Hall's and Charlotte Martin's. The initial typed answers on the appraisal sheet, under the heading 'reliability and value of material' read 'the three stories are too brief and superficial to have any value' and the style was labelled as 'sophomoric.'¹⁰⁶ Again, this feedback is significant as Martin's interview included a description of her brother being whipped to death and the process of forced breeding.¹⁰⁷ Ross's interview also included such vivid descriptions as 'frequently the thighs of the male slaves were gashed with a saw and salt put in the wound as a means of punishment for some misdemeanour.'¹⁰⁸ To label these interviews as 'superficial', despite this content, suggests that Rogers did not value such truthful accounts of enslavement. Indeed, in the view of this appraiser, the 'human interest' and colour asked for by John Lomax and George Cronyn early in the creation of this project was not produced though these important discussions of violence, punishment, sexual abuse and sale under slavery.

In contrast, it seems that Botkin did recognise the value in these candid descriptions of violence. Botkin had most likely altered a section of Rogers' evaluation of the three interviews, as he signed off the appraisal as the supervisor. The initial statement that labelled the interviews as too brief and superficial was scored through, and changed to read; 'though the three stories are brief and less convincing in their presentation than if the informants had been quoted directly,

¹⁰⁴ Sam and Louisa Everett Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

¹⁰⁵ Henry Maxwell et al Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

¹⁰⁶ Sarah Ross et al Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

¹⁰⁷ G. Rawick, *TAS* v.17, p.166

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.168.

there is some value in their treatment of religious services and miscegenation.’¹⁰⁹ This highlights that workers in Washington brought different opinions about what should be included in these interviews to the FWP, and had different responses to these important descriptions of violence under slavery. Botkin evidently understood the importance of statements about forced breeding in these interviews, whereas the appraiser did not.

Lastly, Rogers believed that some interviews were not factual. He wrote that in Rebecca Hooks’ interview ‘many of the statements seem exaggerated and some opinionated editorializing [sic] by the interviewer is at variance with facts.’¹¹⁰ The narrative that is presented in Hooks’ interview is that of a defiant woman. She stated that ‘Old Tom was devil enough himself when he wanted to be’ about her enslaver, and also said that as a child she ‘did not fear the form of punishment administered to her.’¹¹¹ The interview also describes miscegenation, as Hooks described that she was related to her owner’s daughter.¹¹² While this is written in the third person, no more additions seem to have been made to this interview than any of the others. This statement therefore gives a further indication of Rogers’ beliefs that shaped the evaluation process, seeing these strong statements as exaggerated or untruthful.

In contrast to the critical evaluation of the Florida interviews, in other states, the framing of the narrative to present slavery in a positive light, and black Americans in stereotypical terms, did lead to positive evaluations from appraisers. Though the character sketches in the Florida interviews sometimes presented the formerly enslaved as overly emotional or childlike in their expressions, the ones included in the Georgia interviews were aligned to these stereotypes to a much greater extent. The Georgia interviews in general present a much more benevolent picture of slavery than the Florida interviews do; Stewart has demonstrated that ‘white Georgia interviewers posed leading questions, inserted their own impressions of the ex-slaves’ character, speech and mannerisms, and placed their informants’ narratives within a broader story of nostalgia for the Old South.’¹¹³ Illustrative of this is David Goodman Gullin’s interview. Though he described being punished and the sales that occurred on his plantation in Putnam, Georgia, the interviewer presented him as stereotypically overly-emotional as he described him as laughing throughout the interview. Describing his owner during slavery, J.W.

¹⁰⁹ Sarah Ross et al Appraisal Sheet.

¹¹⁰ Rebecca Hooks Appraisal Sheet.

¹¹¹ G. Rawick, *TAS v.17*, pp.173-175.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.174.

¹¹³ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.200.

Mapplin, he also stated that ‘Master Maplin was far above the average slave owner; he was good to his slaves, fed them well, and was a very human gentleman.’¹¹⁴ Similarly, Benny Dilliard’s interviewer, Grace McCune, described him in the over-emotional fashion, writing that ‘tears rolled down his face as he told of his friend, and the visitor, fearful that he was too much over-come by grief to be able to give a good story, suggested that another engagement be made to record his reminiscences.’¹¹⁵

These generally more positive (and less candid) accounts of slavery, in turn, were praised by a different appraiser named G. B. Roberts using phrases describing the human interest and colour, the idyllic picture presented and the amusing stories that were included. When evaluating Robert Henry’s interview, Roberts wrote, under the heading of ‘reliability and value’ that ‘the compiler here retells the informant’s idyllic story.’¹¹⁶ Similarly, an idyllic picture was interpreted by Roberts in Benny Dilliard’s interview; ‘the tone is ... occasionally idyllic in picturing or nostalgic in recalling old times’ and this, according to Roberts, did not detract from the value of it; ‘although it presents a somewhat idyllic picture of slavery, the interview is worthy of publication.’¹¹⁷ Other Georgia interviews were evaluated as valuable due to the ‘amusing’ nature them. Appraising Callie Elder’s interview, Roberts stated that it was an ‘amusing and interesting account by a vivid personality’ and that ‘the interview is of value as both a serious and an unconsciously amusing commentary on negro life.’¹¹⁸ Similarly, appraising David Goodman Gullin’s interview, he interpreted that ‘some human interest items growing out of certain comic, tragic or tragic-comic aspects of slave existence, which are personal and “different.”’¹¹⁹ Furthermore, the Georgia interviews were praised and valued for providing ‘local color’. Alice Hutcheson’s interview was evaluated as ‘a valuable account which is characterised by good local color’ while Benny Dillaird’s was described in the following way; ‘should be especially useful as reference material on slave and plantation life as it contains good descriptive accounts, local color, and regional atmosphere.’¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 12, Part 2, Georgia Narratives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), p.84.

¹¹⁵ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 12, Part 1, Georgia Narratives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), p.287.

¹¹⁶ Robert Henry Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

¹¹⁷ Benny Dilliard Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

¹¹⁸ Callie Elder Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

¹¹⁹ David Goodman Gullin Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.

¹²⁰ Alice Hutcheson Appraisal Sheet, FWP, WPA Collection, LoC, box A897.; Benny Dilliard Appraisal Sheet.

Stewart has demonstrated that a comparison of these two sets of evaluations of the narratives' reliability 'clearly reveal the personal biases of members of Botkin's staff' and that the judgements were 'often based on the reader's own assumptions about the institution of slavery.'¹²¹ Evidently, Roberts felt that the Georgia interviews included amusing, idyllic stories of plantation life, and in turn, thought these were valuable attributes of an interview. In contrast, Rogers evaluated the NWU interviewees' candid, vivid and emotional accounts of abuse under slavery as uninteresting, lacking in colour and therefore not valuable. While it is likely that these interpretations were developed due to the different content of the interviews, the race of NWU interviewers may also contribute to these contrasting evaluations of their interviews. In both cases, however, the evaluations highlight that the two appraisers were highly shaped by white-centric narratives of slavery when evaluating these interviews.

More than uncovering the personal ideological biases of the appraisers, however, the words idyllic, nostalgic, and amusing also give an indication of the emotional reactions that Roberts had to the Georgia interviews. In finding a story amusing and interesting, or nostalgic and idyllic, Roberts gave an indication of his own emotional reactions to the testimony as whilst one person may interpret a specific memory of slavery included in these interviews as idyllic, another may describe this as upsetting or anger-inducing account. For example, Roberts wrote of Robert Henry's interview in his evaluation that 'the compiler here retells the informants' idyllic story.'¹²² Exploring his narrative, in some places Henry's interview did describe slavery in relatively positive terms, such as when he stated that 'in spite of the hard work required, life had been very pleasant on the plantation.'¹²³ Yet, the sentence below shows slavery as far from idyllic; 'the field hands were at work at sun-up and were not allowed to quit until dark.'¹²⁴ Thus, his interpretation of this account as presenting an idyllic picture is highly subjective and indicative of his own emotions towards slavery and black Americans. Furthermore, because 'local color' literature often portrayed plantation life in nostalgic and romantic terms, his use of the term 'local color' in relation to these narratives suggest that he felt some nostalgia when reading the interviews. In contrast, Rogers' interpretation of the Florida interviews as uninteresting gives an indication that he did not have an emotional response when reading the graphic descriptions of punishment and sexual abuse within them.

¹²¹ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.239.

¹²² Robert Henry Appraisal Sheet.

¹²³ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 12, Part 2, Georgia Narratives*, p.196.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

What makes Roberts' emotional reactions particularly significant is that he suggested that these facets of an interview made it a valuable or objective one. Local color and pro-slavery accounts were seen as inherently valuable. As the stereotypical character sketches written at the state level must be considered within the 'white racial frame', so too must the appraiser's emotional and ideological evaluation of these traits. Considering the 'white racial frame' Feagin has argued that it 'has had a very strong *emotional* character.'¹²⁵ While he suggests fear, hate and repulsion of black Americans encapsulated the emotional dimension of the white racial worldview, it is worth seeing emotions of nostalgia in relation to slavery and amusement at black Americans as another emotional facet of this mind-set, as well as an emotional numbness or distance in relation to the brutal aspects of the institution. These emotions towards slavery and black Americans evidently merged with strongly held narratives and stereotypes about them to frame the appraisers' interpretations of the interviews.

Other readers of the narratives, however, had different emotional responses to the Georgia interviews. For example, an interview with George Caulton, which was not sent to Washington, included a hand-written phrase in the margin. Caulton's interview abounds with stereotypical depictions of his emotional character and next to Caulton's alleged statement that the slaves did not understand what the Civil War was about, the editor wrote 'Bull! The Negroes knew they were what the war was about.'¹²⁶ Thus, it seems that these interviews elicited contrasting emotional reactions in different readers. Perhaps because of the different interpretations of these interviews by appraisers and directors, the lack of value ascribed to the NWU interviews did not ultimately affect the circulation and use of them. The appraisers' evaluations of the interviews had little effect, as an interview labelled unsuitable for publication by the Georgia appraiser was still included in the *Slave Narrative Collection*, produced by the Library of Congress Project.¹²⁷

Yet, it is worth noting here that WPA guides about the black experience in Florida and Louisiana, produced by the NWU discussed here and a similar unit in New Orleans, were not published, in comparison to their often racist and stereotypical white-produced guides about

¹²⁵ J. Feagin, *Racist America*, p.66.

¹²⁶ G. Rawick, *TAS Supplement Series 1, Volume 3, Part 1, Georgia Narratives*, pp.172-174.

¹²⁷ Bob Mobley's interview was not recommended for publication, yet was still incorporated into the Library of Congress's collection of these documents – *The Slave Narrative Collection*.

each state. The national directors did not even read the Florida manuscript.¹²⁸ This decision to not publish the state guides written by, and about, black Americans in turn ultimately affected what the public, at the time, read about their experience of slavery and the Reconstruction era. For example, Louisiana historian Joan Redding has argued that the writers in New Orleans ‘major goals were to correct the established discriminatory history and prove, through the example of Louisiana’s history, that blacks had contributed fundamentally to American history, and that their position resulted from repression.’¹²⁹ It was this narrative, written by black Americans, that remained hidden in the archives and away from general readership. Indeed, the remainder of this thesis will demonstrate that it is important to explore how different testimony produced with the formerly enslaved was reacted to, published, used and archived. As can be seen with the WPA state guides, the different value ascribed to sets of testimony created by black Americans, to those created by whites, has undoubtedly influenced which narratives of slavery the public and historians have viewed and acknowledged in the twentieth century.

Conclusions: Emotional Framing and the Many Stages of Source Production

This chapter has demonstrated that, as Stewart has argued, the WPA interviews were ‘sites of struggle over representation.’¹³⁰ Emotion, however, must be recognised as at the heart of how this struggle was played out. While many of the details of how these sources were produced are unclear, it must be acknowledged that the emotional content that is included in Rawick’s published interviews was the result of subtle framing, editing and shaping of the interviews from a variety of actors. Of course, the Ex-Slave Club interviews are considerably shorter than those conducted by the NWU, explaining in part why the interviewees described less emotion. Yet, the consistent pattern of emotional content and absences of feeling in the Ex-Slave Club interviews, and the stark contrast with the NWU testimony, suggests that the starkly different patterns of feeling between the NWU interviews and Ex-Slave Club narratives must be seen as the result of this manipulation during the creation of the source.

¹²⁸ G. McDonogh, *The Florida Negro*, p.x.

¹²⁹ J. Redding, ‘The Dillard Project’, p.59.

¹³⁰ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.199.

Analysing these interviews using a new thematic and methodological perspective has demonstrated that at the interview encounter, write-up, editing and evaluation stage, a variety of actors could bring their own agendas, narratives, ideologies and emotions to bear on the interviews. At the interview itself, the agendas that the formerly enslaved ascribed to the interview also had a greater influence on the content than is usually acknowledged. Though none of the interviewees stated any purpose explicitly, it seems that the Ex-Slave Club's more politically motivated campaign for pensions framed the emotions that they recounted during the interview. Not knowing who the interviewer or writer of the Ex-Slave Club interviews was, however, limits our ability to understand the extent to which this group agenda led to the positive descriptions in the interviews, or whether Cora Mae Taylor also framed her questions to elicit this. In contrast, a number of the NWU interviewees had another more personal agenda, and spoke about this in their interviews; to tell their story, and tell it truthfully. The emotional labour that this honesty and resistance required is occasionally described in these interviews.

After the interview itself, however, stereotypes of black Americans, narratives of slavery, emotions towards the institution and political considerations about white readership came together to subtly frame how emotional content was written about, edited and evaluated. Decisions were made at this stage of the source production over what content should be included in the narratives, as is evidenced by the different forms of Ex-Slave Club interviews. Stereotypical character sketches of those giving their testimony were also inserted into both the NWU and Ex-Slave Club interviews. Whether written by the black or white interviewers or edited by state personnel such as Corita Doggett Corse, the contest at the Florida branch between presenting the black voice and making any writing acceptable for a white audience may account for this. The sketches, far from presenting the true emotional character of the elderly men and women, tell us perhaps more about how those at the Florida branch felt towards black Americans, and demonstrate how the writers' and editors' own racial frameworks were transplanted onto these interviews.

The ideologies and narratives held by appraisers of the interviews about slavery and black Americans also seemed to frame how they were evaluated. The candid descriptions of punishment, violence and emancipation were seen as uninteresting, whilst the benevolent picture of slavery painted in the Georgia interviews was praised. While giving an indication that the appraisers were guided by overarching white-centric narratives of slavery when evaluating the interviews, their descriptions in the appraisal sheets also indicate that their

interpretation was framed by their own emotional reactions to the memories. Others at the Washington headquarters, however, had opposite opinions about these interviews, and Botkin recognised the importance of the statements about forced breeding within the Florida narratives.

Coming back to Benjamin Botkin's discussion of what the emotion within the WPA interviews actually tells us, these chapters have demonstrated that firstly, due to the agenda of the members of the Ex-Slave Club, their interviews do not seem to present unmediated access to their emotional experiences. Importantly, however, it does highlight the agency of this group of formerly enslaved people, and how they framed their narratives according to their own wishes, hopes and political agendas. In contrast, the NWU interviews, and in particular those with women who focused upon telling the truth, may reveal traces, although still mediated, of how the enslaved felt about slavery. Indeed, it would be wrong to argue that nothing of the former slaves' emotion can be accessed in these interviews, and to discount the emotionally-charged, multifaceted and heart-felt testimony, particularly after describing the emotional labour that telling their stories required. Even the NWU documents, however, must be viewed as neither interview transcripts nor entirely creative literary accounts, but as multi-authored representations of slavery, and historians must be wary, for example, when using the descriptions of the informants' emotional expressions as evidence of their feelings. Through adding in sketches of the emotional character of the formerly enslaved, and emphasising different aspects of their testimony, the interviews tell us much about how the writers, editors and appraisers viewed and felt about slavery and black Americans when producing the documents. Thus, this chapter has demonstrated that an understanding of the race, beliefs, feelings and racialised world-views of each individual interviewer and editor, alongside the agendas of the interviewees, is essential when deciding upon which sets of WPA interviews to use when researching the lived experience of slavery and to write more critical emotional histories of the institution.

Chapter Four: Hearing the Voices of the Formerly Enslaved: Emotional Testimony in the Recorded Interviews of Lorenzo Dow Turner

In 1932 and 1933 black American scholar Lorenzo Dow Turner travelled to the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina to produce a linguistic study of the Gullah dialect, which formed part of the *Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada* project. During this expedition, Turner recorded short, but illuminating excerpts of black Americans discussing their lives in bondage. Despite the evident potential of recorded interviews with the formerly enslaved to enhance our understanding of the lived experience of slavery, only a limited number of scholars have used available sound archives of elderly black Americans giving their testimony.¹ This chapter will outline the possibilities of Turner's recordings for writing histories of the emotional lives of the enslaved through analysing seven of his interviews with members of the Gullah community who had been in bondage. This chapter will reveal that the formerly enslaved men and women, in their interviews with Turner, expressed a wide range of feelings about slavery that countered both Jim Crow racial etiquette and the hegemonic stereotypes of black Americans that were circulating at the time. Through listening to emotion in the tone, pitch, volume and expressions of interviewees, this chapter also reveals traces of the unspoken pain and anger and thus the long-term and complex emotional impact of slavery on the black Americans who experienced it, that are often hidden in interview transcriptions.

Questioning why this range of emotion was expressed, this chapter will argue that Turner's interviewing methodology, the interviewees' own agendas when telling their stories, and the racial and political ideologies of the New Negro Movement all interacted to shape the emotional content of the interviews. To present this argument, this chapter is divided into five sections. The first will give a brief history of the Gullah people and attempts to research and write about their language and culture. This will be followed by biographic information on Turner and a discussion of the specific details of his Gullah expedition, to show that as the first

¹ See I. Berlin et al, *Remembering Slavery*; P. Escott, 'Speaking of Slavery'; J. Graham, 'Slave Narratives, Slave Culture, and the Slave Experience', in G. Bailey, N. Maynor, and P. Cukor-Avila (eds.), *The Emergence of Black English: Text and Commentary [electronic book]* (Amsterdam: J Benjamins Pub. Co. 1991).

black American linguist, Turner's collecting project was both a unique and influential endeavour, as he was influenced by 'racial uplift' ideas espoused by the New Negro Movement to linguistically prove, for the first time, the cultural resiliency of the Gullah people. In the following three sections, focusing on the interviewees' memories of work, punishment and emancipation, this chapter reveals that similarly to the WPA interviews, the former slaves' emotion, in this source, was both personal and political. An intricate interplay between Turner's 'racial uplift' political ideology, his interview methodology and the interviewees own feelings during the interview framed how they composed their memories at this particular encounter. Despite this web of influencing factors, as Turner's intellectual work required that he had a rigorous interviewing technique and recorded his interviews, this chapter argues that in these sources historians can get as close as is possible to understanding the - still heavily mediated - complex emotional legacies of slavery for those who were interviewed by Turner.

The History of the 'Gullah' and Fascination with Gullah Culture

The term Gullah has come to represent the people, culture and language of African Americans on the Sea Islands and coastal mainland of South Carolina and Georgia. The region from Sandy Island in South Carolina to Amelia Island in Florida is most commonly labelled as the Gullah Coast.² Due to the geographical landscape of this region, including land, river and sea, this region was ideal for rice cultivation and accordingly it became 'America's premier rice growing area.'³ During the colonial era, many white settlers came from the British West Indies to begin rice cultivation, yet it is important to note that 'Africans were in South Carolina from the beginning of settlement and played a major role in establishing rice culture.'⁴ As rice cultivation was common on the West African coast, and in particular the Senegal-Gambia region, enslavers wanted to import people from this specific area of Africa. Men and women from the Congo-Angola region were also forcibly enslaved and transported to South Carolina during the 1730s, and accordingly, the term Gullah is often labelled as originating from the word Angola.⁵

² A. Sumpter, 'Geechee and Gullah Culture', *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, available at <<https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/geechee-and-gullah-culture>> [accessed 19.02.19].

³ C. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), p.12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.13.

⁵ A. Sumpter, 'Geechee and Gullah Culture'; C. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, p.13.

Even in the eighteenth century, the specifics of this region's geography and crop production meant that a significant racial imbalance emerged in South Carolina, and Charles Joyner has demonstrated that in 1740, two thirds of South Carolina's population were Africans.⁶ Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the rice plantations grew in size and number on the Gullah Coast, and was one of the most profitable types of crop being produced. For the enslaved, rice cultivation was particularly difficult, and usually undertaken via the task system. Discussing this type of work regime in lowcountry South Carolina, Joyner argued that 'the slaves of All Saints planted, cultivated, and harvested their enormous rice crops almost exclusively by hand. The work cycle was dangerous and tiring and involved a full year of strenuous labor in swampy, snake infested lowlands.'⁷ Whilst the enslaved on the Gullah Coast undertook different types of work than most of their counterparts elsewhere, they also lived on much larger plantations than African Americans who lived in other areas of the U.S. Furthermore, they continued to live in a region where there were fewer whites than in other slaveholding states. According to Joyner, 'economically, it meant more continuity with African work patterns that one might otherwise have expected. Culturally, it facilitated continuity with various patterns of African folk culture.'⁸

As Turner himself showed for the first time, elements of African languages were also retained in the dialect spoken by those who had been in bondage and their descendants in this region. Gullah is a form of creolised English spoken on the Sea Islands and mainland coast of Georgia and South Carolina, with surviving aspects of African languages that can be seen in the vocabulary, sounds, syntax and intonation of the dialect. This means, for example, that many of the consonant sounds are very different to English and some sounds cannot be represented or written down using English letters.⁹ The African elements of the Gullah dialect, according to Turner, remained in part due to the large number of enslaved men and women who came to South Carolina directly from Africa in the eighteenth century. This meant that the various African languages that the enslaved brought with them to the U.S. were constantly being strengthened and reinforced throughout the eighteenth century. Due to the lack of a bridge

⁶ C. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside*, p.15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.45.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p.37.

⁹ K. Wyly Mille and M. Montgomery 'Introduction' in L. D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), p.xli.

between the Sea Islands and mainland, and the isolation of this region, it was also a ripe environment for the retention of African elements within their dialect.¹⁰

Despite the term ‘Gullah’ being used to describe the people living on the Gullah Coast and their specific dialect, according to Melissa Cooper, ‘the qualities associated with the term ‘Gullah’ evolved over time.’¹¹ Before the 1920s, Gullah was used in published works to describe black people in coastal South Carolina, yet in the 1920s and 1930s, new characterisations became connected to the ‘Gullah’ term, including a geographical expansion to include those who lived in coastal areas of Georgia, and a focus on spiritual practices and ‘primitive’ traits ‘that made the people included under this banner unique from other blacks in the South.’¹² The evolving nature of the characterisation of Gullah resulted from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century fascination with the culture and language of the Gullah people in the U.S. During the 1920s and 1930s, Turner was not the only person to write about and study the Gullah people, as they emerged ‘as a population whose culture was worthy of collection, documentation, examination and exploitation.’¹³ Cooper placed this fascination with the Gullah people on an obsession with the ‘primitive’ in the early twentieth century; white society ‘believed that the essence of the African was present in Atlantic world blacks’, and in turn ‘that the mystique and allure of the primitive was within reach – their dark skinned neighbors promised to satisfy all of their curiosities and needs.’¹⁴

This fascination with the ‘primitive’ led numerous white writers, researchers and anthropologists to explore and depict the Gullah region in fictional works and ‘scholarly’ studies, spurred by Julia Peterkin, a plantation mistress from South Carolina, who wrote numerous fictional stories about the Gullah Islands. Describing the stories she wrote, Cooper argued that she erased all mention of racism, Jim Crow segregation and white people from her stories. According to Cooper, ‘Peterkin’s Gullah folk were isolated from the outside world and had a unique connection to their African ancestors’ as they were ‘suspicious of modernity and book learning’ and ‘their lives were ruled by supernatural phenomena.’¹⁵ Her fiction led other

¹⁰ L. D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), reprinted by (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2002), pp.3-5.

¹¹ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah: A History of Sapelo Islanders, Race, and the American Imagination* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2017), pp.23-25.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.29

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

researchers to explore and write about the Gullah people. In the same years as Turner undertook his project, white researcher W. Robert Moore wrote a *National Geographic* article about the region, and Lydia Parrish recorded, collected and performed slave songs on the islands. Yet, they did so with the conviction that the black Americans who lived here were ‘authentic primitives, whose daily lives and beliefs mirrored those of the African ancestors.’¹⁶

Many researchers, including anthropologists such as Melville Herskovits, were particularly interested in Gullah folk culture and their spiritual practices, yet Cooper has observed that they also ‘maintained a view of black people’s African past and African survivals that was tainted by popular stories about black voodoo cults on tropical islands, clandestine rituals led by ‘rootworkers’, hexes, zombies and black southerners who venerated macabre charms.’¹⁷ Alongside presenting Gullah people and culture as ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’, according to Margaret Wade-Lewis, who has explored how the Gullah dialect was discussed in linguistic literature, ‘some writers viewed Gullah as modified ‘baby talk’ Africans had acquired from plantation overseers.’¹⁸ She further stated that ‘still others maintained that Gullah differed from British dialects because of the social backwardness, isolation, simplemindedness, and intellectual inferiority of its speakers.’¹⁹ It was within this context of wider fascination with the ‘primitive’ Gullah people and their language that Turner was undertaking his project.

Lorenzo Dow Turner and his Gullah Project

Turner was born in 1890 and was the child of a free-born father and formerly enslaved mother. Wade-Lewis, who wrote an extensive biography of Lorenzo Dow Turner, has outlined that his father, Rooks Turner, was particularly well-educated; he had received a college degree from Howard University only 12 years after emancipation was declared. In 1879, Rooks Turner also set up The Rooks Turner Normal School to train teachers and according to Wade-Lewis, his father ‘was the counterpart of Booker T. Washington, Carter G. Woodson, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and Mary Bethune’ and ‘was not a separatist but definitely a ‘race man’ dedicated to the greater good of persons of African ancestry.’²⁰ Following in his father’s intellectual

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.69

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁸ M. Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner: Father of Gullah Studies* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), p.75.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.5.

footsteps, Turner went to college at Howard in 1910, and received a master's degree from Harvard, graduating in 1917. This was a significant achievement, as Wade-Lewis has argued 'Harvard would admit only an exceptional African American man – one with the potential to become a scholar and leader.'²¹

After receiving this degree, he went back to Howard to teach English, becoming the Head of Department, whilst also obtaining a PhD from Chicago with a thesis entitled 'Anti-Slavery Sentiment in American Literature Prior to 1865.'²² In 1929 Turner then moved to Fisk University, a historically black university. It was during his first few years at Fisk University that Turner began his transition from an English professor to a scholar of linguistics. In 1930, he began training at the Linguistic Institute studying under Hans Kurath, the director of the *Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada* and became the first African American to do so. The *Linguistic Atlas* was formed to survey the different dialects of North America at a time when American linguistics was becoming a more entrenched discipline, emerging from an anthropological focus on recording disappearing Native American languages.²³ As Gullah was a distinct but unknown dialect, after completing his training, Kurath asked Turner to conduct a survey of the Gullah Dialect for this project.

Like the white writers, researchers and linguists mentioned thus far, Turner was interested in the African elements of the Gullah dialect, and he also shared their beliefs that the Gullah were 'stuck in an earlier time' and isolated from the modern world.²⁴ Yet, instead of emphasising African retention to highlight the islanders' primitiveness and backward nature, Turner was approaching the capturing of black voices from an almost unique perspective for this era. Explaining this difference, Cooper has argued that 'while black American scholar Lorenzo Dow Turner conducted studies in coastal Georgia, and on Sapelo Island, to restore dignity to black Americans by exploring the African roots of their linguistic culture, the other Gullah researchers who came to the island did not share his affirmative vision of African peoples.'²⁵ Further to this, she observed that 'in fact, Sapelo's white researchers' writings of African survivals in the region largely reiterated popular stereotypes about superstitious, ignorant,

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.27.

²² For information about his time at University see *Ibid.*, pp.20-31.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.76-79.

²⁴ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.105.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.69.

impulsive, childlike and backward blacks.²⁶ Thus, Turner was alone in being a black American scholar who had a specific interest in highlighting the resiliency of African culture to counter misinformation and derogatory stereotypes about the Gullah people.

Not only framed by his upbringing and wider studies of the Gullah, his project was influenced by wider 'New Negro' ideologies and the political, cultural and intellectual endeavours of black writers, academics, artists, musicians, photographers and political leaders to foster racial pride and emphasise the achievements of black Americans in the early twentieth century. Whilst it is hard to pinpoint the exact beginning of this movement, the New Negro Movement refers to racial, political and cultural ideologies that began within black intellectual circles in the early twentieth century. In 1900, for example, Booker T. Washington, N.B Wood and Fannie Barrier Williams produced *A New Negro for a New Century* that focused upon highlighting the achievements of black people.²⁷ Producing a foundational anthology of essays about the 'New Negro' in 1925, Alain Locke also wrote about the eradication of the 'Uncle Tom' and 'Sambo' stereotypes and the fostering of a new consciousness by including articles and essays about music, art, literature and social science.²⁸ These ideologies, further influenced by the mass migration of black Americans to the cities and continued inequalities, seeped into the practices of black intellectuals and those collecting the testimony of the formerly enslaved. As Stewart indicated in relation to the WPA project, 'black intellectuals were becoming increasingly committed to (re)constructing a historical record that would foster a sense of collective pride and national identity, while educating white Americans about black achievement and entitlement to the rights of citizenship.'²⁹

Wade-Lewis has suggested that Turner was influenced by these political and intellectual ideologies, arguing that Turner was 'guided by his own family tradition of high achievement and the Harlem Renaissance ideal of the 'New Negro' as the standard bearer for the cultural group whose responsibility was to achieve as much as possible to each arena in which one was suited.'³⁰ Similarly, Cooper argued that Turner was a member of the 'New Negro

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ D. Baldwin, 'Introduction: New Negroes Forging a New World' in D. Baldwin and M. Makalani (eds.), *Escape from New York: The New Negro Renaissance Beyond Harlem* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), p.5.

²⁸ C. Wall, *The Harlem Renaissance: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.8 and p.22.

²⁹ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.2.

³⁰ M. Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner*, p.72.

intelligentsia.’³¹ Though many associate the ‘New Negro’ simply with the Harlem Renaissance, Claudrena Harold has argued that, in fact, black southerners were key in creating the ‘New Negro’ identity. She stated that ‘unlike many canonical Harlem Renaissance writers, these southerners envisioned their region and its native sons and daughters as critical to the making of a more empowering modernity for people of African descent in the United States and world over.’³² Although, like white collectors, Turner was focusing on the African elements of the Gullah, he was doing so to highlight resiliency and counteract the stereotypical depictions of the ‘primitive’ Gullah people in previous studies. Turner was therefore one of these ‘New Negro’ intellectuals who saw the South, southern people and the study of the community as important for empowering black Americans.

Motivated by his father who was dedicated to furthering the achievements of black men and the wider ‘New Negro’ racial and political ideologies, in 1932 and 1933 Turner embarked on his linguistic project, with funding from the American Council for Learned Societies and a one-hundred pound Fairchild recording machine.³³ When he first arrived in the Gullah region in 1932, Wade-Lewis noted that ‘to dissolve the suspicions of the Gullah people, who were accustomed to ridicule for their cultural and linguistic uniqueness, Turner sought out three distinct community leaders in Charleston to serve as intermediaries – a minister, teacher and a mortician.’³⁴ He lived in Charleston and would travel by boat to the Sea Islands each day to talk to his informants. Sometimes, in order to record the interviewees where electricity supply was available, he would take them to the mainland by boat. If not, he was occasionally invited to buildings on the Sea Islands that did have access to power, for example, to the plantation home of Lydia Parrish.³⁵

Turner also aimed to become particularly comfortable with his informants so that they would use the dialect that they did with friends and family. In his 1947 article ‘Problems confronting the investigator of Gullah’, Turner argued that ‘the investigator of Gullah should know his Gullah informants so well that they will feel no necessity for using a form of speech which

³¹ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.102

³² C. Harold, *New Negro Politics in the Jim Crow South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2016), p.3.

³³ Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum, ‘Word, Shout, Song: Lorenzo Dow Turner Connecting Communities Through Language’, Exhibition Brochure, August 9, 2010- March 27, 2011.

³⁴ M. Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner*, p.81.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p.82.

they commonly reserve for strangers.³⁶ From examining Turner's appointment book, where he detailed all of his meetings with informants on the Sea Islands, we know that he visited his interviewees between six and eight times.³⁷ He also often compensated them with tobacco, groceries or money.³⁸ This method allowed him to interview twenty-one informants in his first year, conducting up to 100 recordings in total. Occasionally other people were at the interviews and asked questions, including: Guy Lowman who travelled with Turner in the summer of 1932; Turner's wife who accompanied him on his trip in 1933, and transcribed much of the data collected at the interviews; and an unidentified woman. These interviews in turn became the foundation of Turner's book *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, published in 1949, after further training in 1936 in West African languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies. In this influential study, he countered prevailing thought at the time by demonstrating that a much larger number of words and phrases in Gullah have an African source.³⁹

Out of the 21 informants recorded as part of *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, this chapter analyses those conducted with seven formerly enslaved individuals: Diana Brown, Sam Polite, Susan Quall, Wallace Quarterman, Anne Scott, Prince Smith and Dave White.⁴⁰ I am using only seven interviews as these are the only informants who were enslaved and whose interviews are of good enough quality for people to transcribe. When recording these people, Turner encouraged the interviewees to talk about 'topics about which they were enthusiastic', which included slavery and plantation life. This had the result of 'diverting attention from their idiolects in order to capture the creole in its most natural form.'⁴¹ The recordings, therefore, all include some information about the interviewees' lives in bondage, despite not being necessarily created with this purpose in mind. As they are often short interviews, a number of the interviewees only discussed one or two experiences. Susan Quall, for example, focused upon the Civil War and emancipation and Wallace Quarterman mainly discussed his labour. Yet, there is still value in some of these short descriptions, as they are often vivid and detailed discussions.

³⁶ L. D. Turner, 'Problems Confronting the Investigator of Gullah', *Publication of the American Dialect Society*, No. 9, November 1947, p.82.

³⁷ Lorenzo Dow Turner Appointment Book 1932, Lorenzo Dow Turner Papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archive, (hereafter LDT Papers, ACM).

³⁸ M. Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner*, p.83.

³⁹ L. D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, p.5.

⁴⁰ These recordings are held in the American Dialect Society Collection at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

⁴¹ M. Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner*, p.82.

The seven interviews have already been transcribed. Five were produced by the Library of Congress and are available in their online collection *Voices from the Days of Slavery*.⁴² These are word-for-word transcriptions of the interviews, but include some unidentified words that are represented by question marks due to the quality of recordings. The transcripts of the interviews with Diana Brown and Prince Smith are included in *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, were written by Turner himself and are presented in continuous prose. It must be acknowledged here that all the interviews that I am analysing were recorded in order to highlight the African elements of Gullah. I am not a linguist nor do I have any training in Creole languages, meaning it is possible that when analysing these interviews I have lost some of the informants intended meaning due to misunderstanding phrases, words or sounds. This listening has therefore been conducted with the acknowledgement that I am listening to, attributing meaning to, and reacting to the voices of the interviewees in my own cultural schema and with my own linguistic abilities, and these limitations must be acknowledged.

To counteract this, I have consistently listened to the recordings alongside the transcripts of them conducted either by Turner or transcribers at the Library of Congress. Where possible, I have used Turner's transcriptions, as alongside being written in the phonetic alphabet, he also included his own English translation of them. Furthermore, before the reproduction of the transcripts in his book, Turner explained that:

Even though the African element in the remaining Gullah texts is not so obvious as that in the numerals, the songs, and the stories, it is present nevertheless. For example, it manifests itself linguistically in syntactical and morphological features, in vowel and consonant sounds, in the manner in which words are formed, and especially in intonation. These remaining texts also contain a few African words.⁴³

Thus, while the grammar of the transcripts do not always follow rules of standard English, almost all of the vocabulary is in the English language. Where it does differ, meaning can often still be understood. For example, the editors of the new version of Turner's book highlight that Gullah speakers use the active voice when English speakers use the passive voice; 'He was beaten' becomes *Dem beat um* "they beat him."⁴⁴ Thus, non Gullah speakers can still deduce

⁴² *Voices From the Days of Slavery*, available at <<https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/index.html>> [accessed 8.8.18]

⁴³ L. D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, p. 255.

⁴⁴ K. Wyly Mille and M. Montgomery 'Introduction' in L. D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, p.xliii.

meaning from these recordings through listening to them alongside transcriptions - preferably the English translations conducted by Turner where they exist - and through looking up meanings of words or phrases if they are not identifiable.

As can be seen in Table 3, the sample of interviews that this chapter analyses includes three women and four men. Their ages in 1865 ranged from 9 to 25 years of age, with four of the informants being aged 23-25 at this time. Three interviewees worked in the field; one as a plowman and one as a house servant. The remaining two formerly enslaved individuals, Diana Brown and Dave White, do not explicitly mention their labours. All those recorded lived, during slavery, on the Sea Islands of Georgia and South Carolina. Five lived in South Carolina; two on St Helena Island, one on John's Island, one on Wadmalaw Island, and one on Edisto Island. According to the introduction to Turner's book, 'none had travelled outside their immediate vicinity except for brief periods, and all but one were native and had parents who were native, to the immediate area in which they lived (one exception was Wallace Quarterman, of Frederika, St. Simons Island, Georgia, who was born in Liberty County, two counties to the north along the coast and moved to St. Simons at an early age.)'⁴⁵

The remaining two interviewees lived on St. Simons Island, G.A. Seven interviews is, of course, a small sample of recordings to use. This sample also only provides access to the memories of those who were young children and young adults during slavery, so is not representative of the full spectrum of enslaved people.⁴⁶ Yet, as this chapter does not attempt to make broad conclusions as to the experience of slavery but aims to uncover the dynamics that shaped the production of this source, this sample size is not a limitation. To really probe these dynamics, an in depth analysis of each recording is needed. This analysis will be provided in the remainder of this chapter.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.xlv.

⁴⁶ In contrast to the WPA interviews taken in the late 1930s, however, these were conducted in 1932/3, giving greater insight into the experiences of those who were enslaved into early adulthood than the WPA interviews can provide.

Table 3: Table of Age, Location of Enslavement and Date of Interview of Turner’s Gullah Interviewees.

| Name | Year of Birth (circa) | Age at the time of interview (years old) | Location of enslavement | Date of Interview with Turner |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Diana Brown | 1844 | 88 | Seabrook, Edisto Island, S.C. | Date Unknown |
| Sam Polite | 1843 | 89 | Frogmore, St Helena Island, S.C. | June 27, 1932 |
| Susan Quall | 1854 | 78 | Sand Hill, Johns Island, S.C. | May 16, 1932 |
| Wallace Quarterman | 1943 | 90 | Frederika, St Simons Island, GA. | August 5, 1933 |
| Anne Scott | 1847 | 85 | Frogmore, St Helena Island, S.C. | June 27, 1932 |
| Prince Smith | 1844 | 88 | Rockville, Wadmalaw Island, S.C. | May 2, 1932 |
| Dave White | 1857 | 76 | South End, St Simons Island, GA. | July 26, 1933 |

Emotional Memories of Enslaved Labour

When Turner interviewed the formerly enslaved in 1932 or 1933, five of them discussed the forced labour regime that existed on their slave-holding unit. Turner would sometimes question the elderly black Americans specifically about their work or methods of farming. He asked Sam Polite ‘what did you plant?’ and asked Wallace Quarterman, ‘what were some of the things you raised there? What were some of the crops planted South?’⁴⁷ Although the words are not entirely clear, the transcript of Anne Scott’s interview suggests that the interviewer ‘asks an inaudible question possibly phrased like: What was your master's name and where did you work?’⁴⁸ Forced labour was a fundamental foundation of the slavery institution and defined much of the everyday experience of the enslaved, perhaps explaining why Turner and other interviewers, such as those employed by the WPA, generally did enquire about their experiences of it. Discussions of work regimes were often not only included in interviews produced with the formerly enslaved but also in slave autobiographies. Blassingame, when analysing these narratives, concluded that labour practices gave ‘a certain uniform pattern to the slave’s life’ and that ‘according to the black autobiographers, most field hands rose before dawn, prepared their meals, fed the livestock and then rushed to the fields before sunrise.’⁴⁹

Whilst extreme forms of violence – such as whippings and punishments – elicited strong emotional responses from those who experienced it, when they discussed their memories (which will be outlined below), the informants for the most part only implied feelings towards these regimes through the words and phrases they used to describe their work. For example, everyday tasks that the enslaved were forced to complete are explained in minute, step-by-step detail by a number of the Gullah informants. Anne Scott, who was enslaved on St. Helena Island recounted the work she undertook in her enslaver’s house; ‘I was in the house. Take care of children. In the morning. Get up. Put on the [cereal (?)] and stop and wash the children

⁴⁷ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932, American Dialect Society Collection, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, (hereafter ADS Collection, LoC), AFS 25656, ADS 1284, available at <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/title.html>> [accessed 14.10.17]; Wallace Quarterman, interviewed by L.D. Turner, August 5, 1933, ADS Collection, LoC, AFS 25665 ADS 1293, available at <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/title.html>> [accessed 14.10.17]

⁴⁸ Anne Scott, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932, ADS Collection, LoC, AFS 25657 ADS 1285, available at <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/title.html>> [accessed 14.10.17]

⁴⁹ J. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South, Revised Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p.250.

hands, brush their hair.’⁵⁰ She continued, in a similar fashion, to explain the rest of her day. Wallace Quarterman discussed his field work by stating ‘I plant potato. I plant corn. I plant green. I plant beans. Every day, you understand.’⁵¹ Similarly, Prince Smith described in detail the field labour that he undertook; ‘then you turn around; then you take your hoe and you will go, and it take you till sundown to hoe out them task.’⁵² It is therefore significant that these interviewees all recount their labour in the same specific, task-by-task fashion.

Repetition of words and phrases is a common trait in the Gullah language, explaining why Quarterman repeated the word plant, yet the rhythm of these relentless staccato phrases is still emotionally significant. Alessandro Portelli has argued, in relation to oral history interviews, that rhythms are important to analyse; ‘many narrators switch from one type of rhythm to another within the same interview, as their attitude toward the subjects under discussion changes.’⁵³ The way in which the informants recounted each task, step-by-step, emphasises the endless and weary nature in which they remembered their everyday experience of bondage. The relentless nature of labour that is suggested in these descriptions is reinforced by phrases that the interviewees used after recounting the details of their labour. After talking about her domestic tasks Anne Scott stated ‘after all, I couldn’t do no more but that’, whilst Wallace Quarterman declared ‘every day, you understand’ after listing the crops that he planted.⁵⁴ These phrases suggest that the formerly enslaved people who were interviewed by Turner wanted to emphasise the unremitting nature of their work regimes, yet it is surprising that it is muted weariness that is implied in their descriptions and not more intense emotions such as anger, resentment or even fear.

Enslaved labour was undoubtedly a form of structural violence, which could have immediate and long-term health impacts, but was also an everyday practice. Saidiya Hartman has noted that violence and feelings of terror often infused everyday ‘mundane’ practices on the slavery plantation and was ‘perpetrated under the rubric of pleasure, paternalism and property.’⁵⁵ As Hartman indicated, some of the formerly enslaved peoples’ descriptions of their forced labour

⁵⁰ Anne Scott, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

⁵¹ Wallace Quarterman, interviewed by L.D. Turner, August 5, 1933.

⁵² Prince Smith, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 2, 1932, ADS Collection, LoC, AFS 25668 ADS 1296.

⁵³ A. Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, p.65.

⁵⁴ Anne Scott, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 193; Wallace Quarterman, interviewed by L.D. Turner, August 5, 1933.

⁵⁵ S. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.4.

practices do imply more strongly held emotions towards slavery's systemic violence. Prince Smith's words, further to describing the endless nature of his work, suggest bitterness and resentment towards the labour he was forced to undertake. After spending a considerable length of time speaking about a method of farming, he stated 'after all that labor, you got your peck of corn to grind to get your food to eat. And the driver was mean and bossy.'⁵⁶ Diana Brown's interview more explicitly suggests a feeling of resentment and defiance towards the practice of enforced labour, highlighting that it did not end when emancipation occurred. When she described the work that was carried out on Edisto Island by members of her community in the 1930s, Brown stated 'you pick a basket of bean for five and one cent. Two basket – what it come to? I wouldn't go there today; not me! I'll eat the bean, but I ain't going go pick none there.'⁵⁷

Brown suggests two reasons for this defiant stance. Her refusal to work was firstly related to the 'meanness' of the owner of the plantation. She noted that 'the people say that man is the meanest man was. Me not going there', that he was 'the red devil' and that she would fight and cuss at him.⁵⁸ This is similar to how Prince Smith related his resentment of the work regime to the description of his driver as 'mean and bossy.'⁵⁹ Second, her defiant stance against working evidently stemmed from her experience of being in bondage. Later in the interview, after stating that white men were getting black Americans to pick cotton in exchange for potatoes, Brown said 'ain't it – Ain't slavery coming back? All who never saw it – ain't it coming back? I say "Thank God they ain't got me hand, because I can sit down and cross my feet."⁶⁰ She also noted that 'I done been through that. Now the children are fretting. I say them white people got them young children to work for them.'⁶¹ This statement is highly significant, and reveals the lasting emotional legacies that slavery - and in particular the labour that was an inherent part of the institution - had on both the enslaved and their descendants. Evidently, slavery's work regime remained at the forefront of people's minds on Edisto Island, causing a feeling of communal fear or anxiety when they thought another exploitative system was returning, even for those who had not been in bondage.

⁵⁶ Prince Smith, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 2, 1932.

⁵⁷ Diana Brown, interviewed by L.D Turner, ADS Collection, LoC, AFS 25763-25764 ADS 1402-1403.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Prince Smith, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 2, 1932.

⁶⁰ Diana Brown, interviewed by L.D Turner.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

While the communal and inter-generational fear about the return to slavery is important to acknowledge, it is also significant that Brown presented such explicit emotions. By calling the owner of the plantation in the 1930s the ‘devil’, explaining her refusal to work, and acknowledging her wish to fight this white man, Brown quite explicitly displayed a level of anger and defiance against both enforced labour and the white owners of these labour camps. This is an emotional picture that stood in conflict with the racial etiquette that existed in the 1930s. At this time, Jim Crow etiquette governed all aspects of African Americans’ public lives, including where they could live and work, who they could talk to and how they could speak to whites. This was enforced through violence – between 1931 and 1935 more than 70 lynchings took place in southern states against blacks.⁶² Whilst Jim Crow etiquette governed black people’s everyday lives and social relations, it also enforced an emotional etiquette. As Ritterhouse noted, racial etiquette was similar to a social script for navigating segregation – ‘etiquette gave individuals a supply of words, phrases and gestures to use in interracial situations.’⁶³ This script did not include a space for expressing anger or being violent. For example, Ritterhouse has examined the autobiography of Walter White, leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People between 1931 and 1935, in her study. White relayed a memory of being shoved by a white boy whilst drinking water from a fountain and that his anger led him to throw a rock at the boy’s head. White stated that when he remembered his race, and the etiquette associated with it, ‘my anger changed to cold terror.’⁶⁴ Though Turner’s race may have allowed Brown to talk more freely, her defiant testimony and refusal to work undoubtedly still countered Jim Crow rules that governed black lives at this time.

Pride is a feeling that also framed how the formerly enslaved men described their labour. For example, Wallace Quarterman claimed ‘yes sir I, I was I’m a real good service man, a foreman, you know. Foreman. Foreman for them’ and Sam Polite noted that ‘[slavery] make me work, make me work you’re a man.’⁶⁵ His pride is more clearly suggested in his WPA interview, where he states; ‘I t’ink it been good t’ing. It larn nigger to wuk.’⁶⁶ The pride that is indicated in these statements may well present Quarterman and Polites’ feelings accurately and in

⁶² J. Blasingame, ‘Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves’, p.482.

⁶³ J. Ritterhouse, *Growing up Jim Crow*, p.5.

⁶⁴ Walter white quoted in J. Ritterhouse, *Growing up Jim Crow*, pp.136-137.

⁶⁵ Wallace Quarterman, interviewed by L.D. Turner, August 5, 1933; Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

⁶⁶ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 3, Part 3, South Carolina Narratives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), p. 276.

Remembering Slavery, the authors concluded from an analysis of their sample of slave narratives that ‘work, in short, was both a source of oppression and a seed of liberation.’⁶⁷ Yet, these statements of pride also served a more political purpose; they countered stereotypical depictions of the docile and contented ‘Sambo’ that were prevalent at the time. The image of the ‘Sambo’, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has argued ‘captured an image of docility in direct opposition to the white ideals of male honor’, and that, ‘divorced from the image of the Buck, it offered an image of the black man as naturally subservient to the will of the white, as too lazy and supine to care about self-defense, much less the honorable attributes of freedom.’⁶⁸ When the formerly enslaved men declared that they worked hard and indicated that they were proud of this, they were countering these derogatory stereotypes.

The decision to shape their discussions of enforced labour with these indicators of pride is also significant given that the Gullah informants were talking to Turner at a time when the political and cultural ideas of the New Negro Movement were in circulation, and eradicating negative stereotypes was at the forefront of their agenda. Succinctly describing what the image of the ‘New Negro’ entailed, Cherene Sherrard-Johnson argued that ‘whether as a figure in transition or a newly emancipated subject, many saw the New Negro as the antidote to the old Negro. Alternatively casting the New Negro as an image, ideology, or trope, proponents of the concept engaged in a war of representation in the arena of culture, politics, and public opinion to replace dehumanizing stereotypes with progressive images of confidence and prosperity.’⁶⁹ Through emphasising their labour achievements, Quarterman and Polite thus presented a narrative about themselves and racial achievement that followed this intellectual and cultural current, and countered white patriarchal stereotypes of African American men as being docile, lazy and lacking in honourable masculine traits. When they described their pride in the work they undertook, these two men were constructing an individual, and perhaps collective (but heavily gendered), record of pride. While these former slaves likely had little access to the thoughts and writings of black intellectuals, cultural historian Gregory Smithers

⁶⁷ I. Berlin et al, *Remembering Slavery*, p.73.

⁶⁸ E. Fox Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women in the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p.291. For more on stereotypes of black Americans see G. Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South 1890 – 1940* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998); G. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: the Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817 – 1914* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) and D. White, *Ar’n’t I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1985).

⁶⁹ C. Sherrard-Johnson, ‘New Negro’, *Oxford Bibliographies*, available at <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190280024/obo-9780190280024-0013.xml> [accessed 20.02.19]

has cited the work of Michele Mitchell, who has analysed Advice Manuals in the black community. Smithers noted that ‘as Mitchell succinctly characterizes the message of this literature, “morality, thrift, and hard work were essential to black progress.”’⁷⁰ While Polite was illiterate, the ideas presented in these advice manuals were likely to have circulated between literate and non-literate black Americans at this time, perhaps through sermons and religious instruction.

Furthermore, throughout his life Quarterman was interested in religious instruction, education and politics. In another interview Quarterman gave with Alan Lomax and Zora Neale Hurston, he displayed a knowledge of and interest in Reconstruction era politics, arguing that the black man was not educated enough straight after emancipation to be in office. He also stated that ‘you know when a man ain't got no education he ain't got nothing.’⁷¹ Similarly, it can be deduced from his interview with Turner that Quarterman was a religious teacher or leader. He stated that:

There you see I just trying to learn the people how to talk, you know. Down at the South. They could [read (?)] but I not know they understand it. Yes, sir. And they miss us. If, we had a, do you understanding? I could understanding shouting they could live by. And I sought hard to learn them. You understanding. I learned them how to shout.⁷²

Later in the interview, he also stated that ‘yes, I was a boss man, for the United States.’⁷³ Quarterman was therefore interested throughout his life in educating others, and was involved in some way in politics after emancipation. Whether he was aware or not of the New Negro Movement, Quarterman clearly held similar beliefs in the need for education and black racial uplift.

Turner was also heavily influenced by the ideas circulating in black intellectual circles that emphasised black progress through hard work and education, and may have brought them to the interview encounter to encourage the interviewees’ expressions of pride. This is evident

⁷⁰ G. Smithers, *Slave Breeding*, p.118.

⁷¹ Wallace Quarterman, interviewed by A. Lomax, Z. Neale Hurston, E. Barnicle, June 1935, Alan Lomax, Zora Neale Hurston, and Mary Elizabeth Barnicle Expedition Collection, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, AFC 1935/001 AFS 00342A, available at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/title.html> [accessed 14.10.17]

⁷² Wallace Quarterman, interviewed by L.D. Turner, August 5, 1933.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

simply in his topic of study, through which Turner was attempting to counteract beliefs that the enslaved community lost their African cultural heritage when they were forcibly moved to the U.S. In turn, he was able to highlight that Gullah was not simply baby-talk but was a Creole dialect which included important elements of African languages and demonstrated the cultural resiliency and sheer survival of the enslaved. According to Cooper, Turner explicitly undertook the work that the New Negro Movement asked for; ‘Franz Boas and his students, Alain Locke and the New Negro vanguard, had pushed for a new imagining of African and black people’s African heritage. They called for a new view of the black-American connection, and Lorenzo Dow Turner carried out that mission.’⁷⁴

Turner’s other writings explicitly reveal these intellectual and political motivations that drove his work and that he almost certainly brought to the interview encounter. In some of his academic work, he focused on counteracting negative depictions of black Americans and improving race relations in the U.S. For example, in one unpublished piece entitled ‘Negro Stereotypes’, Turner wrote that ‘this myth of the Negro’s being inferior gave tremendous encouragement to slaveholders and writers of pro-slavery literature’ and that ‘it could not stem the tide of the abolition movement, but it left in the minds of Americans and many Europeans a stereotype of the Negro which is still all too prevalent.’⁷⁵ Within this article, he argued that schools must contribute to the eradication of these stereotypes by deleting words such as ‘darky’, ‘nigger’ and ‘black Sambo’ from teaching materials. Turner also argued in *Human Relations in the United States – A Mid Century Appraisal*, which seemed to be a speech at a higher education college, that ‘through the systematic study of African culture, as well as the achievements of the New World Negroes, Negro college graduates can make an important contribution to the improvement of race relations in this country.’⁷⁶ He explained that ‘such information will conclusively disprove theories concerning the inferiority of Negroes which fill page after page of our school and college textbooks.’⁷⁷ This work undoubtedly echoes the ideological currents of the New Negro Movement and the cultural movement of the Harlem Renaissance, in which black men such as Alain Locke focused upon ‘arts and letters as the vehicle for radical self expression and accurate portrayal beyond the caricature of social science and the minstrel stereotype.’⁷⁸ Yet, it was not just in his linguistic discoveries and written work

⁷⁴ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.110.

⁷⁵ L. D Turner, ‘Negro Stereotypes’, LDT Papers, ACM, Writings, B13, F13.

⁷⁶ L. D. Turner, ‘Human Relations in the U.S.’, LDT Papers, ACM, Writings, B13, F10, p.12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ D. Baldwin, ‘Introduction’, p.12.

that Turner fulfilled the mission of the New Negro Movement and highlighted the resiliency and achievements of black Americans. Perhaps inadvertently, the memories, stories and feelings that the formerly enslaved described to him during their interviews also highlight their individual strength and pride.

Turner did not explicitly force his beliefs in the need to promote black achievement and counteract negative stereotypes onto his interviewees through his questions. He did not ask, for example, ‘are you proud of your work?’ or ‘what have you achieved since emancipation?’ Yet, he brought these political ideologies to the interview encounter, which seemed to encourage the interviewees to express their pride and anger and in turn counter stereotypes in a way that Turner encouraged in his writing. Turner did ask the interviewees questions about their work and at the interview they were also asked about the actions of their enslavers, framing the interview to allow the former slaves to express how they felt about the institution. In one of their many meetings, Turner may have also discussed his views with the individuals he interviewed in ‘off the record’ moments that cannot be heard from these small recorded sections of the many meetings that Turner had with each person.

Thus, analysing the emotions that were implied in these interviews highlights the interplay of personal feelings and racial ideologies that shaped how the formerly enslaved Gullah community spoke about their experiences. Smithers insightfully argued, in relation to memories of slave breeding, that ‘it is worth noting that black scholars, educators and social commentators knew that they had to tread a fine line between exposing the past for what millions of African Americans remembered – or imagined – it to be, on the one hand, and emphasizing a message of ‘uplift’, the ‘cult of respectability’ and ‘racial destiny’ on the other.’⁷⁹ Turner and some of his interviewees were traversing this fine line together when they remembered and documented the emotions that stemmed from enforced labour under slavery. On one hand, Turner’s interviewees discussed the tiresome and endless nature of slavery in their testimony, and Brown presented the anger she felt, exposing the inherent violence of the institution. Yet, at the same time, the fine line tipped when Polite and Quarterman emphasised their positive feelings towards their personal labour achievements, reinforcing a message of black achievement and ‘uplift’.

⁷⁹ G. Smithers, *Slave Breeding*, p.59.

Emotional Memories of the Relationships with Enslavers and Overseers and Experiences of Punishment

Alongside the everyday experience of enforced work, the slaves' relationship with their enslaver, overseer and driver was a central element of their experience of bondage and all the interviewees but Susan Quall mentioned their owner or overseer in their interview.⁸⁰ Not all of these were emotional in nature. For example, Anne Scott just mentioned her enslaver, Drummond, when discussing what happened during the Civil War, and only disclosed his name after she was asked.⁸¹ Wallace Quarterman briefly talked about his overseer, Mr. Powers, and explained that he always followed orders; 'right after father when his son say, do, I do it now. I just do it cause ain't nobody else can do it. That's all.'⁸² One interviewee in this sample, Dave White, also countered the general pattern of the interviews by suggesting that he 'loved' slavery. Though his recording is fairly difficult to understand, he seemed to state that 'Old slavery time. I love [it]. Yeah I love the old time.'⁸³ White was not the only person to suggest that they 'loved' slavery in interviews conducted in the 1930s, and many linked this statement to an apparent affection towards their owner. For example, historian William Dusingberre, who has extensively analysed the WPA interviews, argued that 'there is evidence from the lips of former slaves that an appreciable number of slavemasters were indeed seen by their bondspeople as in some sense 'good' masters.'⁸⁴ Often, positive descriptions such as these were framed by white interviewers' questions about their enslavers, as well as the Jim Crow backdrop that forced enslaved people to qualify any negative statements towards the institution with more positive ones.

The quality of the recording means that it is not possible to hear much of the surrounding information, and thus it is hard to comprehend whether White's positive feeling toward slavery stemmed from his relationship with his enslaver or the interview situation itself. What is known is that his interview was particularly short and is not as detailed or frank as the others in

⁸⁰ Susan Quall, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 16 1932, ADS Collection, LoC, AFS 25659 ADS 1287, available at <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/title.html>> [accessed 14.10.17]

⁸¹ Anne Scott, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

⁸² Wallace Quarterman, interviewed by L.D. Turner, August 5, 1933.

⁸³ Dave White, interviewed by L.D. Turner, July 26, 1933, ADS Collection, LoC, AFS 25666 ADS 1294, available at <<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/voices/title.html>> [accessed 14.10.17]

⁸⁴ W. Dusingberre, *Strategies for Survival*, p.15.

Turner's set. The recording starts with him recounting the Lord's Prayer, and then he was prompted to respond to a number of questions which he did not answer in detail. White was also interviewed by a WPA interviewer, Laura L. Middleton in Charleston, S.C, yet this interview does not give any more information about his experiences of slavery, as it almost solely describes White's home and character. Furthermore, it is a classic example of an interview written in a narrative form with numerous instances of romanticised stereotypical descriptions. For example, Middleton wrote in the second paragraph that 'his quiet unadulterated mode of living and his never changing grateful disposition typifies the true Southern Negro of pre-Civil War days; a race that was common place and plentiful at one time, but is now almost extinct, having dwindled in the face of more adequate educational facilities.'⁸⁵ This WPA interview, then, gives even less of an indication about why White stated that he 'loved' slavery and countered the general pattern of these interviews.

Despite White's assertion, it is evident that others felt anger or hatred towards their enslavers, because of their treatment of the people they enslaved. The majority of enslavers attempted to control every aspect of slave lives, through a web of interlocking control, discipline and surveillance mechanisms.⁸⁶ Within the plantation, Camp has argued that white enslavers controlled African Americans through 'dictating the movements of their slaves into the fields or yards and back to the quarters, with carefully considered breaks and holidays.'⁸⁷ Enslavers employed overseers and drivers to help them ensure that these spatial and temporal controls were adhered to by the enslaved. Furthermore, they employed horses, dogs and slave patrollers against those they held in bondage to stop their movement outside the plantation boundaries. Feelings of anger and hatred directed towards the overseer and/or enslaver are presented in their interviews in relation to the enforcement of these strict regimes. When describing his overseer, Polite stated 'treat you? Well, I believe [with uhhh (?)] the only somebody that is, that is that man. That is the devil. That is the only one died is him.'⁸⁸ Diana Brown also used the term 'red devil' to describe 'Harrison Daddy', a contemporary white plantation owner on

⁸⁵ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 3, Part 4, South Carolina Narratives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972), pp.194-195.

⁸⁶ A vast literature exists detailing these control mechanisms. See N. Jones, *Born a Child of Freedom, Yet a Slave: Mechanisms of Control and Strategies of Resistance in Antebellum South Carolina* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1990) and S. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*.

⁸⁷ S. Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p. 6.

⁸⁸ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

Editso Island.⁸⁹ Both directed these terms towards the overseer or owner of the plantation because of the way that they treated the black American workers.

Physical violence was another control mechanism utilised by enslavers and overseers and as Rawick has argued in relation to WPA interviews, ‘the overwhelming majority of the several thousand interviews with ex-slaves recorded in the 1920s and 1930s, and all of the slave narratives published before the Civil War, talk of physical force being used to keep the slaves in line.’⁹⁰ Turner’s interviews are no exception, with two of the men recounting vivid and detailed memories of punishment. For example, Sam Polite stated about his overseer:

Well, he would get up in the morning, run his hands in his pockets. Into his pockets and tell you, you know ??? work. And came right out and ??? and rub that horse and pull them up in the sun and then he tell you ??? get yourself dirty from rubbing that horse, he would go down, down on your knees. And he would whip, whip you and [just fist you had a gash (?)] on you. And so the way I been through from a boy up to a man today ain't nothing better for tell me today about slavery.⁹¹

Prince Smith recounted in similarly vivid detail the punishments that were given out on his slaveholding unit; ‘then they had the raw lash – cow hide, you know, sir – flat. They don’t give you a cut on your clothes; you naked. They cut you some place and the blood drain down on you. Hard work in hard, tight time!’⁹² He also described being placed in a box:

Done with that, they had a box. They took it out in the road and they wet that box and call it sweat box. [It] had three sides and they left a door. And they push you in there and shut the door on your back there and lock you up in there in the hot time of the sun; and the sun broiling over your head. And you be in there two hours. They punish you.⁹³

Though Polite and Smith never explicitly described how these experiences made them feel, the vividness and specificity of these memories and the sensory nature of the descriptions is emotionally significant. Polite remembered very particular moments related to being punished, such as the overseer running his hands in his pockets, while Smith explained exactly what the ‘sweat box’ looked like. The fact that a number of these elderly black Americans so vividly

⁸⁹ Diana Brown, interviewed by L.D Turner.

⁹⁰ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume One, From Sundown to Sunup*, p.56.

⁹¹ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

⁹² Prince Smith, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 2, 1932.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

remembered, 70 years later, the specific details of the punishments they endured suggests that the emotional and psychological consequences of physical abuse were long-term and profound.

When describing these punishments, Smith also used phrases such as ‘hard work in hard, tight time’, ‘they punish you’ and ‘that slavery trouble that we pass through’, all of which are indicative of the painful emotions towards slavery that they still held.⁹⁴ Polite also implicitly suggested similar feelings when he stated ‘and so the way I been through from a boy up to a man today ain't nothing better for tell me today about slavery.’⁹⁵ As is apparent in these phrases, however, after describing the specifics about the punishments they received, both interviewees chose to make a broad statement about living through slavery. Smith said, ‘we pass through’ and Polite declared ‘I been through from a boy up to a man.’⁹⁶ Stewart has argued, in relation to the WPA narratives, that ‘African Americans involved with this unique project found ways to ‘write back’ and create their own narratives about the legacy of slavery and African Americans’ past, present, and future as citizens of the nation.’⁹⁷ Again, similarly to how the male Gullah informants discussed enforced labour, the interviewees were not simply negative, sorrowful or defeatist. This decision, on the part of the formerly enslaved, to frame their memories of punishment to end with feelings of hope and survival again highlights that Turner’s ‘New Negro’ political ideologies intertwined with the informants own memories to present this narrative that focused upon achievement and survival. The elderly Gullah community thus used their opportunity to present their own version of the slavery narrative, complicating these entrenched stories through presenting multilayered emotions towards the institution, including anger, pain, hope and pride.

The political and intellectual agenda underpinning Turner’s Gullah project also influenced his method of interviewing, which allowed for this presentation of such a range of emotion. A comparison of the contents of Turner’s interview with Polite and a WPA interview conducted with him later in the 1930s highlights how this interview situation framed what was said in the interview.⁹⁸ In Polite’s discussion with Turner, he referred to his overseer as the devil, but mentioned no such anger toward his overseer in a WPA interview conducted by Chlotilde

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

⁹⁶ Prince Smith, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 2, 1932; Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

⁹⁷ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.10.

⁹⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 3, Part 3, South Carolina Narratives*, pp.271-276.

Martin, a white WPA worker. Instead, he stated that ‘driver nigger gib licking, but Maussa “most always been dere”’ and then qualified this statement by stating ‘but Maussa good to slabe if dey done day’s tas’ and don’t be up to no meanness.’⁹⁹ Why did he not mention his overseer in the WPA interview, let alone his anger towards him? Why did he speak positively about his enslaver in the WPA interview, yet fail to mention this in his interview with Turner? Of course, it may be that Polite did actually view his master as good and attributed the violence to his overseer who he had the most contact with. Yet, it is still significant that he presented such anger towards his overseer in Turner’s interview, without mentioning it in his interview with Martin.

Of course, Turner was an African American man, whilst Martin was a white woman. The race of the interviewer clearly affected what the interviewees said, with historians such as Rawick arguing that in the presence of white interviewers, black interviewees ‘would more than likely play down the worst aspects of slavery.’¹⁰⁰ Turner’s descriptions of his time interviewing on the Gullah Islands highlights that the elderly informants were extremely cautious when talking to white interviewers. Turner wrote that when Guy Lowman, a white man, accompanied him during an interview on the Sea Islands:

Dr. Lowman unintentionally used a tone of voice which the informant resented. Instantly the interview ended. Apologies were to no avail. The informant refused to utter a word.¹⁰¹

Furthermore, when returning to the Sea Islands later in the summer, Turner was asked by many ‘why did you bring the white man?’¹⁰²

Considering that the formerly enslaved were so wary of even speaking to Dr. Lowman, they may have ‘composed’ their memories to make them acceptable when they did have to talk to a white person. Alistair Thomson has noted that we all compose our memories so that they align with public narratives, and that ‘memories are risky and painful if they do not conform with the public norms or versions of the past.’¹⁰³ During the 1930s numerous American authors

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.273.

¹⁰⁰ G. Rawick, *TAS Supplement Series 1, Volume 3, Part 1, Georgia Narratives*, p.xxxii.

¹⁰¹ L. D. Turner, *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, p.12.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ A. Thomson, ‘Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia’ in R. Perks and A. Thomson (eds.) *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998) p.301.

were writing fictional accounts of slavery and plantation life that contributed to this dominant public version of the history of slavery. Perhaps the most popular of these were stories that portrayed antebellum life in nostalgic, romanticised ways. The most famous and circulated example is Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, published in 1936 and adapted into a film in 1939.¹⁰⁴ Describing life on a Georgia plantation, Mitchell presented slavery as a benevolent institution using the trope of the loyal and contented slave. Of course, other black and white authors were writing less romanticised accounts of enslaved life that challenged Mitchell's narrative, and historian Tim Ryan gives the example of two fictional accounts of slave rebellions: Arna Bontemp's book about a 1800 Richmond slave rebellion entitled *Black Thunder* and Frances Gaither's *The Red Cock Crows*.¹⁰⁵ Yet, as Ryan also argued, authors from this era, including Bontemp and Gaither, did not write any fictional accounts of slavery that provided a strong enough counter-narrative to the one portrayed in *Gone with the Wind*.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it is Mitchell's romanticised, 'moonlight and magnolia' account of slavery that emerged as the dominant narrative or version of the past in the 1930s, and as whites reinforced this sanitised version of the history of slavery in fiction and film, black Americans such as Polite often re-modelled their 'risky' memories of enslavement when interviewed by whites, excluding memories of anger or hate to fit within a white public narrative. Indeed, according to the Library of Congress transcription, during Anne Scott's interview Guy Lowman was present and perhaps even asked a question. This could explain her lack of discussion about her enslaver at this interview and suggests that she composed her memories to fit this situation.¹⁰⁷ This racial dynamic is also clear context for the lack of anger presented in the WPA interview with Martin.

The technique that Turner used when interviewing further allowed the interviewees to present these 'risky' memories and emotions. In order to be able to uncover the cultural and linguistic resiliency of the Gullah people, which was motivated by a desire to promote the achievements of black men and women, Turner had to become particularly familiar with his interviewees. He did this by seeking out their community leaders and meeting the interviewees six to eight times, which contrasts starkly with the WPA interviewers' methodologies. They generally only met the former slaves on a maximum of two occasions. The level of comfort and familiarity that

¹⁰⁴ M. Mitchell, *Gone with the Wind* (Macmillan Publishers, 1936).

¹⁰⁵ T. Ryan, *Calls and Responses: The American Novel of Slavery Since Gone With the Wind* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008), p. 21.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p.22.

¹⁰⁷ Anne Scott, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

Polite felt with these two individuals would therefore have varied greatly, allowing Polite to speak more freely with Turner. The fact that members of the Gullah community were willing to travel to an unfamiliar setting to be interviewed – either the mainland or a plantation home of a white woman – highlights the extent of trust between Turner and those he interviewed, revealing why the formerly enslaved presented such vivid descriptions of punishment and the anger that stemmed from it.

The questions asked at each interview also differed, shaping the responses given by Polite. It is evident from looking at Chlotilde Martin's three interviews that she conducted as part of the WPA project that she always asked the question 'what did you think about slavery?' Whilst not explicitly a leading question, all three WPA interviewees tailored their responses to the expectations of a white-centric narrative of slavery. Sam Polite stated that 'I t'ink it been a good t'ing' whilst both Sam Mitchell and Lucretia Heyward qualified their statements of 'I t'ink slavery is jest a murdering of de people' and 'nigger git bad cut in slabery time' by noting that they liked or didn't hate their master.¹⁰⁸ This line of questioning was influenced by Martin's beliefs that the enslaved were childlike in their positive emotionalism, views that Jerrold Hirsch has highlighted are seen in her draft of a guide to Negroes in Beaufort for the American Guide Series, where she described African Americans as 'a happy people, primitive, unmoral.'¹⁰⁹ In the published American Guide to 'Beaufort and the Sea Islands' prepared by the South Carolina branch of the FWP (most likely with contribution from Martin) similar stereotypical descriptions remain. The guide states: 'a picturesque group, these Negroes seem to wear life easily, and show the extremes of indolence and industry, unmorality and deep religion.'¹¹⁰ It also claims that 'today, superstitions, highly emotional religious practices and incomplete independence are still to be found.'¹¹¹

This narrative is countered in Turner's interview. Probing questions were asked such as 'how did he treat you?' and 'what did he do?' when Polite spoke of his dislike of his overseer.¹¹² These encouraged Polite to answer honestly, leading to multilayered emotional answers. As

¹⁰⁸ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 3, Part 3, South Carolina Narratives*, p.276; p.204; G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 2, Part 2, South Carolina Narratives* (Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972) pp.279-281.

¹⁰⁹ J. Hirsch, *Portrait of America*, p. 124.

¹¹⁰ Federal Writers Project, Work Progress Administration, South Carolina, *Beaufort and the Sea Islands* (Savannah: The Clover Club, 1938) pp.9-10.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

Smithers has argued in relation to recollections by runaway slaves, this range of emotion played a political function:

In heartbreaking and chillingly graphic detail, the narratives of former slaves like Mary Epps were direct and unflinching challenges to Lost Cause mythology and professional historical accounts of slavery. Slaves were not, as white memoirists and professional historians insisted, happy. The enslaved were abused, exploited, and utterly manipulated.¹¹³

Much of the information recounted, and emotion expressed, in the two interviews with Sam Polite are the same. Polite and the other WPA interviewees who were questioned by Martin did present some forceful statements against slavery. Yet, subtle differences occur between the two. Turner's interview presents Polite's explicit anger against his overseer, yet no such anger is seen in Martin's interview. Similarly, the interview with Martin qualifies Polite's description of punishment with a positive statement about his enslaver, whilst Polite did not mention his owner to Turner. This highlights that the emotion that the former slaves presented in their testimony was highly political, contested and consciously framed. Testimony from the same person was shaped, through questioning and perhaps editing in the case of the WPA interview, to adhere to and complement different political narratives about slavery. Martin's interview included small, but important positive qualifications about slavery and his enslaver - shaped by the questions asked and the interview situation - that bolstered the myth of the happy and contented slave. As with the slave narratives described by Smithers, Turner's interview techniques, that were shaped by a competing racial worldview and 'New Negro' political ideology, allowed the formerly enslaved men and women to present a range of complex emotion that countered this narrative, as well as emphasise their hope and pride in their achievements.

Thus far, this chapter has analysed the words Turner's interviewees used to describe their white owners and overseers, revealing the political dynamics and interview methodologies that framed the answers given by the informants. Yet, to fully explore the emotional content of these interviews, embodied indicators of emotion in the voice and structure of the interviews – the pauses, stutters, silences, vocal tone and rhythm – should also be analysed. Describing the practice of creating oral histories, Julie Livingston, a historian of emotion, observed that when reduced to texts, interviews are 'stripped of their performative and emotional qualities' and

¹¹³ G. Smithers, *Slave Breeding*, p.55.

noted that during an interview ‘it mattered whether someone had laughed or cried or grown suddenly silent as they recalled or debated particular events.’¹¹⁴ Listening to emotion in the voice is particularly important when investigating how the formerly enslaved discussed experiences of punishment, due to what scholars of trauma have noted as the language-destroying effects of violence. As Elaine Scarry has argued when analysing the effects of pain inflicted upon the body, ‘intense pain is also language-destroying: as the content of one’s world disintegrates, so the content of one’s language disintegrates.’¹¹⁵ Similarly, Veena Das has detailed the relationship between language and pain, arguing that ‘a fractured relation to language has been documented for many survivors of prolonged violence, for whom it is the ordinariness of language that divides them from the rest of the world.’¹¹⁶ In the WPA interviews, some of the people interviewed by the NWU in Florida explained in words the emotional difficulty of discussing physical and sexual violence during their interviews. Yet, because articulating incidences of punishment in words can be challenging, being able to hear responses to feeling in the voice can more readily reveal the emotions that the elderly black Americans brought to the encounter that they did not - or could not - articulate.

In some cases, the interviewee’s vocal pitch and tone further reinforced the emotion that was indicated in the phrases they used, such as when Polite stated in relation to his overseer that ‘the only somebody that is, that is that man. That is the devil’.¹¹⁷ Of course, the use of the term ‘devil’ suggests that Polite remembered and continued to feel hatred and resentment towards his overseer. Yet, Portelli has argued that ‘the tone and volume range and the rhythm of popular speech carry implicit meaning and social connotations which are not reproducible in writing.’¹¹⁸ When listening to this recording, it is strikingly evident that Polite’s voice changed in tone and volume, and became louder when he said ‘the devil’, suggesting that he felt something when talking about this aspect of his personal history. It seems that he used this vocal emphasis as a means of further expressing his anger towards the overseer, alongside representing this in the words that he used.

¹¹⁴ N. Eustance et al, ‘AHR Conversation: The Historical Study of Emotions’, *The American Historical Review*, 117.5 (2012), pp. 1488-1489.

¹¹⁵ E. Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.35.

¹¹⁶ V. Daas, ‘Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain’, *Daedalus*, 125.1 (1996), p.76.

¹¹⁷ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

¹¹⁸ A. Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, p.65.

Both Polite and Smith also paused a number of times when discussing being punished. Edited to include pauses, the transcription of Prince Smith's interview reads:

They don't give you a cut on your clothes [pause]; you naked [pause]. They cut you some place and the blood drain down on you. [pause]. Hard work in hard, tight time.¹¹⁹

In the recording, Smith also emphasised the word 'hard.' Sam Polite's interview presented a similar case. For example, he paused for a considerable length of time between stating that 'he would whip, whip you and just fist you had a gash on you' and 'so the way I been through from a boy up to a man today ain't nothing better for tell me today about slavery.'¹²⁰ Portelli has stressed the importance of listening to pauses in oral histories, arguing that 'pauses of irregular length and position accentuate the emotional content.'¹²¹ While we cannot take these vocal tones and pauses as incontrovertible evidence of how Smith and Polite felt when they were actually being punished, the sense of emotion that speaking about this memory triggered in both interviewees is highly evident when we hear these irregular pauses, and is undoubtedly lost when reading the WPA interviews.

Historians have explored in detail the testimony of those who have experienced traumatic events and have highlighted that discussing memories of any such experience can be emotionally painful. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, for example, have stated that 'the traumatic experience has normally long been submerged and has become distorted in its submersion' and that 'the act of telling might itself become severely traumatizing, if the price of speaking is *re-living*; not relief, but further retraumatization.'¹²² Whether the interviewees were actually re-living the event when they were discussing it with Turner is unknown (though the descriptions are undoubtedly vivid), yet it is clear that they felt some level of emotion when they discussed the violence they experienced during slavery. Exploring the short and long-term effects of child abuse on the enslaved, Nell Painter used a modern-day psychological concept - 'soul murder' - to argue that this violence led the enslaved to feel depression, anger and low self-esteem. She demonstrated that the ex-slave narratives, often written years after slavery ended, bear witness to this 'psychological hurt.'¹²³ Similarly, the pauses in Turner's interviews

¹¹⁹ Prince Smith, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 2, 1932.

¹²⁰ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

¹²¹ A. Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', p.65.

¹²² S. Felman and D. Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 76 and 67.

¹²³ N. Painter, *Southern History Across the Color Line*, p.29.

also highlight the long-term emotional impact of this violence on those giving their testimony, revealing that discussing this violence that occurred at least 70 years before continued to have an emotional impact on them.¹²⁴

Listening to the emotion in the voices of the Gullah informants also gives an indication, alongside Turner's political agenda and interviewing technique, of how and why they composed their memories. Scholars can also take pauses, for example, as evidence of the 'emotional labour' or 'emotional management' that they engaged in; of how former slaves managed their emotional responses at the interview and shaped their discussions accordingly. Due to the difficulty in using language to describe violent events, these pauses could be seen as tools that Smith and Polite used to manage their emotions and in turn help them to decide how to articulate, to Turner, the traumatic events that they experienced. For example, when pausing before saying 'hard work in hard, tight time', Smith appeared to be composing himself and deciding what to say next during this gap.¹²⁵ Furthermore, even though the elderly black Americans did express some of the pain and anger that they wanted to, they also had to continuously make decisions throughout their interview about which emotions to present in this public setting, as one would today. Even though they were talking to a trustworthy black interviewer, within any social setting emotional management is undertaken by those in society, particularly when discussing an emotionally significant event. Each person has to choose when and where it is not acceptable to cry, for example, taking into consideration societal norms and public values. Hochschild has argued that emotion 'can and often is subject to acts of management', and to explain this she noted that 'the individual often works on inducing or inhibiting feelings so as to render them 'appropriate' to a situation.'¹²⁶ Although the interviewees did not have to fully manage their feelings to induce or inhibit certain emotion (as will be seen in Lomax's recordings), when discussing such violent events in a public setting,

¹²⁴ The traumatic legacies of slavery have been explored to some extent by historians, but tend to focus on inter-generational trauma rather than individual effects. Others have explored this inter-generational trauma from a more psychological perspective. Here, however, I am more interested in analysing the former slaves individual responses to discussing memories of violence. See R. Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), G. Graff, 'The Intergenerational Trauma of Slavery and its Aftermath', *Journal of Psychohistory*, 41.3 (2014) pp.181-197 and J. Gump, 'Reality Matters: The Shadow of Trauma on African American Subjectivity', *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 27.1 (2010), pp.42-54.

¹²⁵ Prince Smith, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 2, 1932.

¹²⁶ A. Hochschild, 'Emotion Work, Feelings Rules, and Social Structure', *American Journal of Sociology*, 85. 3 (1979), p.551.

Polite and Smith did have to manage the feelings that this discussion triggered to present a more socially acceptable emotional and bodily display.

Thus, through just analysing text it is only possible to gain access to the words that each formerly enslaved person chose to represent their experiences. As Livingstone has described, when interviews are transcribed a ‘flattening’ of emotional content occurs.¹²⁷ In contrast, through listening to the recordings, historians can hear the emotion that the interviewees did not articulate through their words, but evidently felt when they discussed their memories. The pauses and emphases that can be heard when they spoke about punishment firstly reveal further layers of feelings that slavery triggered, highlighting how the violence they endured had a particularly long-term emotional impact. Secondly, listening to this emotion in the voice indicates the huge personal stakes that telling their stories involved, and how difficult describing these incidences of violence could be. Lastly, through hearing these pauses this section has demonstrated, in part, how the formerly enslaved men dealt with this emotion and how it shaped their discussions. Polite and Smith paused, it seems, to compose themselves before continuing to discuss their vivid memories. The interviewees’ unspoken feelings that were triggered at the encounter, and the decisions they made as to when to pause and compose themselves, must therefore be acknowledged as more personal factors that explain how they discussed their memories, alongside Turner’s political considerations.

Emotional Memories of the Civil War and Emancipation

The interviewees not only discussed their experiences of being in bondage, but also their memories of the end of the institution. Ira Berlin *et al* argued, after an analysis of a collection of sound recordings with the formerly enslaved, that ‘from the start, the former slaves’ recollections of slavery focused on the last years of the institution’, as ‘the great events that had propelled them to freedom amid the tumult of Civil War loomed large.’¹²⁸ Uncertainty defines the experience of most of those who were in bondage during the Civil War. Anne Scott’s interview begins with her recounting the upheaval that she encountered; her enslaver made her and a number of other slaves move from the slaveholding unit to another place named Collington. When her enslaver died however, her father ‘bring us back to the Yankee, back to

¹²⁷ N. Eustance *et al*, ‘AHR Conversation’, p.1489.

¹²⁸ I. Berlin *et al*, *Remembering Slavery*, p.xliii.

the same where we came. It close to midnight and we come back.’¹²⁹ A sense of uncertainty is also clear in Sam Polite’s interview. He told Turner that he was a ‘travelling boy’, and had to ‘run away’ to Bonrad, Weepers Bridge and Savannah, yet it is unclear from his recording whether he was running from the Union army or from his enslaver.¹³⁰ Susan Quall also had to run from one place to the next, sleeping on the side of the road, in this case with her father. What is also notable about Quall’s memory, apart from the uncertainty of having to move from place to place, is that she suggests that her father was fearful of being caught by ‘the yanks.’ She stated:

When the Yanks came through that night, and looked for us and see the fire, then the, father then said ‘we have to move from this place because we might get shot.’ And he picked me up on his back and he run with me...And he said, ‘No. I ain’t let them catch you’.¹³¹

This fear is further emphasised later in the interview, when she used the word ‘safe’ to refer to a later experience at the side of the road. This supports Graham’s assessment of a number of 1930s recordings, that ‘while the slaves welcomed the coming of the Yankees as liberators, they were suspicious of them as whites.’¹³²

Though these informants described their experiences during the Civil War, the moment that they discovered they were free stood out as a more significant event in this testimony. More complex memories are associated with this period and process. For example, Quall and Scott focused not on being ‘free’ in itself, but on being able to go home after the Civil War. Scott placed emphasis on being able to go ‘back...right to the island. Home to the island’ and Quall also stated, ‘carry freedom then I got to come back home. And the home is Johns Island.’¹³³ Both informants relayed during their interview that they had remained on their respective islands ever since. While this emphasis on returning home could suggest an excitement on their part to return to their families and community, it also reinforces that the Civil War was a particularly uncertain and fearful time for these interviewees. Polite also specifically remembered the moment in which he became free. After recounting having to run from place to place, he stated:

¹²⁹ Anne Scott, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

¹³⁰ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

¹³¹ Susan Quall, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 16 1932.

¹³² J. Graham, ‘Slave Narratives, Slave Culture, and the Slave Experience’, p.150.

¹³³ Anne Scott, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932; Susan Quall, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 16 1932.

And then from there a fighter come up from behind me and brought her from there come back over on the Main on [Savannah?]. And I know everything was over. Slavery and ??? everything that slaves do I are doing the same thing today for myself.¹³⁴

While not explicitly emotional, this phrase is shrouded in emotional meaning, as Polite used the unspecific yet loaded term ‘everything’ to encompass and describe his experiences of both slavery and the Civil War.

The way in which these Gullah informants described their experiences of the last days of slavery is significant in a number of ways. While these phrases are emotionally complex, most of the elderly black Americans seemed to speak about emancipation freely at the beginning of their recording. Through even speaking of emancipation, each person shaped their narrative to highlight hope and survival. As the formerly enslaved men framed their comments discussing labour and punishment to end with hopeful statements, some of them also shaped their overall interview with discussion of this important moment, highlighting another way in which Turner’s beliefs about emphasising racial uplift and black achievement may have shaped these interviews.

Second, it is significant that not one of the Gullah interviewees explicitly mentioned how they felt at emancipation, for example, by stating that they were happy or experienced joy. Instead, the phrases they used to describe the moment of emancipation seem more emotionally complex. In the WPA interviews that did discuss their memories of emancipation, many of those giving their testimony focused solely upon their joy at hearing the news. This occurred in interviews conducted by both white and black interviewers, but particularly in the interviews conducted by the NWU in Florida; this description of joy was virtually consistent throughout the NWU interviews. In comparison to this, then, why did the individuals interviewed by Turner present more complex emotions towards this momentous event, and not mention their joy?

First, Turner’s interview technique allowed for emotions to be implied and complexity presented, because his interviewees knew and trusted him. In contrast, those interviewed by

¹³⁴ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

the NWU were talking to interviewers who they had only met once or twice. Perhaps, because Turner's interviewees were more comfortable, they felt able to show more complex feelings whilst in his company, which explains the difference in their answers. Second, the wider interview situation also shaped which answers the formerly enslaved people gave. Though the black Americans interviewed by the NWU at times found ways to subtly present their own more accurate descriptions of the history of slavery in the presence of their black interviewers, they evidently still had to be more careful about what they said to interviewers who were working for a white government agency. Many qualified negative statements about slavery with positive recollections of their owners, for example, highlighting how they managed their emotions in this setting. Discussing their joy at emancipation was, however, one way in which they could criticise the institution in an acceptable manner, without stating this critique explicitly. In contrast, because of the trust Turner built up, the Gullah informants did not have to hide their criticism, and presented it throughout their narratives through expressing anger, hatred and defiance. Turner's interviewees did not have to take up this rare opportunity to critique the system, and instead presented their own, multilayered emotions towards emancipation.

This need to subtly critique the system shaped the memories presented in other interviews and is reinforced if we explore Sam Polite's WPA interview with Chlotilde Martin. In his discussion of emancipation he included much less emotional or reflective content. He stated that:

W'en Freedom come, Missis didn't say nutting, she jest cry. But she gib we uh wagon and we press (stole) a horse and us come back to St. Helena Islant. It tek t'ree day to git home. W'en we git home, we fine de rest ob de nigger yere been hab Freedom four year befo' we.¹³⁵

This sentence is more descriptive, and less emotional than his interview with Turner, but also highlights how the interview situation could affect what the interviewee said. It is significant that Polite mentioned his enslaver's emotions in the WPA interview, but not in the interview with Turner. Stewart has noted that in WPA interviews the discussion of an emotional owner was common: 'ex-slaves often retold the history of slavery and emancipation ... to reconfigure the relationship most fundamentally altered by freedom, that of master and slave.'¹³⁶ To explain

¹³⁵ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 3, Part 3, South Carolina Narratives*, p.275.

¹³⁶ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.225.

this, she wrote that ‘ex-slaves frequently depicted scenes in which the popular antebellum tropes of the childlike, irrational slave and the benevolent, paternal master became inverted, usually when the emancipation of the slaves is made known to the slave owner.’¹³⁷ This, Stewart argued, was an act of signifying, which she highlights ‘protected the speaker by cloaking statements that could be perceived as forbidden or insubordinate and by smothering whites’ questions under a blanket of voluble affability and humor.’¹³⁸ This mention of the owner’s emotion was again a way in which Polite could criticise his enslaver, without saying it explicitly, as he did in the presence of Turner when calling his overseer the devil.

Lastly, the complexity of emotion can be deduced more readily from sound recordings. In contrast, much of the range of feeling could be lost when interviewers summarised or changed specific words when they wrote up the WPA interviews. Hearing the voice often complicates our understanding of the emotion implied in a phrase, highlighting a different emotion that the interviewee may have brought to the encounter. For example, before Polite stated ‘and I know everything was over’, he paused.¹³⁹ He also became quieter as the sentence progressed. Portelli has argued ‘the same statement may have quite contradictory meanings, according to the speaker’s intonation, which cannot be represented objectively in the transcript’, and this is the case with this phrase.¹⁴⁰ Whilst it could be assumed that this was meant as a celebratory statement (similar to those expressed by the WPA interviewees), from listening to the recording and his vocal tone we know that the emotions linked to this experience were in fact multifaceted. As with the discussions of punishment, the pause suggests that Polite was thinking about this event deeply when he described it to Turner, choosing what to say carefully. His voice sounds almost reflective - getting quieter through the sentence - highlighting that it continued to be emotionally significant for him years after emancipation occurred. Again, this demonstrates that talking to Turner was an emotional investment for Polite, but also reveals that it was not joy or celebration but a more complex feeling that Polite brought to the encounter which shaped how he spoke about slavery. Simply reading the transcript of this interview would not illuminate this emotional dynamic.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.200.

¹³⁹ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932.

¹⁴⁰ A. Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, p.65.

Thus, exploring the way in which the formerly enslaved discussed the last days of the institution reveals how a number of personal and political dynamics at the interview situation shaped how they discussed their memories. By even choosing to speak about emancipation, the elderly black Americans were framing their interview with a hopeful moment as they did when they discussed forced labour and punishment. Yet, they also presented complex emotions towards this moment in comparison to WPA interviewees who were also questioned by black interviewers, and exploring the reasons for this again highlights the specific dynamics at this encounter that shaped what the former slaves said. First, Turner's ability to build up trust with his informants, that in turn encouraged them to critique slavery, allowed for this complexity to be presented. Furthermore, through listening to the recordings we can hear more of this emotional complexity, which furthers our understanding of the emotions that Polite brought to the encounter. Hearing that he was not celebratory in tone, but sounded more reflective, explains why Polite did not focus on the joyous celebrations after emancipation occurred. Camp has argued, from an illustration of Virginia slaves after the Emancipation Proclamation that 'their faces bespeak the complex of emotions that this revolutionary moment brought: exultation, apprehension, curiosity, weariness, and youthful certainty.'¹⁴¹ In contrast to other interviews where black Americans had to manage their emotion, the interviewees' feelings that they brought to the encounter, Turner's political considerations and his resultant interview technique, all converged to allow the formerly enslaved men and women to present this complex mixture of emotion.

Conclusions: Discovering the Complex Interplay between the Personal and Political

Through focusing upon emotion in Turner's interviews with formerly enslaved people from the Gullah coast, this chapter has highlighted a number of political, personal and methodological factors that shaped how the interviewees discussed their memories of slavery. Influenced by New Negro Movement ideologies about promoting black achievement and fostering black pride to undertake his project to uncover the linguistic resiliency of the Gullah islanders, Turner set out to record his informants speaking in the Gullah dialect that was usually reserved for family. To undertake the recordings, he had to develop a relationship with his informants and gain their trust, and get them to discuss memoirs that were important to them.

¹⁴¹ S. Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, p.120.

This interview methodology allowed the formerly enslaved to document a range of complex emotion in relation to their enslavement; weariness, anger, fear and uncertainty as well defiance, pride, and hope. Not simply because of his race, but by visiting his interviewees up to eight times, his informants seemed to feel a level of comfort and ease with Turner. Because of this, Turner received snippets of particularly detailed and emotional stories from these men and women, often presenting emotions that could not be spoken of with a different interviewer. The anger expressed, for example, by Diana Brown when she called her owner the devil contravened racial etiquette at the time and was therefore seen much less in WPA interviews. Whilst the interviewees expressed a complex range of emotions in these interviews, they often framed their memories of enslavement with a focus on pride, defiance and hope. The emphasis on these emotions, which again parallel and reinforce ‘racial uplift’ narratives, also reveals another way in which circulating ‘New Negro’ political ideologies seemed to affect how the black Americans discussed their experiences of slavery.

More than simply revealing the political dynamics and practical interviewing methods that framed the interview situation, through being able to *listen* to the emotions in these recordings, the more personal dynamics that framed the interview encounter are illuminated. Though the elderly black Americans evidently wanted to present their pride and their anger at the institution, pauses and changes in vocal tone when discussing punishment and emancipation highlight the emotional responses that discussing these events triggered. This not only reveals that discussing their memories of the institution, even 70 years later, was an emotional and personal experience, but also illuminates the emotions that the formerly enslaved men brought to the encounter that they did not necessarily indicate in their words. Gaining a glimpse of these unspoken feelings thus gives an added insight into why they discussed their memories in the ways they did and the emotional labour required to manage these feelings in such a public setting. Dusiinberre has argued in relation to WPA interviews in Virginia that ‘the old black people interviewed in 1937 found a kind of catharsis in talking about the physical violence they had experienced.’¹⁴² Whilst we cannot know if catharsis did occur, it is undoubtedly the case that through hearing their voices, we can get closer to understanding their experience of the interview situation.

Most importantly, however, through hearing the unspoken emotion in the interviewees’ voices, further layers of the emotional impact of slavery’s violence can be uncovered. Heather

¹⁴² W. Dusiinberre, *Strategies for Survival*, p.85.

Williams has noted that ‘writing about emotions can be daunting’ and reminds us that ‘it is difficult enough to be aware of and to understand one’s own emotions’, but ‘attempting to understand the emotions of people who lived several lifetimes ago is a true challenge.’¹⁴³ Exploring emotional content in this set of interviews is no exception, and as white interviewers at the WPA shaped their narratives to present their own version of slavery, Turner also wanted to present his particular narrative about black Americans and slavery through this project. Yet, in contrast to most WPA interviewers, Turner had a particularly advanced interview technique that allowed his informants to express a range of emotions and as he recorded the interviews, emotional content can be listened to. Of course, understanding how slavery felt to the interviewees when they were enslaved is also particularly difficult as these interviews were produced many years after slavery ended. This chapter has shown, however, that in this particular set of recordings historians can get as close as possible to gaining glimpses of the pain and anger that slavery triggered, the ways that the formerly enslaved dealt with these memories at the interview encounter, the hopeful emotions that the interviewees framed their testimony to include, and thus both the immediate and long-term emotional impact of slavery for the men and women who gave their testimony.

¹⁴³ H. Williams, *Help me to Find my People*, p.3.

Chapter Five: Hearing the Voices of the Formerly Enslaved: Emotional Performances in the Folk-Song Recordings of John Lomax

Numerous folklorists, including John Lomax, were engaged in capturing black American folk-music at the same time as Lorenzo Dow Turner was undertaking his linguistic study of the Gullah dialect and the FWP workers were conducting interviews with the formerly enslaved.¹ Surrounding his tenure as director of the FWP (1936-1938) and with the sponsorship of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress, John Lomax gathered thousands of recordings from across the southern United States, including from elderly black Americans who had been in bondage.² Many of these songs, captured between 1933 and 1942, have become part of a canon of ‘negro folk song’ and are widely available to both the scholar and public through commercial streaming services such as iTunes and Spotify.³ Due to the popularity of these recordings in comparison to Turner’s, this chapter analyses the emotion that the performers expressed in performances of secular folk-songs and discussions of their memories in six recordings produced by Lomax on his 1940 expedition to the southern U.S.

As a strategy for claiming the scientific validity of his fieldwork, Lomax conceptualised his recordings as highly objective; he believed they were ‘sound-photographs of Negro songs, rendered in their own native element, unrestrained, uninfluenced, and undirected by anyone who had his own notions of how the songs should be rendered.’⁴ Yet, this chapter will reveal that Lomax entered the recording situation with a methodology that

¹ Other folklorists include: Alan and John Lomax; Howard Odum; Dorothy Scarborough; Fredric Ramsey; Charles Edward Smith; and William Russell. Black men and women, such as Zora Neale Hurston, Charles S. Johnson and Roscoe Lewis were also active collectors of folk-song. See M. Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues*, p. 12.

² The fact that John Lomax was a director at the FWP during its early stages, but also undertook his own projects, highlights the interconnectedness of the people and ideas that were circulating and went into producing different sets of ex-slave documents in this era.

³ A number of Lomax’s recordings are available on the Library of Congress website, *Voices from the Days of Slavery* and songs sung by Harriett McClintock, for example, are also available to listen to on iTunes and Spotify.

⁴ J. Lomax, “‘Sinful Songs’ of the Southern Negro”, *The Music Quarterly*, 20.2 (1934), p. 181.

was framed by stereotypical views of black Americans, a personal nostalgia for the ‘Old South’, a wider political agenda to celebrate the ‘civilising’ nature of slavery and a personal fascination with the ‘primitive’.⁵ Countering Lomax’s belief in the ‘unrestrained, uninfluenced and undirected’ recordings, the analysis of emotion in his recordings will reveal that Lomax ensured that the elderly black Americans who he recorded repressed and performed emotions, and that they adhered to a strict and highly directed set of feeling rules that valued the expression of simplistic, childlike emotions and positive feelings towards slavery. This not only resulted in recordings that reinforced the romanticised narrative that slavery was a benevolent institution, an emotional picture that stands in stark contrast to Turner’s interviews, but also meant that the performers had to engage in an extreme, but more traditional form of emotional work during the recording encounter. This chapter therefore demonstrates that historians must acknowledge this emotional labour and manipulation when using these sources as the basis of their research, as it limits our ability to access any unmediated discussion of the performer’s emotional experiences of enslavement.

‘Sound-Photographs of Negro songs’: John Lomax and His Methodology

John Lomax was born in 1867 in Mississippi to James Avery Lomax and Susan Frances Cooper. After two years, Lomax and his family moved to Bosque Valley, Texas and according to Mary-Beth Hamilton, ‘Lomax grew up immersed in farm labor, scratching corn and cotton out of the arid soil, attending school for short bursts between crops.’⁶ His love of folk-music apparently emerged during his childhood in Texas, as ‘there Lomax learned ballads from passing cowboys and spirituals from Nat Blythe, a local African American whom he taught to read and write.’⁷ Discussing Lomax’s education, Nolan Porterfield, who has written an extensive biography of Lomax’s life, wrote that

⁵ For studies of Lomax’s work see B. Filene, “‘Our Singing Country’: John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly, and the Construction of an American Past”, *American Quarterly*, 43.4 (1991); P. Mullen, *The Man Who Adores the Negro: Race and American Folklore* (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 2008); C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*; J. Hirsch, ‘Modernity, Nostalgia and Southern Folklore Studies: The Case of John Lomax’, *The Journal of American Folklore*, 105.416 (1992), pp.183-207. Work that utilises his recordings to write histories of the institution include I. Berlin et al, *Remembering Slavery* and G. White and S. White, *The Sounds of Slavery*.

⁶ M. Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues*, p.93.

⁷ J. Marshall Bevil, ‘John Avery Lomax’, *American National Biography*, available at <<http://www.anb.org/view/10.1093/anb/9780198606697.001.0001/anb-9780198606697-e-1800749?rskey=mtmQSn&result=2>> [accessed 22.02.19].

he became a ‘highly educated man’ as in his mid-twenties he went to the University of Texas to study arts and sciences. Whilst at university, he was also an editor of a monthly magazine entitled the *Texas University*.⁸

After he completed his degree, Lomax was offered a job as registrar of the University of Texas, where he worked until 1903. After leaving this job, he became an English instructor at the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, and in 1907, he attended Harvard to participate in a course on folk expression and regional literature. This inspired him to gather a number of cowboy songs into an anthology, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, published in 1910, with funding from the Harvard Sheldon Fellowships.⁹ After another stint working at the University of Texas, Lomax then became a trader in a bank until 1931, when he was made redundant during the economic turmoil of the Great Depression.¹⁰ It was after this redundancy, and the death of his first wife, that Lomax decided to return to his love of folk song, and drove around the U.S. delivering public lectures to promote his anthology. A year after this initial lecture tour, he gained support from the Archive of American Folk Song to embark on a summer expedition to record American folk-songs across the southern United States, which culminated in another book published in 1934, entitled *American Ballads and Folk Songs*.¹¹ Lomax continued to gather folk material to be deposited at the Library of Congress throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, leading to the publication of a memoir, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, about his early life and folklore expeditions.¹²

As Lomax produced such a range of recordings, was Folklore Director of the FWP and was sponsored by the Library of Congress, a number of historians have analysed his beliefs and recording methodologies to understand more about his relationship with specific performers. For example, folklore historian Patrick Mullen in *The Man Who Adores the Negro* scrutinised John Lomax’s relationship with Henry Truvillion, one of his black performers. He revealed that ‘romanticism, pastoralism, [and] paternalism’

⁸ N. Porterfield, *Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), pp. 33-49.

⁹ J. Lomax, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (New York: Sturgis and Walton Company, 1911).

¹⁰ J. Marshall Bevil, ‘John Avery Lomax’.

¹¹ J. Lomax, *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1934).

¹² J. Lomax, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947).

undoubtedly influenced Lomax's interactions with black individuals.¹³ Yet, exploring the context of the era, Mullen noted that 'there were problems in the way John Lomax represented Henry Truvillion, but their relationship was remarkable given the racial restrictions of their time.'¹⁴

Considering the racial context of the time further, there are similarities between Lomax's paternalistic interactions with his performers and the policies and beliefs of John Collier, the architect of the Indian New Deal, towards Native Americans. During the Depression and as part of the New Deal, Roosevelt appointed Collier as the Commissioner of Indian affairs and was the chief architect of the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. Collier diverted Native American policy away from the allotment system and a focus on assimilation and instead, according to E. Schwartz, "promoted economic development, brought Indian people into mainstream aid programs, reversed the loss of Indian lands, increased livestock ownership, and funded cooperatives."¹⁵ Yet, at the same time as passing these reformist and often celebrated policies, historians have criticised his policies as being paternalistic (as is the case with John Lomax).¹⁶ Schwartz, for example, explained that despite his fascination with, and celebration of, the Taos Pueblo people and their culture, Collier believed that they were simultaneously 'too inward-looking to adapt by themselves, and so he was willing to see federal power used to force their adaption.'¹⁷ Similarly, he described Collier's interaction with the Florida Seminoles as paternalistic; after voting very narrowly for the Indian Reorganization Act, the Seminoles questioned whether to accept the result, yet Collier ensured that no new election occurred.¹⁸

Further exploring Lomax's beliefs, public historian Benjamin Filene also published an article on Lomax's relationship with Huddie Ledbetter (aka 'Leadbelly'), who gained some commercial success after Lomax promoted him. Through unpicking this relationship, Filene demonstrated that John and Alan Lomax had a distinct vision of

¹³ P. Mullen, *The Man Who Adores the Negro*, p.63

¹⁴ P. Mullen, 'The Dilemma of Representation in Folklife Studies: The Case of Henry Truvillion and John Lomax', *Journal of Folklore Research*, 37.2/3 (2000), p.172.

¹⁵ E. Schwartz, 'Red Atlantis Revisited: Community and Culture in the Writings of John Collier', *American Indian Quarterly*, 18.4 (1994), p.525.

¹⁶ D. Fixico, *Bureau of Indian Affairs* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2012), p.122.

¹⁷ E. Schwartz, 'Red Atlantis Revisited: Community and Culture in the Writings of John Collier', p. 518.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.520-21

folk music and their choice of which songs to record and dismiss has ‘powerfully influenced how Americans remember their musical heritage.’¹⁹ He also claimed that ‘they were strikingly successful in shaping a canon to their own tastes’ as ‘they managed to tack between the public’s desire for a vital, American cultural tradition rooted in the past and the need to dilute this tradition in order to reach a mass audience.’²⁰ Stewart has also analysed Lomax’s representations of race and his performers, but this time in relation to his work as the director of the WPA project, remarking that ‘his theories regarding what constituted “authentic” black culture, shaped his direction of the Federal Writers’ Ex-Slave Project, and significantly affected how the ex-slaves and their narratives would be represented.’²¹ She explained that Lomax believed he had an insight into African American mentality due to his relationships with black informants. In turn, this shaped the content of the narratives, leading to a focus on the interviewees’ behaviour and appearance.²²

Building upon these analyses, and further exploring his field notes and biographies, it seems that Lomax was influenced by two main ideas about slavery and black American music that sat slightly in tension. Jerrold Hirsch has suggested that ‘what makes John Lomax an interesting figure is the informative contradictions and tensions in his work.’²³ He was fascinated by so-called ‘primitive’ aspects of black American folk-song that were being lost, despite also being influenced by a wider cultural celebration of the ‘civilising’ institution of slavery that began the erosion of such ‘primitive’ traits, as well as a personal nostalgia for this ‘Old South’ and the ‘loyal’ black Americans who were a part of it.

The fact that Lomax was both fascinated with the ‘primitive’, and saw black American music as representing a more backward culture, was not uncommon in this era. After the devastation of World War I, Cooper has argued that white assumptions about the superiority of European civilisation were shattered, ‘inspiring new interest in people once deemed backward and savage among Modernist writers, artists, and

¹⁹ B. Filene, “Our Singing Country”, p.604.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.619-620.

²¹ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.93.

²² *Ibid.*, p.97.

²³ J. Hirsch, ‘Modernity, Nostalgia and Southern Folklore Studies’, p.187.

intellectuals.’²⁴ Describing how black Americans became the subject of this, Cooper also explained that ‘because race was at the heart of white Victorian thinkers’ conceptualization of civilization, it is not surprising that blacks, and more specifically southern blacks, became central to American modernists’ quest to recover the experiences and emotions that civilization had deprived them.’²⁵ Marianna Torgovnick, who has studied how the imagery of the ‘primitive’ developed in the early twentieth century, explained that ‘those who study or write about the primitive usually begin by defining it as different from (usually opposite to) the present.’²⁶ Further to this, she explained that ‘the real secret of the primitive in this century [twentieth century] has often been the same secret as always: the primitive can be – has been, will be (?) – whatever Euro-Americans want it to be.’²⁷ White Americans thus looked to the ‘primitive’ as an antidote to what they saw as the costs of modernity and to help them make sense of themselves within this ‘modern’ era. They wanted to find ‘emotions and experiences’ that ‘civilisation’ was depriving them of. Although his expedition was undertaken in 1940, Lomax’s wish to capture black music, as an example of the uninhibited emotionalism that was being eradicated, must be seen as an example of this (as should the endeavours of the white researchers who went to the Gullah Islands in search of a ‘primitive’ culture).

Again, Lomax’s fascination with black American culture as something ‘primitive’, but worth preserving, is similar to Collier’s beliefs about Native American culture. Elmer Rusco, for example, has argued that Collier pushed for policies that preserved some self-governance for Native Americans people because he wanted to preserve their cultural traits. Like Lomax who looked to black American music as an example of what modern society had lost, Rusco has argued that in the case of Collier ‘the evidence is overwhelming from his work and studies of his life that he did this because he believed that Native American cultures were superior to the culture of the modern, industrialized world.’²⁸ Indeed, Schwartz has also shown that in Collier’s autobiography he described his encounter with the Taos Pueblo people as ‘life-changing’ as they ‘were still the

²⁴ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.26.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ M. Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.8.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.9.

²⁸ E. Rusco, ‘John Collier: Architect of Sovereignty or Assimilation?’, *American Indian Quarterly*, 15.1 (1991), p.49.

possessors and users of the fundamental secret of human life – the secret of building great personality through the instrumentality of social institutions.’²⁹

Patrick Mullen has described Lomax’s views more thoroughly, writing that ‘Lomax admired certain kinds of African American folklore as art – especially folk song – but he followed prevailing scholarly theory in seeing singers in evolutionary terms as expressing a more primitive culture.’³⁰ This is evident in an article that Lomax published in 1947, in which he explained that, ‘we had come to Murrell’s Inlet, near Georgetown, South Carolina ... to hear the singing of primitive coast Negroes.’³¹ Crucially, Lomax was interested in ‘primitive’ music because he believed that due to technological advances such as the radio, mass migration from the country to cities, and increased education, ‘civilised’ American society was at risk of losing this ‘primitive’ music that was more emotional in nature. In a letter to Harold Spivake, Chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress in 1939, he noted that:

We are finding some new stuff and re-recording some of the last of the old. The gang work songs, sung in wild abandon, seem definitely gone. I can’t find ‘em anymore after only 2 years. And the old spirituals are following: Chief causes, I think, the radio and education.³²

To find these ‘disappearing’ and ‘primitive’ songs, he travelled to isolated areas of the southern U.S. As Mullen has revealed, ‘Lomax clearly had set out to find isolated groups in order to fulfill his scholarly conceptions: “Our purpose was to find the Negro who had had the least contact with jazz, the radio, and with the white man.”’³³ This led him to record in prisons in search of music that historians of the soundscape of slavery, Shane and Graham White, have explained were an ‘older, more ‘authentic’ African American culture – in our terms, one closer to the time of slavery.’³⁴ Lomax often discussed his rationale behind this choice of recording space in his writing. In his article

²⁹ E. Schwartz, ‘Red Atlantis Revisited: Community and Culture in the Writings of John Collier’, p. 507.

³⁰ P. Mullen, ‘The Dilemma of Representation in Folklife Studies’, p.157.

³¹ J. Lomax, ‘Adventures of a Ballad Hunter: Sinners and Saints’, *Southwest Review*, 32.1 (1947), p. 25.

³² COR48, 25-05-1939, John Lomax Correspondence (1933/001), Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, (hereafter JLC, LoC), folder 58.

³³ P. Mullen, ‘The Dilemma of Representation in Folklife Studies’, p.161.

³⁴ G. White and S. White, *The Sounds of Slavery*, p.xxi.

about two individuals, Iron Head and Clear Rock who he recorded in prison, he stated that:

The river songs indeed seemed gone, for I had already searched the New Orleans docks. Soon the gang songs of the black man would follow suit, as a part of the advance of the machine age. On the penitentiary farms, where the Negro labor must be done in groups, the 'plantation hollers' yet live.³⁵

As Turner focused upon isolated areas in his Gullah study, Lomax likewise conducted recordings in places where contact between white and black culture remained limited. Yet, the two men focused their work on these similar areas for contrasting reasons. As an academic endeavour, Turner was attempting to highlight the continuing African influence on the language of African Americans in the Gullah regions, in turn demonstrating instances of black resistance and resilience against white oppression. Lomax, in contrast, despised the black intellectualism that Turner embodied, and Hamilton suggested that on his travels, Lomax found that 'most vexing were the educated Negroes he met up with from time to time on his journey, the teachers and ministers who attempted to stage-manage his visits to remote black communities to ensure that nothing unseemly made its way onto Lomax's wax disks.'³⁶ This disdain of educated black Americans was likely due to the belief that aspects of the 'primitive' that he appreciated, such as spontaneous, unrestrained and emotional songs, were being lost through education and the attempts of educated black Americans, such as Turner, to eradicate negative stereotypes of African Americans.

Exploring the stereotypes relating to the 'primitive', Cooper has explained that 'this fascination with the carefree, unfettered, primitive black 'other' was not a departure from racist civilization discourse, but instead was an adjustment of the discourse.'³⁷ Although the appreciation of the 'primitive' increased in the 1920s and 1930s due to the perceived costs of civilisation, derogatory tropes and stereotypes that linked black Americans to a more 'backward' culture and white Americans to a civilised one existed prior to this, used to reinforce arguments for white superiority.³⁸

³⁵ J. Lomax, 'Adventures of a Ballad Hunter: Iron Head and Clear Rock', *SouthWest Review*, 30.1 (1944) pp.50-51

³⁶ M. Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues*, p.112.

³⁷ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.29

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.26.

There are numerous tropes related to the ‘primitive’, according to Torgovnik; ‘primitives are like children, the tropes say. Primitives are our untamed selves, or id forces – libidinous, irrational, violent, dangerous.’³⁹ As Cooper observed, white Americans linked these stereotypes to black Americans from the 1830s, and into the nineteenth century ‘many scholars described black-Africans as childlike, superstitious, and uninhibited, with strong sexual instincts and the tendency to express themselves through music and dancing as opposed to civilized forms of communication.’⁴⁰ John Dollard who published an examination of race relations in the South during the 1930s, described some of this stereotypical imagery: ‘Negroes are a naturally happy, carefree people; ... they are comical, amusing, and when they are very small, cute.’⁴¹ White Americans used these tropes, he claimed, justify their inferior position.

In Lomax’s article for *The Nation*, he revealed that he held these stereotypical beliefs, stating that ‘genuine negro folk-songs’ were ‘spontaneous outbursts of intimate affections and impulses.’⁴² In the same article he wrote that:

There surely exists no merrier-hearted race than the negro, especially in his natural home, the warm climate of the South. The negro’s loud laugh may sometimes speak the empty mind, but at the same time it reveals a nature upon which trouble and want sit but lightly.⁴³

Although this article was published in 1919, his views about black emotion did not change drastically. When describing the informants in his 1930s field notes, there are abundant examples of descriptions that portray black Americans as singing in highly emotional, unrestrained but simplistic fashions. An illustrative example of this is his description of the songs sung by ‘Iron Head’:

Few songs were gay in tone. Most of them were dominated by a brooding sadness. Here was no studied art. The words, the music, the rhythm, were simple, the natural emotional out-pouring of the black man in confinement. The listener found himself swept along with the

³⁹ M. Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, p.8.

⁴⁰ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.27.

⁴¹ J. Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town [electronic book]*, (New York: Doubleday, 1949), p.384.

⁴² J. Lomax, ‘Self Pity in Negro Folk Songs’, *The Nation* 105.2719 (1917), p.141.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

primitive emotions aroused, and despite himself, he discovered his own body swaying in unison to the urge of Iron Head's melodies.⁴⁴

These pieces of writing reveal that although Lomax viewed black Americans as 'primitive', he mainly utilised the 'primitive' character tropes of childish behaviour, spontaneity and emotionality rather than the violent and dangerous stereotypes, even when he discussed prison inmates such as Iron Head. Although depictions of African Americans as violent and dangerous were undoubtedly circulating during the early twentieth century, such as in the film *Birth of the Nation*, and can occasionally be seen in Lomax's writing, through positing black Americans as childlike, submissive and inferior, Lomax could in part reconcile his celebration of aspects of the 'primitive' with his appreciation of the beneficial and civilising nature of slavery.⁴⁵

That Lomax saw slavery as benevolent and celebrated it a civilising institution can be most explicitly seen in his 1917 article, in which he wrote that 'slavery ... has been a thing of the past these many years, and, after all, as a part of the race history, formed but a brief interlude – an episode – between many generations of barbaric freedom and the present status of liberty in a civilized land.'⁴⁶ Again, this was a popular narrative that circulated in the early twentieth century, even in academic circles. Ulrich B. Phillips, a white professional historian, published *American Negro Slavery* in 1918, in which he argued that the standard southern plantation was 'a school constantly training and controlling pupils who were in a backward state of civilization.'⁴⁷ They moved from this state of barbarism to become civilised human beings, Phillips suggested, through emulating the practices of 'orderly, well bred' white families, practices that were also enforced with discipline.⁴⁸

Linked to this narrative of slavery, Lomax was evidently motivated to collect his recordings as he felt a personal nostalgia for the 'Old South' and the loyal black

⁴⁴ J. Lomax, 'Adventures of a Ballad Hunter', p.48.

⁴⁵ For studies of this film, use of racial stereotypes and its cultural impact see B. Urwand, 'The Black Image on the White Screen: Representations of African Americans from the Origins of Cinema to *The Birth of a Nation*', *Journal of American Studies*, 52.1 (2018), pp.45-64; L. Plath, 'Mammy, Mandingo, Django and Soloman: A Century of American Slavery in Cinema from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *12 Years a Slave*' in S. Edwards, M. Doslki and F. Sayer (eds.), *Histories on Screen: The Past and Present in Anglo-American Cinema and Television* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

⁴⁶ J. Lomax, 'Self Pity in Negro Folk Songs', p. 141.

⁴⁷ U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, p.342.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.343.

Americans who worked for his family during his childhood. In *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, Lomax hinted at this; as a child, he became friends with Nat, a black American who worked on his farm. He revealed that Nat had a great influence on his life, writing that ‘I came to love Nat with the fierce strength and loyalty of youth’, and explained that Nat influenced him musically; ‘from Nat I learned my sense of rhythm’ and ‘he taught me many jig tunes.’⁴⁹ It seems that this friendship greatly influenced his decision to capture African American folk-songs, as he recounted that ‘as I travelled up and down the South these recent years, I find myself always looking for Nat, the dear friend and companion of long ago.’⁵⁰

This kind of romanticised nostalgia and descriptions of love on the part of white southerners for the black Americans who were part of their childhood can be seen throughout southern memoirs, but most often in relation to the figure of the ‘mammy’. For example, Grace Elizabeth Hale has explored ‘mammy stories’ that circulated in the early twentieth century within memoirs and autobiographies of white woman, who look back at their ‘mammy’ as ‘the crucial nurturer, protector, and teacher of white children.’⁵¹ John Dollard further emphasised this point about southern nostalgia for the people of ‘the Old South’ when he wrote in the 1930s. He explained that there was an ‘idealization of the ‘old-timy’ Negroes’ and that ‘by idealizing the old-time Negro type and wishing for its return, the present-day realities of southern life are avoided and it is not necessary to take account of the actual change in the Negro status.’⁵² This nostalgia for ‘Nat’ must therefore be seen within this context of idealising the ‘Old South’ and celebrating the patriarchal nature of the slavery institution.

Lastly, it is important that researchers acknowledge that unlike Turner, Lomax also collected folk-songs to popularise this music. Filene has identified this dual purpose, explaining that ‘fearing that this traditional music was being overwhelmed by commercialism, they were determined to record it in as pure a form as possible and to awaken new audiences to its power and charm’, aiming to ‘both preserve and popularize folk music.’⁵³ This can be seen through his promotion of Huddie Ledbetter or

⁴⁹ J. Lomax, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, pp.11-12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.12.

⁵¹ G. E. Hale, *Making Whiteness*, p.98.

⁵² J. Dollard, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*, p.383.

⁵³ B. Filene, “‘Our Singing Country’”, p.604.

‘Leadbelly’, who he met in July 1933 in Angola Penitentiary. In 1934, Ledbetter was released from prison, and Lomax took him on his recording expeditions. Lomax then began to publicise his music, by recording him commercially and booking him to sing at concerts. This led to some commercial success, as on a trip to New York, for example, ‘publishers, critics, musicians, radio broadcasters, folk song enthusiasts, socialites and reporters’ were all interested in Ledbetter’s story, and a ‘media circus’ ensued.⁵⁴ Aside from the ideological assumptions that led to his attempt to preserve and popularise folk music, Lomax evidently also simply saw financial gain as important, stating in correspondence with Harold Spivacke that ‘the possibility of making a little extra money I should welcome.’⁵⁵

Analysing Lomax’s Collections

Historians have produced important studies of Lomax’s political and racial beliefs and recording methodologies and this chapter builds upon these analyses in three ways. First, it brings the focus of the research back onto the recordings themselves, exploring how these beliefs affected the emotional content of a distinct set of recordings. Out of the thousands conducted by Lomax with black Americans in a variety of southern states, this chapter only analyses those produced with people who had been enslaved. Lomax recorded a number of formerly enslaved performers across his many expeditions between 1933 and 1941, but this case-study focuses specifically on those with elderly black Americans on Lomax’s 1940 southern states expedition. This leaves recordings with six men and women: Harriett McClintock, Alice Richardson, Billy McCrea, Bob Ledbetter and Joe and Mary McDonald (see Table 4). All of these people sang numerous songs from slavery, and most of their recordings contain short recollections or opinions about aspects of the institution.⁵⁶ Though this is a small sample of recordings, Lomax produced more extensive field notes and photographs on this 1940 recording trip than any other. Thus, having access to these contextual

⁵⁴ M. Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues*, p.116.

⁵⁵ Letter from John Lomax to Spivacke, 14/04/39, JLC, LoC, folder 57.

⁵⁶ Small snippets of Joe McDonald and Billy McCrea’s recollections are online at the Library of Congress’s collection *Voices from the Days of Slavery*. I have then transcribed the remainder of these two recordings and the full recordings of the other interviews, as it is important to hear these recollections with their surrounding context. Much of the information provided about each performer was found in the field notes written by John and Ruby Lomax on their trip, whilst other information is taken from the recordings themselves. Each former slave was also photographed.

materials allows for a better understanding of the many factors that shaped the interview encounter.

Table 4: Table of the Age, Location of Interview, and Persons Present at Interview with John Lomax’s 1940 Interviewees.

| Name | Age at the time of interview (years old, circa) | Location of interview | Persons present at the interview |
|----------------------------|---|------------------------------|--|
| Harriett McClintock | N/A | Sumterville, Alabama | John Lomax; Ruby Pickens Tartt; Ruby Terrill Lomax; Great grandchildren; Passerby audience |
| Alice (‘Judge’) Richardson | 92 | Natchez, Mississippi | John Lomax; Ruby Terrill Lomax |
| Billy McCrea | 117 | Jasper, Texas | John Lomax; Ruby Terrill Lomax |
| Bob Ledbetter | 80 | Oil City, Louisiana | John Lomax; Ruby Terrill Lomax; Noah Moore |
| Joe and Mary McDonald | N/A | Livingston, Alabama | John Lomax; Ruby Terrill Lomax; Ruby Pickens Tartt; Son and Daughter |

Second, to explore the possibilities of Lomax’s recordings for understanding the emotional texture of enslaved life, this chapter focuses upon the framing of emotion in the recordings. Songs, of course, present different opportunities to analyse emotional content and encounter dynamics. Historian of African American history Michael Honey, for example, has described the many possibilities that an analysis of music can offer scholars, noting that ‘songs do some of the same work as oral history; they also

add the ‘affective power of sound’ that brings an additional emotional dimension to the past.’⁵⁷ Numerous historians agree that songs originating under slavery were no exception; Shane White and Graham White, who analysed some of the recordings under consideration in this chapter, have argued that ‘drawing on the cultural traditions of West Africa, slaves often spontaneously created songs that expressed their deeply felt emotions or the immediate circumstances of their lives.’⁵⁸ Those who had been in bondage spoke of the emotionally charged nature of song. Frederick Douglass, for example, remembered that ‘they would make the dense old woods, for miles around, reverberate with their wild songs, revealing at once the highest joy and the deepest sadness.’⁵⁹ Du Bois also dedicated a chapter of his book, *The Souls of Black Folk* to ‘the sorrow songs’, explaining that the enslaved sang them to relieve their suffering and to recount their experiences. He believed that ‘the Negro folk-song - the rhythmic cry of the slave - stands to-day not simply as the sole American music, but as the most beautiful expression of human experience born this side the seas.’⁶⁰ Du Bois also explained that these songs revealed an aspect of the experience of the enslaved; ‘these songs are the articulate message of the slave to the world.’⁶¹

This chapter thus outlines the patterns of emotional content revealed in Lomax’s recordings in order to analyse how Lomax influenced and politicised the emotional expression of the formerly enslaved. In turn, the following case-study provides conclusions as to the possibilities and limitations of this source set for exploring the emotional experience of the enslaved. To provide this analysis, the first section of this chapter will examine the lyrics, as well as the way in which the words were expressed or sung by the individuals whom Lomax recorded. Songs allow for the expression of an added dimension of emotion through permitting a greater range of tone than speech, including moans, shouts and different pitches, as well as embodied reactions such as tapping and dancing. Analysing emotional expression, as in the case of Turner’s interviews, will perhaps allow for a better understanding of the experiences and feelings that the elderly black Americans brought to the encounter.

⁵⁷ M. Honey, “‘Sharecroppers’ Troubadour”: Can we use Songs and Oral Poetry as Oral history?”, *Journal of the Oral History Association*, 41.2 (2014), p.218.

⁵⁸ G. White and S. White, *The Sounds of Slavery*, p.58.

⁵⁹ F. Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass*, p.13.

⁶⁰ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk Fifth Ed. [electronic book]* (Chicago: A C. McClurg, 1904), p.251.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.250.

It would be inappropriate, however, to undertake the same methodological analysis when exploring songs and interviews, as they are distinct sources that can reveal different information. In contrast to the individual memories of slavery that are recounted in the interviews, the songs are not necessarily personal commentaries on the institution. Song lyrics were created collectively during slavery and passed down through generations and Lawrence Levine has identified that ‘spirituals both during and after slavery were the product of an improvisational communal consciousness.’⁶² Through analysing the lyrics of these songs, then, historians can perhaps gain access to a collective emotional response to slavery, not necessarily individual experiences.

Yet, Levine also explained that religious songs were ‘*simultaneously* the result of individual and mass creativity.’⁶³ Lyrics often changed to reflect the mood of the individual singing at any one time. White and White have stated that ‘for large numbers of slaves, a song was never a stable text and an unvarying tune; it was a frame to be filled as the moment dictated.’⁶⁴ They explained that ‘lines, couplets, and stanzas in this lyric pool did not belong to one particular song, but floated freely, able potentially to be inserted in many.’⁶⁵ The lines that the formerly enslaved men and women chose to sing or ignore, therefore, may reflect their own personal experiences of enslavement or how they were feeling about slavery at the interview encounter. When singing about slavery the lyrics included by these singers may be reflective of their personal thoughts and feelings about the institution that they brought to the encounter, yet also highlight communal assumptions and beliefs.

Lastly, this chapter focuses upon the way in which practical considerations - such as the interview site and the people present at the interview - affected the recording situation. Much of this information can be extracted from the field notes, photographs and recordings themselves. Between September and November 1940, for example, John A. Lomax, Bess Lomax (his daughter) and Ruby Terrill Lomax (his wife) travelled around Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and Virginia.

⁶² L. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, p.29.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ G. White and S. White, *The Sounds of Slavery*, p.59

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.60.

Here they collected field recordings of a variety of songs, including folk-songs, ballads, blues, work songs and children's songs, as well as sermons and church services onto 12- inch lacquer aluminum base discs. These were deposited at the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress.⁶⁶ The formerly enslaved performers who they recorded lived across the south – Alabama, Mississippi, Texas and Louisiana – yet all resided in isolated places. As can be seen from Table 4, all of the performers appear to be born in bondage, though it must be acknowledged that Harriett McClintock's age at the time of interview was not discussed. In terms of occupation, McClintock, Joe and Mary McDonald talk about working in the field. Joe and Mary McDonald, Billy McCrea and Bob Ledbetter were all performers in their youth, whilst Alice Richardson continued to perform into the 1930s.

The specific place in which the interviews were conducted also differed: a chair at the bottom of the hill next to McClintock's house (see Figure 5.1); Richardson's neighbour's house; Lomax's hotel room; and Joe and Mary McDonald's porch. John and Ruby Lomax were always present at the recordings, and John Lomax asked the majority of questions and comments. The other people involved in the conducting of the interview changed depending on the place. In Livingston, Alabama, Ruby Pickens Tartt helped to select performers and accompanied them during the recordings, and is documented to have known the performers well.⁶⁷ Family members were often present, as in the case of McClintock and Joe and Mary McDonald, and passers-by watched as McClintock sang, as seen in Figure 5.1. This chapter will therefore take into account the effects of these differing spaces and situations, alongside Lomax's beliefs and the interviewees' own personal agendas, during the analysis of emotional expression in these recordings.

⁶⁶ John and Ruby Lomax 1940 Southern States Recordings Collection Catalogue, <<https://catalog.loc.gov/vwebv/search?searchCode=LCCN&searchArg=2009655314&searchType=1&permalink=y>> [accessed 01.08.17].

⁶⁷ J. Lomax, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, p.190.



Figure 5.1: ‘Aunt’ Harriett McClintock at the microphone with John A. Lomax, Sr., Mrs. Ruby Pickens Tartt, and Aunt Harriett’s ‘great-grands’ children in background, at crossroads near Sumterville, Alabama.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington D.C, available at <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lomax/item/2015645818/> >[accessed 24.10.17]

Secular Song and Emotion

Way down in the bottom, whar de cotton so rotten, you wont get your
hundred yeah today,
Way down in the bottom, whar de cotton so rotton, you wont get your
hundred yeah today,
Ohh little johnny, he's a poor little fella, he wont get his hundred yeah
today.⁶⁸

Harriett McClintock sang 'Poor Little Johnny' to John and Ruby Lomax during a recording stop in Alabama. This work song typified the type of music that Lomax wanted to preserve and he wrote in *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* that he specifically went to see McClintock as she 'according to rumor, knew a cotton-picking song.'⁶⁹ Ruby Lomax also explained in a letter to her family on October 29, 1940, that 'we had all wanted to hear her special cotton-picking song, 'Poor Little Johnny', about which Mrs. Tartt had told us.'⁷⁰ Historians such as Levine have explained that African American songs are 'difficult, almost impossible, to date with any precision.'⁷¹ Yet, information provided by Alan Lomax about this song suggests that McClintock sang these lyrics as a child, when she was enslaved on an Alabama plantation. Alan Lomax's notes also suggest that the origins of the song 'undoubtedly date from the period of the Civil war and earlier.'⁷² This is suggested in McClintock's own explanation of the song, as she told Lomax that she learnt it from her mother, who was also enslaved.⁷³

After singing 'Poor Little Johnny' to Lomax twice, McClintock recounted that she sang this whilst cotton picking; 'that was just a song you know we play and sing in the cotton pad you know when picking cotton.'⁷⁴ She also explained that it was sung collectively by a mass of labourers; 'the whole bunch be singing that same song.'⁷⁵ Shane White and Graham White have observed, from WPA testimony and the writings of white observers such as a correspondent of *Dwight's Journal of Music*, that the sound of

⁶⁸ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940, John and Ruby Lomax 1940 Southern States Recordings Collection (AFC 1940/003), Archive of Folk Culture, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress, (hereafter Lomax SSRC, LoC), AFS4025.

⁶⁹ J. Lomax, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, p.191.

⁷⁰ Harriett McClintock, John Lomax Field Notes, Lomax SSRC, LoC.

⁷¹ L. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, p.xii.

⁷² A. Lomax, *Afro-American Blues and Games Songs*, Historic AFC Linear Note Booklets, Archive of American Folksong (1942) <https://www.loc.gov/folklife/LP/AFS_L4_sm.pdf> [accessed 10.09.17]

⁷³ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

collective singing on the plantation was not uncommon. There were a ‘number of occasions on which the sounds of mass slave singing must virtually have filled the air’, including ‘gangs of slaves laboring together in the fields.’⁷⁶

As can be seen from the lyrics of ‘Poor little Johnny’, the words could describe the hardships of labour, as well as the emotions that the enslaved felt towards their work. In particular, this song detailed the difficulty of picking the enforced quota of cotton each day, using the example of ‘little Johnny’. The line ‘Oh little Johnny, he’s a poor little fella, he won’t get his hundred yeah today’ is not explicitly emotional. Yet, the stanza does suggest that failing to pick the desired quota of cotton had profound consequences. Norrece Jones, who has extensively analysed the control mechanisms of enslavers, wrote about these negative consequences. He explained that ‘the whip was the most active weapon in the ruling-class arsenal’ and that ‘blacks were castigated usually for negligence at work.’⁷⁷ The careful observation and resultant whipping of slaves who were picking cotton has also been visualised in the film *12 Years A Slave*, adapted from Solomon Northup’s autobiography. In this, he described the punishments that could occur when the quota of cotton was not picked:

It was rarely that a day passed by without one or more whippings. This occurred at the time the cotton was weighed. The delinquent, whose weight had fallen short, was taken out, stripped, made to lie upon the ground, face downwards, when he received a punishment proportioned to his offence. It is the literal, unvarnished truth, that the crack of the lash, and the shrieking of the slaves, can be heard from dark till bed time, on Epps' plantation, any day almost during the entire period of the cotton-picking season.⁷⁸

Thus, ‘Poor Little Johnny’ seems to describe, in a veiled way, the likelihood that ‘Johnny’ will be punished (as Northup recounted in his narrative) for not picking his quota of cotton.

⁷⁶ G. White and S. White, *The Sounds of Slavery*, p.39.

⁷⁷ N. Jones, *Born a Child of Freedom*, p.72-73.

⁷⁸ S. Northup, *12 Years a Slave: Narrative of Solomon Northup, a Citizen of New York, Kidnapped in Washington City in 1841 and Rescued in 1853*, (New York: Sampson Low, Son and Company, 1853), available at: <<https://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/northup/northup.html>> [accessed 31.10.18]

Alongside 'Poor Little Johnny', Lomax recorded a number of other work songs. For example, Lomax asked Bob Ledbetter to sing a song about cotton picking, asking 'and, and what was it you sang about, the cotton?'⁷⁹ The lyrics sang were similar to McClintock's:

My Sam told me to pick a little cotton,
My boy says don't, the seeds all rotten,
Get out off the way, old Dan Tucker,
Come too late to get your supper.⁸⁰

Ledbetter remembered that he sang this as a young boy as he worked, also stating that 'everywhere you hears me you hear me singing a song, a reel.'⁸¹ Similarly to the lyrics sung by McClintock, this song is not explicitly emotional, yet again the lyrics undoubtedly articulated the difficulties of cotton picking.

This was not the only work task accompanied by song, however. As Levine demonstrated 'slaves not only picked cotton but planted rice, husked corn, rowed boats, rocked babies, cooked food, indeed performed almost every conceivable task to the accompaniment of song with an intensity and style that continually elicited the comments of the whites around them.'⁸² For example, McClintock's song, 'Come, Butter Come' described the process of cooking for enslavers. Although McClintock did not explain whether she sang this whilst working in the kitchen, the lyrics refer to the process of churning milk:

Come butter come, come butter come,
Waiting for the butter and the butter won't come,
Oh come butter come, oh come butter come,
Mister and master come to the table, waiting for the butter and the
butter won't come.⁸³

This final line that references her enslavers may suggest, in a similar way to the two cotton picking songs, that those who were labouring in the kitchen felt anxious about fulfilling their work tasks, yet again is in no way explicit.

⁷⁹ Bob Ledbetter, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 10th, 1940, Lomax SSRC, LoC, AFS 3992-3995.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² L. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, p.6.

⁸³ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

Lomax also wanted to record work songs that were sung away from the plantation. He asked Billy McCrea to sing a ‘steamboat song’ and in particular, ‘Blow Cornie Blow’ about the captain calling them to begin work toting salt from a boat to a warehouse.⁸⁴ Whether McCrea sang this whilst enslaved or emancipated is unclear, yet when describing his work he referred to his ‘master’, which suggests that he may have sung this song whilst in bondage. The lyrics of ‘Blow, Cornie Blow’ depict the moment when the Captain called the labourers to work:

I think I hear the captain call me, blow cornie blow,
I think I hear the captain calling, blow cornie blow,
A blow cornie blow. Blow cornie blow,
A blew it cold, loud and mournful, Blow cornie blow.⁸⁵

The description of the ‘cold, loud and mournful’ sound may simply be an aural description of the horn itself. However, this lyric may also refer to the emotions that the enslaved workers associated with this sound. White and White have observed that a number of elderly black Americans interviewed by the WPA remembered and recounted clearly the sound of the horn and bells that structured their daily lives. They further argued that ‘generally, ex-slaves’ memories of plantation bells and horns evoked painful associations.’⁸⁶ These painful associations are likely to be the subject of this song.

Although some veiled emotion can be interpreted from the lyrics of the previously analysed songs, most of the tunes that the formerly enslaved described singing whilst at work were simply up-beat and playful. Many that Lomax recorded are examples of songs that were designed to maintain morale, by timing work tasks to musical rhythms and tempos. An example of this type of motivational song was one named ‘Gin’, that McClintock sang whilst picking cotton. The lyrics simply described the process of cotton production:

Can you wheel about an’ gin, gin the cotton gin,
Can you roll over an’ gin, gin the cotton gin,

⁸⁴ Billy McCrea, interviewed by J. Lomax, September 30th 1940, Lomax SSRC, LoC, AFS 3974-3975.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ G. White and S. White, *The Sounds of Slavery*, p.5.

Can you reel about an' gin, gin the cotton gin.⁸⁷

McClintock repeated each line twice. This repetitiveness reveals that this song was used by the enslaved as a way of encouraging them to continue working, by timing their tasks to the continuous rhythm. Similarly, McCrea sang 'Ju Rawsy Row', which included lots of repetition. At the start of each line, McCrea chanted 'ju rawsy row' and then added a seemingly random line to this, such as 'don't come to my house', 'hoe nigga hoe' and 'old ties tend the crop.'⁸⁸ Also whilst picking cotton, McClintock remembered singing:

Everybody looking on sning dress,
Sning sning,
Everybody looking on a sning dress,
Snig snigg,
Everybody jumping on sning dress.⁸⁹

Again, this was a light-hearted song, and each line was repeated multiple times. McClintock sang this with other children when they were in the 'cotton pad'. She explained that when singing this song, they would be having 'just a big play, big play' after being prompted by Lomax.⁹⁰ McClintock remembered other, similar play tunes. The lyrics of 'Peep, Squirrel', such as 'Peep, squirrel, ah- da – diddledum/ Walk, squirrel, ah- da – diddledum' typify the playful, up-beat nature of these tunes.⁹¹

The lyrics of the songs included in Lomax's recordings of formerly enslaved performers present us with an emotionally positive and simplistic picture of African American secular songs. Yet, it is evident that, as Levine has observed, 'the variety of non-religious songs in the slaves' repertory was wide' and claimed that 'there were songs of in-group and out-group satire, songs of nostalgia, nonsense songs, children's songs, lullabies, songs of play and work and love.'⁹² Levine noted that the songs could 'speak

⁸⁷ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

⁸⁸ Billy McCrea, interviewed by J. Lomax, September 30th 1940.

⁸⁹ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ For more examples of work and play tunes from this era, see B. Botkin's collections, who worked as part of the FWP and at the Archive of American Folksong with John Lomax. B. Botkin, *A Treasury of Southern Folklore: Stories, Ballads, Traditions and Folkways of the People of the South* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1949); B. Boktin, *The American Play-Party Song: With a Collection of Oklahoma Texts and Tunes* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1937).

⁹² L. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, p.15.

of the forces that affected their lives profoundly’, including lyrics about punishments and separations.⁹³ To illustrate this, he provided the example of some lyrics heard by John Dixon Long, a white man, about the forced separation of an enslaved man from his family and the emotions that stemmed from it. The phrases described the scene:

William Rino sold Henry Silvers;
Hilo! Hilo!
Sold him to de Gorgy trader;
Hilo! Hilo!
His wife she cried, and children bawled;
Hilo! Hilo!
Sold him to Gorgy trader;
Hilo! Hilo!⁹⁴

It is significant that in his writings, Lomax recognised that African American work songs could include emotional expressions of sorrow or loneliness, and he exaggerated and romanticised this emotional content in his field notes. He wrote in a discussion about ‘hollering songs’, for example, taken from his 1940 expedition, that ‘they are sung with an open throat – shouted, howled, growled, or moaned in such fashion that they will fill a stretch of country and satisfy the wild and lonely and brooding spirit of the worker.’⁹⁵ Furthermore, he remarked that ‘in mood they run the gamut of the worker’s emotional life: his loves and sorrows, his hope and despair, his weariness, his resentment.’⁹⁶ Despite these notes, the work songs that the performers sang to Lomax do not seem to ‘run the gamut of the worker’s emotional life’; instead, they describe positive and limited emotional responses to the labour tasks that they were forced to undertake.

It is important, therefore, to question the choice of songs, which mainly included descriptive, repetitive or playful lyrics instead of critical songs about punishment, separation or their masters, and a number of factors could explain this. First, it could suggest that the formerly enslaved simply remembered their enforced labour in an unemotional and positive fashion and that, in turn, there were limited long-term emotional consequences of this labour. It must be acknowledged, however, that the

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.14.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Hollers and Blues, John Lomax Field Notes, Lomax SSRC, LoC.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

African American singers may not have sung songs of resistance, hope, anger and sorrow as they were in the presence of a white audience, as was extensively discussed in relation to the racial dynamics at the WPA interviews. Levine has observed this in the case of folklorists, too; ‘black singers and storytellers were often extremely self-conscious and self-protective in the presence of folklorists, white and black alike.’⁹⁷ He then presented a song, sung throughout generations of black Americans that describes this:

Got one mind for white folks to see,
‘Nother for what I know is me,
He don’t know, he don’t know my mind.⁹⁸

But, Lomax’s role in the shaping of these recordings must also be taken into account. Lomax represented the elderly black Americans who performed for him as happy, childlike and simplistic throughout his writings. His notes about Joe and Mary McDonald typified his representation of childlike emotion, as he wrote that ‘when Miss Terrill would play back their song the two would shout and laugh like a couple of children.’⁹⁹ Lomax also represented McCrea’s physical responses to these songs – dancing and clapping – as childlike behaviour. He recounted that ‘he spoiled a record by jumping to his feet and beginning to dance in the most dramatic moment of the song.’¹⁰⁰ He also downplayed any negative emotion in his writing. For example, he told readers to let go of the ‘tragedy’ in Poor little Johnny, and even called it ‘a quaint and tuneful melody.’¹⁰¹ Mullen has also provided an example of how Lomax would fail to include any information that diverged with these stereotypical characterisations. When writing about a black minister, Lomax failed to take account of the discussions about religion that they had as, Mullen argued, ‘the intelligent black minister did not fit the stereotype of the laughing Negro with a sometimes “empty mind.”’¹⁰²

⁹⁷ L. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, p.xii-xiii.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* For more information on former slaves veiling meanings see G. Osofsky, *Puttin’ On Ole Massa: The Slave Narratives of Henry Bibb, William Wells Brown and Solomon Northup* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); H. Louis Gates, *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁹⁹ Joe and Mary (Mollie) McDonald, John Lomax Field Notes, Lomax SSRC, LoC.

¹⁰⁰ Billy McCrea, John Lomax Field Notes, Lomax SSRC, LoC.

¹⁰¹ Harriett McClintock, John Lomax Field Notes; J. Lomax, *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* p.192.

¹⁰² P. Mullen, ‘The Dilemma of Representation in Folklife Studies’, p.167.

Lomax's characterisations of black Americans undoubtedly reflected a wider societal culture in which white Americans held stereotypical views, namely that of the 'Sambo', which posited black Americans as docile, lazy and subservient. These must be located within the context of Feagin's 'white racial frame', a world-view in which the privileges of whites are defended and narratives of 'inferiority' of 'others' are entrenched through the actions of whites and prevailing images and stereotypes that they hold.¹⁰³ The descriptions of the childlike and inferior nature of black American character in Lomax's field notes typify the type of stereotypes that Lorenzo Dow Turner recognised in his writing and wished to eradicate through his work.

As Turner's political motivations to eradicate these stereotypes shaped his recording methodology, it is evident that Lomax's stereotypical beliefs about African American emotion also strongly influenced the recording situation to ensure that these stereotypes were upheld and reinforced. Lomax chose which songs would be recorded carefully. Comments within the recordings and field notes suggest that before the recording started, the former slaves discussed with Lomax which songs they remembered. It then seems that Lomax decided on the ones that he wanted to hear. For example, Lomax already knew about McClintock's rendition of 'Sning Dress' and asked her to sing it, stating 'that play song about sning get up, you want to stand up and sing that one?'¹⁰⁴ Similarly, he already understood that McCrea could sing steamboat songs, and specifically asked him to perform 'Blow Cornie Blow.'¹⁰⁵

Lomax chose songs that were unemotional and did not critique the system of slavery. Filene uncovered that Lomax failed to include any songs that challenged the institution or continuing unequal criminal justice system in *American Ballads and Folk Songs*. Lomax, he argued, was 'largely uninterested in songs that posit ways for African Americans to change the system that had caused them so much suffering.'¹⁰⁶ Filene then contrasted the lyrics included in *American Ballads* to a collection of songs by Lawrence Gellert, entitled *Negro Songs of Protest*, which included a number of songs that described sorrow and anger towards the institution. Gellert himself criticised Lomax's methodology, seeing him as 'an archetypal racist driven by a reactionary

¹⁰³ J. Feagin, *Racist America*.

¹⁰⁴ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

¹⁰⁵ Billy McCrea, interviewed by J. Lomax, September 30th 1940.

¹⁰⁶ B. Filene, "'Our Singing Country'", p.608.

nostalgia for the shuffling Sambo of southern lore.’¹⁰⁷ By making this same comparison between Lomax and Gellert, Hamilton concluded that ‘clearly, there were limits to what Lomax would capture in his ‘sound photographs.’ Voices that challenged, that expressed resistance, he could not acknowledge, could not even hear.’¹⁰⁸ The analysis of recordings in this chapter supports this assessment made by Hamilton, yet expands her conclusion by highlighting that Lomax’s recordings failed to capture the emotions that coincided with this resistance; sorrow, anger and resentment.

Blackface minstrelsy was also popular at this time being, according to historian Eric Lott, ‘the first, formative public or institutional acknowledgment by whites of black culture.’¹⁰⁹ Created for the amusement of whites, the black minstrel show was based upon ‘pretending that slavery was amusing, right and natural.’¹¹⁰ Produced in the same era, Lomax’s choice of songs ran in parallel with the message of the black minstrel show, through presenting slavery as benevolent, fun and amusing, and failing to acknowledge the violence that was inherent in the system. Further exploring why minstrel shows were so popular, Lott suggested that ‘a strong white fascination with black men and black culture ... underwrote this popular expropriation’; he also remarked that ‘blackface performers were conspicuously intrigued with the street singers and obscure characters from whom they allegedly took the material that was later fashioned to racist ends.’¹¹¹ Lomax’s own motivations for recording black folk music seemed to echo the drives of blackface performers and audiences. In a similar way to the fascination of blackface performers with black Americans, Lomax also seemed to be interested in black people and their culture, and specifically, his childhood friend Nat. This decision to choose songs that presented slavery only in a positive light must therefore be seen within the context of his personal nostalgia for the ‘Old South’ and love of his friend Nat, the wider political narrative that positioned slavery as a civilising and benevolent institution, and a larger cultural popularity of the ‘Sambo’ stereotype.

¹⁰⁷ M. Hamilton, *In Search of the Blues*, p.134.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p.136.

¹⁰⁹ E. Lott, ‘Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy’, *Representations*, 39 (1992), p.23

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.23

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.25

The simplistic emotional picture of African Americans that Lomax painted through his choice of songs was reinforced through his continual prompts to the singers that affected how the songs were sung. He often told the performers to sing in a different tone, or with a different expression. For example, Lomax told McClintock to ‘again, sing it again’ when she sang ‘Poor little Johnny.’ After this prompt, she sang the song louder, with more enthusiasm, whilst clapping.¹¹² Similarly, throughout Ledbetter’s recording, Lomax regularly and quite aggressively prompted him to be louder. He had to sing ‘Want a Little Water Baby’, a holler about bringing water to the field, four times as Lomax impatiently stated that ‘well you had to sing it a lot louder than that for them to hear you across the field.’¹¹³ After a song entitled ‘Sun Goes Down’ Lomax also told him to change key, remarking ‘now sing that and sing it lower, you got a pitch too high.’¹¹⁴

Lomax even prompted his performers express specific emotions. On his 1939 expedition to see Joe and Mary McDonald (who he also visited in 1940) the couple sang ‘When I Was a Girl’. Lomax asked Mary McDonald what she did when she sang this song, and she replied that she would be dancing. After an exchange about whether she ‘had a good time’, Lomax told her to ‘well laugh’ leading to forced laughter from McDonald.¹¹⁵ In a similar exchange later in the recording, Lomax also told Joe McDonald to ‘well laugh a little now.’¹¹⁶ It is significant that in the recording a year later, during Lomax’s 1940 expedition, the McDonalds regularly laughed when talking to Lomax. Whilst this may have been genuine laughter, the emotion that Lomax told the McDonalds to express during their 1939 recording may have shaped how they acted emotionally when in Lomax’s presence a year later.¹¹⁷

These formerly enslaved men and women would have quickly picked up and adhered to an emotional etiquette that Lomax tried to enforce. As Erin Dwyer, who has analysed the performance of emotion by slaves and enslavers suggested, ‘in childhood, through

¹¹² Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

¹¹³ Bob Ledbetter, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 10th, 1940.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Joe and Mary McDonald, interviewed by J. Lomax, May 27th, 1939, Southern Mosaic: The John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip, available at <<https://www.loc.gov/collections/john-and-ruby-lomax/about-this-collection/>> [accessed 05.07.17]

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Joe and Mary McDonald, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 30th, 1940, Lomax SSRC, LoC, AFS 4030-4034.

their interactions with adults and with other children, enslaved children would learn the importance of reading, performing, suppressing and inspiring emotions, and they honed the skills necessary to do so.¹¹⁸ Growing up in bondage, enslaved children would have learnt the importance of presenting and feigning certain emotions in front of whites, and the dangers associated with expressing the wrong emotion. This racialised etiquette that limited black expression continued into the 1930s. After the gains achieved by black Americans during Reconstruction, white southerners fought their way back to political and social control and this involved, according to Ritterhouse, ‘not only the subjugation of free black labor and the expulsion of blacks from electoral politics but also the reassertion of a code of domination and deference rooted in slavery – in short, racial etiquette.’¹¹⁹ Elucidating how parents taught their children about racial etiquette Ritterhouse also argued that ‘virtually any response to white supremacy that black parents counselled – short of anger and hatred for whites – required children to suppress their emotions in favor of keeping a cool head.’¹²⁰ In the context of the violent Jim Crow South, showing anger or affection towards a white person could lead to extreme violence. John Lomax made his expectations of this emotional etiquette – framed by the Jim Crow context to value laughter and happiness and disallow sorrow or anger – extremely clear through his choice of songs and prompts, reinforcing to the formerly enslaved singers that they must adhere to this.

The men and women who Lomax recorded were also used to performing and playing a role designated by whites. Five out of the six former slaves were performers in some capacity, either during or after slavery. The field notes written by Lomax describe McCrea as stating that, ‘I was a singer and dancer and patter when I was a boy. That was long ago, in slavery times’, whilst Ledbetter’s field notes also suggest that he was a ‘renowned singer in his younger days.’¹²¹ Joe and Mary McDonald, Lomax recounted, ‘had been ‘raised by white folks’ and from them learned some of their songs. They had the reputations of being good songsters, and probably good clowns and were often invited by their ‘white folks’ to entertain guests.’¹²² This note suggests that the

¹¹⁸ E. Dwyer, ‘Mastering Emotions’, p.174.

¹¹⁹ J. Ritterhouse, *Growing up Jim Crow*, p.24.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.103- 104.

¹²¹ Billy McCrea, John Lomax Field Notes; Bob Ledbetter, John Lomax Field Notes, Lomax SSRC, LoC.

¹²² Joe and Mary McDonald, 1939 Southern Recording Trip Field Notes, Southern Mosaic: The John and Ruby Lomax 1939 Southern States Recording Trip, available at <https://www.loc.gov/resource/afc1939001.afc1939001_fn0001/?sp=> [accessed 05.09.17]

McDonalds put on a performance, playing the part of the ‘the clown’ to entertain white guests, which again must be seen in the context of blackface minstrelsy.

Similarly, Alice Richardson continued to perform to white guests into her old age, and Ruby Terrill Lomax’s field notes explain that she would entertain as a stereotypical slave ‘mammy.’ She wrote that ‘when the ‘pilgrimages’ are on in the spring, Judge makes a pretty good haul from tips, for one of the white hostesses dresses her up as a slave-time mammy and takes her to her home to sing for her visitors.’¹²³ The Natchez Pilgrimage was founded in 1932, and was an event in which antebellum mansions were opened to the public. Significantly, this event was held to memorialise the ‘Old South’ that Lomax was attempting to present in his recordings. People dressed up in period costume performed antebellum songs and dances to celebrate the era, and ‘the whole effect gave profound life to moonlight-on-magnolia romanticism.’¹²⁴ According to public historian Jack E. Davis, the Pilgrimage presented black Americans in stereotypical ways. In terms of entertainment, ‘happy blacks, each with a canvas sack slung over a shoulder, stood behind a row of cotton balls and entertained the audience with slave songs.’¹²⁵ Evidently, Richardson was used to singing in a stereotypical, upbeat way to white people, which reinforced a narrative of the benevolent ‘Old South’. She likely replicated this when performing to Lomax.

Emotions must be recognised as central to these performances of black caricatures. Stephanie Yuhl has revealed that, ‘from the late 1880s on, the emerging consumer culture increasingly adopted black caricatures – the smiling, kerchief-wearing Mammy; the grinning, watermelon eating pickaniny; the loyal, pipe-smoking Uncle Mose.’¹²⁶ It thus seems that these formerly enslaved singers were used to feigning certain emotions in performances to white guests to adhere to white notions of the ‘mammy’, ‘Sambo’, and ‘Uncle’, and did so when recorded by Lomax. The audiences present at the recording perhaps added to this element of performance. Ruby Lomax noted that whilst McClintock sang at the side of the road, ‘passers-by passed until we had a considerable audience – much to Aunt Harriett’s satisfaction.’¹²⁷ During Ledbetter’s recording, an

¹²³ Alice Richardson, John Lomax Field Notes, Lomax SSRC, LoC.

¹²⁴ J. Davis, ‘A Struggle for Public History: Black and White Claims to Natchez’s Past’, *The Public Historian*, 22.1 (2000), p.53.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.55.

¹²⁶ S. Yuhl, *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p.128.

¹²⁷ Harriett McClintock, John Lomax Field Notes.

unknown number of people entered the room, and Ruby Lomax stated that ‘we’re gonna have to get some more chairs.’¹²⁸

Furthermore, the elderly black Americans were trying to please Lomax with their performances. After singing ‘Come Butter Come’ McClintock asked Lomax ‘that do?’¹²⁹ Similarly Billy McCrea asked ‘how do you like that one?’ after singing ‘Ju Rawsy Raw Raw.’¹³⁰ Many did not even want to sing, because they were worried about putting on a good performance for Lomax. For example, McCrea stated that ‘I didn’t want come, my voice is not good.’¹³¹ Similarly, Ledbetter claimed that ‘I hate to sing to anybody. My voice, it, it broke.’¹³² Analysing just one song that Lomax recorded, White and White have observed that the black Americans were performing; the ‘rendition of this spiritual seems very much an artefact of the recording situation. Probably because members of the group wished to present the Lomaxes with a “good performance”, there is little vocal ornamentation in their singing and the usual raggedness of African American vernacular music is missing.’¹³³

Although this analysis has focused on how Lomax shaped the recording encounter, utilising the concept of ‘emotional labour’ helps to explain how the formerly enslaved emotionally experienced this situation. Hochschild has defined emotional labour as ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display’ and explained that this emotional work must be seen in the context of a set of ‘feeling rules’ most often required in the work place.¹³⁴ Due to the fact that many of those who were recorded by Lomax were performers and used to playing a stereotypical role for white audiences, these recording situations were likely seen as instances of work to them. Lomax made his ‘feeling rules’ explicitly clear with his continual prompts, leading questions and choice of songs and in turn, the singers were engaging in an extreme form of emotional labour, *performing* their emotional expression in accordance to Lomax’s expectations.

¹²⁸ Bob Ledbetter, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 10th, 1940.

¹²⁹ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

¹³⁰ Billy McCrea, interviewed by J. Lomax, September 30th 1940.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² Bob Ledbetter, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 10th, 1940.

¹³³ G. White and S. White, *The Sounds of Slavery*, p.119.

¹³⁴ A. Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, p.7.

Thus, comparing Turner's and Lomax's recording situations, it is of significance that Turner's interviewees also had to engage in a form of emotional labour when they dealt with the feelings that speaking about instances of violence triggered. Yet, the fact that they were comfortable enough to speak truthfully about a wide variety of experiences led to this need for emotional management. This means that historians can deduce the long-term emotional consequences of slavery - the pain and anger - from indicators of emotion in Turner's interviews. In contrast, during Lomax's recordings, the formerly enslaved men and women who performed for him undoubtedly participated in a more extreme form of emotional management and performance and were highly restricted in what they said, meaning that attempting to uncover any genuine feeling within these recordings is futile. In cultivating such 'feeling rules' to help him present a positive narrative of slavery, in fact, Lomax stopped any 'primitive' spontaneous expression of emotion that he was also looking for.

Emotional Recollections of Slavery

The purpose of Lomax's recording trips was to collect folk-songs. He did not routinely question the elderly black Americans about their lives or their experiences of slavery. In asking about the songs they were singing, however, Lomax received snippets of information about slavery from the performers. The recollections provided by the formerly enslaved completely reinforced the picture painted through Lomax's song selection and prompts to ensure the expression of simplistic, one-dimensional and positive emotions about the institution, suggesting the 'feeling rules' that the singers adhered to when performing songs was also followed throughout the recordings. After singing each labour song, for example, McClintock spoke about her experience on the cotton plantation. She did not speak naturally, however, and Lomax had to continually prompt her to continue to speak:

JL: uhuh, did you ever pick any cotton?

HM: me, yes

JL: how much did you pick a day?

HM: I pick about hundred and fifty, hundred and twenty-five

JL: uhuh... errr... did your mother know any more of this song?

HM: No more of this one. [??] That was just a song you know we play and sing in the cotton pad you know when picking cotton. That's all I know of that

JL: What the whole bunch singing?

HM: The whole bunch be singing that same song.¹³⁵

Later in this exchange, McClintock described that she was 'so glad we picking cotton', suggesting a positive attitude towards her forced labour.¹³⁶ Mary McDonald also presented similar emotions towards her work in the field. Lomax asked Mary McDonald to tell him a story about her childhood days, the people who raised her, and her work. In response, McDonald stated 'I work in the field and the house too. Both places. But I like the field the best.'¹³⁷ In comparison Joe McDonald suggested that 'I didn't like the field, didn't go to the field till I was nineteen', yet, again in response Mary stated 'I love the field.'¹³⁸ Lomax wrote about Joe and Mary McDonald's positive feelings towards slavery in his field notes:

Quite unusual was the attitude of these two old people towards slavery. They had lived on adjoining plantations during their childhood and courtship, both with considerate and humane masters ... 'We had plenty of good food, and better clothes than we wear now', said Uncle Joe, and Aunt Mollie added, 'and we didn't have to work so hard. Those were happy days'. Maybe it was longings for the days of childhood and youth, but this is what they said.¹³⁹

McClintock and the McDonald's views about slavery starkly contrast with the emotional states spoken about in the Turner recordings in relation to forced labour, in which the Gullah informants expressed weariness, anger and pride. In comparison to the simplistic, one-line descriptions of their feelings towards labour, Turner's interviewees described complex feelings towards the institution. Differing ages may have caused these divergent views. As Turner conducted his recordings in 1932/3, a number of the interviewees had lived in bondage until their twenties. In comparison, both McClintock and McDonald were young when slavery ended. Enslaved children had less intense work regimes than adults; despite the fact that some children started working as early as three, they were collecting rubbish and pulling weeds, whilst

¹³⁵ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Joe and Mary McDonald, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 30th, 1940.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Joe and Mary (Mollie) McDonald, John Lomax Field Notes.

children between eight and twelve years old would perform more agricultural tasks.¹⁴⁰ Enslaved children were also often able to engage in playful activities, with a number of those interviewed by Fisk University noting that they played in the field, sang, ran through woods, hunted and climbed trees.¹⁴¹ McClintock's description of cotton picking therefore supports these other interviews that suggest children could experience some happiness or amusement on the plantation whilst playing.

Why were these happy memories remembered and emphasised? Memories are composed in relation to the context in which they are discussed, as are decisions about what to recount. McClintock and the McDonalds spoke about their memories straight after they sang up-beat, playful songs. These happier memories may therefore have been remembered above other, more complex ones, because of the musical context of the interview. Furthermore, throughout the recordings McClintock and the McDonalds continually laughed. John Lomax even made jokes towards the McDonalds, responding to Mary's comment that she picked one hundred and fifty to seventy pounds of cotton a day, with the line 'uh, you weren't picking very hard.'¹⁴² Similarly, McClintock laughed throughout her explanation to Lomax about the boyfriends she had.¹⁴³ It is in the context of the laughter and music that the positive memories were recounted.

Yet, Lomax's influence on the recording must again be taken into account. Many of these responses that described positive emotions came after a leading question. For example, when speaking to McClintock about her work on the plantation, Lomax stated 'sounds like to me you were dancing' which led to a positive reply by McClintock; 'in the cotton pad! Hooting and hollering – so glad we picking cotton.'¹⁴⁴ Again, after singing another cotton picking song, 'Sning Dress', Lomax stated 'I thought you'd be having a play party.'¹⁴⁵ After this leading question McClintock replied with a similar answer. She said 'just a big play, big play, and then we'd get in the cotton pad and all us children would get together and get to singing you know the sning dress.'¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁰ G. Campbell, 'Children and Slavery in the New World: A Review', *Slavery and Abolition*, 27.2 (2006), p. 265.

¹⁴¹ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 18, Unwritten History of Slavery*, p.15; p.114; p.248.

¹⁴² Joe and Mary McDonald, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 30th, 1940.

¹⁴³ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Similarly, Lomax asked the McDonalds a number of leading questions, such as ‘what kind of work did you like best in the field?’ It seems, then, that the formerly enslaved performers were responding to the questions in ways that Lomax wanted them to.¹⁴⁷ McClintock and McDonald never readily offered up information, but were prompted every sentence by Lomax to recount more information. As has been noted, Lomax even asked the McDonalds to laugh during their previous recording, creating an emotional etiquette that they continued to follow in their 1940 expedition. The laughter, as well as the positive, simplistic answers to these questions may have thus been part of their ‘good’ performance for Lomax.

McClintock was also not comfortable when Lomax recorded her. She evidently did not like the recording machine, shouting ‘turn that ghost off’.¹⁴⁸ Lomax also stated ‘go ahead, don’t you watch the machine, you just sing’, suggesting that she was preoccupied with the mechanisms of the recording machine.¹⁴⁹ Even the Lomaxes recognised that his performers often did not speak with the same candidness when in front of the machine. During McClintock’s recording, Ruby Lomax explained that a preacher walked past and spoke to the Lomaxes about spirituals. She then wrote that, ‘we wished we could have got all this recorded, but it had begun to rain and we had hastily packed all the machine and equipment into the car’, and further stated that, ‘anyway we probably could never have got the same informal talk.’¹⁵⁰ Similarly in the field notes about Richardson Amerson, Lomax recounted that, ‘that same afternoon before the microphone he attempted to repeat his extraordinary monologue. The result was a colorless imitation of the morning outbreak.’¹⁵¹ Thus, it is quite evident that when in front of the microphone, the elderly men and women were less willing to talk informally and were more likely to put on a performance, perhaps leading to the simplistic and short reminiscences of slavery that they recounted.

Billy McCrea’s recording also shows that when the formerly enslaved did not adhere to this performance, and spoke of negative feelings towards slavery, they were cut off. McCrea spoke for a number of minutes, unprompted, about slavery. For the only time

¹⁴⁷ Joe and Mary McDonald, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 30th, 1940.

¹⁴⁸ Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Harriett McClintock, John Lomax Field Notes.

¹⁵¹ Richard Amerson, John Lomax Field Notes, Lomax SSRC, LoC.

in these recordings, Lomax asked McCrea ‘what do you remember about when slavery was over?’ and asked him to speak about the Yankees.¹⁵² His monologue described in detail his experiences of slavery, including veiled sentiments about how he felt. McCrea spoke of his memories of the Yankees moving along with mules and cannons, including a description of how they punished some of the men. When he was remembering the Civil War and freedom, he regularly stated ‘I can recollect that just as good’ or ‘I remember that just as well’ suggesting it perhaps had emotional significance for him.¹⁵³ McCrea then spoke about his master, who was a speculator:

I recollect just as well, and he'd bring back whole lot the colored people. Old Col. M., they said he was a speculator. And he sell them to all these people around this country. There's lot of old people, they all dead now, what he brought there and sold.¹⁵⁴

McCrea did not mention any specific emotion within this recollection, yet, by recounting that ‘I can remember it, I was a big boy then’, seeing the sale of fellow slaves clearly stood out in his mind.¹⁵⁵

After this explanation of his owner and a description of his father’s work, McCrea suggests that slavery did have an emotional impact on him. He stated ‘I been, I won it, I been through a heap [laughs] all that stuff. That, that was in slavery time, that was old slavery time.’¹⁵⁶ The emotional sentiment implied in this phrase is complex. McCrea was not simply sorrowful, but emphasised his own survival. This statement of survival is similar to a line spoken by Sam Polite and Prince Smith, both interviewed by Lorenzo Dow Turner. Polite noted that ‘and so the way I been through from a boy up to a man today ain’t nothing better for tell me today about slavery’ whilst Smith stated that ‘that slavery trouble that we pass through.’¹⁵⁷ Even this simple statement by McCrea highlights a more complex range of emotions than those that are presented in the other recordings, and countered the picture painted of simplistic, positive emotions.

¹⁵² Billy McCrea, interviewed by J. Lomax, September 30th 1940.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932; Prince Smith, interviewed by L.D. Turner, May 2, 1932.

When McCrea more explicitly critiqued the institution, however, Ruby Lomax cut him off. After explaining that he had been through a heap, he remarked that ‘and I remember I can tell you some more about slavery time.’¹⁵⁸ He then chose to describe the punishments inflicted on runaway slaves. He remembered that:

And I recollect one time, we all was looking at it. And they, and they brought in, had hounds. And they brought them hound in and brought three niggas with them hound, runaway niggas, you know, caught in the wood. And they, right, right across, right at the creek there, they take them niggas and put them on, and put them on a log lay them down and fasten them. And whup them. You hear them niggas hollering and praying on them logs. And there was a nigga bring them in. Then they take them out down there and put them in jail.¹⁵⁹

In this, he quite explicitly explained the immediate emotional consequences of punishment on the enslaved. The whippings would lead them to holler and pray. It was at this point, when McCrea’s feeling towards slavery were explicit, that he was cut off by Ruby Lomax, who stated ‘that’ll be enough.’¹⁶⁰

This highlights that the Lomaxes did not want to hear this discussion of punishment, and its emotional consequences, during the recording situation. Instead, Lomax evidently saw slavery as a paternalistic institution, and his 1917 article must be emphasised again here. According to him, ‘slavery ... has been a thing of the past these many years, and, after all, as a part of the race history, formed but a brief interlude – an episode – between many generations of barbaric freedom and the present status of liberty in a civilized land’¹⁶¹ This idea of slavery as a civilising institution was not only a narrative that circulated in popular culture, but was also espoused by elite white academics at the time such as Phillips, which explains why Lomax also echoed these. In 1917, as mentioned, Phillips argued that the institution was ‘a school constantly training and controlling pupils who were in a backward state of civilization.’¹⁶² Not only did he suggest that slavery was both benevolent and civilising, but also perpetuated stereotypes of black Americans by writing that ‘the slaves were negroes, who for the most part were by racial quality submissive rather than defiant, light-hearted instead of

¹⁵⁸ Billy McCrea, interviewed by J. Lomax, September 30th 1940.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ J. Lomax, ‘Self Pity in Negro Folk Songs’, p. 141.

¹⁶² U. B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery*, p.342.

gloomy, amiable and ingratiating instead of sullen, and whose very defects invited paternalism rather than repression.’¹⁶³ Discussion by McCrea of punishment evidently did not fit within this narrative painted by white cultural producers - including Phillips and Lomax - of a benevolent and paternalistic institution or of the enslaved as light-hearted and amiable, highlighting why Lomax chose to cut him off at this point. In contrast, McClintock and McDonald’s nostalgic memories about their enforced labour did fit within this civilising process narrative, and in turn explains why Lomax prompted his performers so regularly with leading questions.

Conclusions: The Emotional Performances and Emotional Labour in Lomax’s Recordings

Describing the kind of folklore expeditions that Lomax and other white men and women engaged in, Patrick Mullen has argued that ‘despite the good intentions of many liberal white researchers, the results of their research often misrepresented cultures and functioned to maintain power over black subjects.’¹⁶⁴ Far from being unmediated ‘sound photographs’ of African American folk-song, Lomax fully framed the recording situation to produce sources that were overwhelmingly shaped by, and in turn reinforced, a narrative that positioned slavery as a beneficial and benevolent institution. The recordings presented black Americans as simplistic and childlike in character. A comparison of these recordings with those conducted by Turner reinforces this argument; Turner’s interviewees recounted a range of emotions and memories of slavery, including feelings of anger, hatred, bitterness and hope, whilst the emotions expressed by Lomax’s performers were overwhelmingly limited to one-dimensional expressions of happiness about the institution.

This chapter has demonstrated that Lomax directed the recording situation to enforce his own slavery narrative. When singing and recalling their memories of slavery to Lomax in the 1930s, the formerly enslaved had to conform to a set of feeling rules dictated by Lomax, suppressing and performing certain emotions to adhere to his

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.341-342.

¹⁶⁴ P. Mullen, *The Man Who Adores the Negro*, p.6.

expectations. Lomax pushed his performers to express positive, simplistic emotions when he told them to laugh or asked them to only talk about their memories of play. He also did not ask the elderly black Americans to sing songs that criticised slavery or present emotions other than happiness towards it. Although the former slaves' own agendas influenced the recordings to a lesser extent than in the NWU WPA interviews and Turner's recordings, it must not be forgotten that despite the limited opportunities in this space for the formerly enslaved to counteract this picture, they found small ways to do this when McCrea, for example, attempted to describe the consequences of punishment and sale.

In both chapters, a focus on emotion has therefore revealed that Lomax and Turner were influenced by competing political beliefs about slavery and black Americans. These beliefs were reflective of the larger cultural battle over the memory of the institution at this time; Turner used his recording sessions to explicitly counteract the 'Sambo' stereotypes and positive narrative about slavery that Lomax presented in his writings, that motivated his recording expedition, and which his recordings promoted. This motivation to frame slavery as benevolent and civilising overrode Lomax's fascination with, and wish to preserve, 'primitive' music. His recordings promoted and celebrated slavery as a patriarchal institution, but failed to record the 'primitive' 'spontaneous outbursts' that he was looking for, and the formerly enslaved peoples' role in this must be acknowledged.

This analysis of feeling in the recordings has, more importantly, uncovered the performers own emotional investment in the recordings, by revealing the different forms of emotional labour they had to engage in. During Turner's recordings, when the formerly enslaved spoke about the violence of slavery, they had to manage the emotions that discussing their experiences triggered, in order to continue to tell their stories. In a limited way, they had to engage in a form of emotion work, dealing with the feelings that talking about punishment triggered to present a socially acceptable emotional narrative, as those who experience traumatic events must do when attempting to describe them. In contrast, when being recorded by Lomax, the black Americans' discussion of their memories did not spark such intense emotions as they only discussed positive experiences of the institution. Instead, Lomax's interviewees had to engage in a much more traditional and extreme form of emotional work, managing their

potentially wide ranging feelings towards slavery to only display happiness and joy in response to a strict emotional etiquette enforced by Lomax. Thus, alongside highlighting the limitations of Lomax's recordings for providing access to the lived experience of slavery, this chapter has clearly demonstrated the negative personal consequences that the strive to record the formerly enslaved in this era could have for the African American interviewees and performers who were a part of this collection.

Chapter 6: Visualising Pride, Dignity and Achievement: Turner’s Photographs of Formerly Enslaved People

As part of Lorenzo Dow Turner’s 1932 and 1933 project to survey the Gullah dialect in South Carolina and Georgia, alongside numerous sound recordings, Turner created photographs of those he encountered on the Sea Islands, including the same group of formerly enslaved people. As an African American man producing photographs in the 1930s, Turner was part of a distinguished lineage of black photographers who captured images of their fellow citizens, despite not being a professional photographer himself.¹ For many of these black artists photography was an important medium to represent and shape racial identity and for developing understandings of race and freedom.² The analysis of Turner’s photographs of four formerly enslaved people in this chapter will demonstrate that Turner was no exception to this, despite the fact that he captured the images to illustrate his linguistic project.³ When taking photographs of his Gullah informants, as when he recorded them, Turner was motivated by the same ‘New Negro’ ideologies. As such, The emotions conveyed by the men and women in his images echo visuals produced as part of the Harlem Renaissance that made the case for black political and social equality through presenting African Americans with the emotional qualities that were central to the developing ‘New Negro’ collective consciousness – dignity, self-worth, and success.⁴

¹ See D. Willis, *Reflections in Black: A History of Black Photographers 1840 to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton Company, 2000) for more about black American photographers. She includes Presely Ball, Augustus Washington and Jules Lion Arthur P. Bedou, Addison Scurlock and Prentice Herman Polk.

² *Ibid.*, p.3 and p.35. Also see M. Wallace and S. Smith, ‘Introduction’, in M. Wallace and S. Smith (eds.), *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity [electronic book]* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p.5.

³ These images are held in the Lorenzo Dow Turner Collection, Anacostia Community Museum Archive, Washington D.C.

⁴ Within this chapter I define the term ‘dignity’ as a sense of self worth, ‘pride’ as a feeling of accomplishment with one’s achievements, and the term ‘defiance’ as an act of open resistance.

This chapter will also argue that as is the case with Turner's sound recordings, the capturing of these images was a two-way process. The Gullah informants' presentation of such uplifting emotional qualities was personally, culturally and politically shaped and motivated; the images represent a personal moment of self-fashioning and political statement by the formerly enslaved themselves, but were also heavily framed by the 'New Negro' aesthetic, intellectual and political ideas that Turner held.

After presenting this argument through analysing the use of props in Turner's images, the subjects' stances, postures and expressions and the formerly enslaved men and women's self-fashioning using Gillian Rose's critical visual methodology, this chapter will end by analysing how Turner, his wife and others have circulated and used the photographs since their creation. Despite Turner creating these images to both illustrate his recordings and counter negative visualisations and stereotypes of black Americans circulating in wider culture, the photographs were kept out of public reach into the twenty-first century, which limited their use by both the public and historians (in contrast to Lomax's sources). This analysis of the numerous factors that shaped the content and use of these images, however, reinforces that the sources provide historians of slavery with numerous possibilities. Despite Turner's framing of the emotion that the formerly enslaved expressed in his photographs, analysed alongside his recordings, the photographs aid scholars in building up a more complete and layered picture of each formerly enslaved person and their memories through understanding how they chose to portray themselves in these images.

Gullah Photography, Lorenzo Dow Turner's Project, and the Influence of the Harlem Renaissance

As Chapter Four outlined, during the 1920s and 1930s, white researchers were particularly fascinated by what they perceived as the 'primitive' nature of Gullah culture and the people who lived on the Sea Islands. Whilst this led numerous researchers to write about and record African Americans who resided in these areas, many also took photographs of the Gullah community. Describing Sapelo islanders' reaction to the white people who visited their homes with the permission of Howard Coffin, the white man who owned Sapelo Island, Melissa Cooper wrote that, 'the Johnsons, and the other blacks who lived on the island, had come to expect the strange

mix of animus and curiosity that their blackness inspired in Coffin's visitors, so no one thought it odd when a parade of researchers and collectors began marching through their communities asking questions and taking pictures.' ⁵ Many of the white photographers who collected images of the Gullah people did so with the permission and aid of plantation owners, suggesting that often the community had little choice about whether to be photographed. For example, W. Robert Moore, who wrote a *National Geographic* article about Sapelo Island, also took photographs of the black Americans who lived there in 1933. Moore went to the island at Coffin's request, as Coffin was concerned with boosting tourism to the island. As Moore's subjects often worked for Coffin, and his manager often accompanied Moore around the area, the black men and women that Moore encountered were often coerced into posing for him. Writing about this, Cooper argued that 'had Hettie Walker or Emma and Emmitt Johnson refused to pose for Moore's photographs, they would have surely offended Howard Coffin's guest and risked being counted among the small group of Islanders who Coffin determined could not be trusted.'⁶

As Moore's descriptions of Sapelo Island 'connected almost every aspect of black life on the island to African traits', the photographs he produced were also framed to convey what he saw as the 'primitive' nature of this society. ⁷ For example, after hearing about the Johnsons, a family with 15 children, Moore decided to photograph them. As a number of the siblings had moved away from the island, he asked children from neighbouring houses to stand in for those who were not present, and evidently directed the family and acquaintances to stand in height order. ⁸ Mimicking stereotypical descriptions of black Americans as spontaneously emotional, and racialised descriptions of their appearance, he accompanied the photograph in his article with the caption: 'Emmitt beamed at my immediate request to photograph his kinky-headed group.'⁹ As Chapter Four demonstrated, Julia Peterkin also wrote numerous romanticised stories about the Gullah community that spurred interest in this coastal area in the 1920s and 1930s. As part of her career, she produced an illustrated book about the lives of black Americans in lowcountry South Carolina, entitled *Roll, Jordan*,

⁵ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.79.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.81-82.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.81.

Roll, which included photographs taken by Doris Ulmann on the Lang Syne plantation that Peterkin owned.¹⁰ Whether the men and women that she photographed chose to be involved in this project is not known, yet as is the case with the Moore images, Ulmann was producing the images with the permission and guidance of the white owner of the plantation that her subjects resided or worked on.

Despite some praise for the quality of Ulmann's images from prominent black American scholars such as Sterling Brown, Nicholas Natanson has argued that these images present the sitters as 'noble primitives'. Unpicking this concept, he wrote that 'one notes the shining faces, the handsome bodies of the workers attending their plows, their cotton sacks, their fishing nets, their cooking pots. Simple folk, at peace with nature and themselves, fill these frames majestically.'¹¹ Furthermore, similar stereotypical descriptions of the photographs' subjects were included in *Roll Jordan Roll* as were included in Moore's article, and the images were used to illustrate Peterkin's writing that painted a patronising picture of a benevolent 'Old South'.¹² Other photographers who travelled to South Carolina and Georgia accompanied field workers who were specifically on the islands to capture the testimony of those who had been in bondage. Bayard Wooten, a white photographer from North Carolina, joined Genevieve Willox Chandler, who was Peterkin's cousin and a FWP worker, on her mission to collect the stories of the formerly enslaved who resided in the coastal areas of South Carolina. Like Peterkin and Ulmann, they were aiming to produce an illustrated book of life on the Gullah Coast, but this was never completed.¹³

At a similar time to these white photographers, as part of his linguistic project, Turner produced numerous images of the people he encountered on the Sea Islands. It is hard to uncover information about Turner's specific reasons for collecting the images, or his method when creating them. Although Turner wrote *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect* which included information about the methods he used to record each individual whom he encountered, he did not discuss how he captured his images. Turner did not write

¹⁰ M. C. Lamunière, 'Roll, Jordan, Roll and the Gullah Photographs of Doris Ulmann', *History of Photography*, 21.4 (1997), p.298.

¹¹ N. Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, pp. 23-24.

¹² M. C. Lamunière, 'Roll, Jordan, Roll and the Gullah Photographs of Doris Ulmann', p.298.

¹³ K. Mills, G. C. Peterkin and A. McCollough (eds.), *Coming Through: Voices of a South Carolina Gullah Community from WPA Oral Histories Collected by Genevieve W. Chandler* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2008), pp.xxxv-xxxvi.

about the photographs in his book, nor does an explanation of them appear in any of his other writings.

It is possible to speculate, however, that in stark contrast to the photographs that white researchers took to illustrate articles or stories that portrayed the Gullah community as ‘primitive’, backward and childlike, Turner was creating his images to add illustrative visuals to his linguistic project to aid him in countering these ‘primitive’ depictions of the Gullah people during his teaching. The comprehensive biography about Turner written by Wade-Lewis only included a short explanation of why Turner took the photographs. She noted, however, that ‘Turner, an expert photographer as a result of his work as a newspaper editor, took black and white shots of his informants.’¹⁴ She further explained that ‘although no photographs appear in *Africanisms in the Gullah Dialect*, no doubt because of cost constraints, Turner sometimes made photocopies of the photographs for course handouts that he distributed to students along with the informants’ narratives.’¹⁵ This suggests that Turner produced the images to incorporate into his scholarly and teaching work about African influences on cultural and linguistic practices on these islands, and created them to illustrate and educate people about the enduring nature of African culture and language. Moreover, it is also possible to discern that in contrast to the images that many photographers captured with the aid of plantation owners on the Gullah Coast, we know that when recording the formerly enslaved men and women, Turner met with community leaders before undertaking his research.¹⁶ Thus, instead of being affiliated with the white plantation owners of the Sea Islands, Turner was accepted by the community itself.

Whilst little is known about Turner’s photographic methodology, Wade-Lewis noted that he had a personal interest in posing for portraits, which he sent to family and friends. Further describing his interest in this medium, she wrote that ‘Turner purchased as many photographs as he could afford in endless poses and varieties.’¹⁷ Turner’s own portraits were captured by Arthur P. Bedou, a Creole from New Orleans and Addison Scurlock (see Figure 6.1), an African American photographer who worked in

¹⁴ M. Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner*, p.82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.82-83.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.81.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.23.

Washington D.C, both of whom were prominent photographers during their time. Both Bedou and Scurlock, according to Willis, were producing their images during the ‘time of the ‘New Negro’, reflecting the explosion of creative endeavours that gave national prominence to artists, educators, historians and philosophers.’¹⁸ Explaining the influence of the New Negro Movement on photography, Willis argued that ‘this new black intellectual community, which was based in urban cities, emerged at a time when photographers were actively photographing the artistic and political leaders of their communities.’¹⁹ Reflecting the ‘New Negro’ ideologies that Chapter 4 demonstrated motivated Turner’s linguistic work, the photographers that he chose to visit produced images that conveyed the qualities that the ‘New Negro’ was meant to embody and display in public settings. According to Willis, for example, ‘the Scurlocks’ portraits, for the most part, were of images of self-empowerment and self-determination. They paralleled Locke’s New Negro ideal.’²⁰

Creating images of black Americans that conveyed their sense of self-worth, their success, and their satisfaction with their achievements was an integral part of the Harlem Renaissance. In the post-emancipation South white society systematically denied black individuals basic human rights and respect through institutionalised segregation and societal racism, and as part of this, stereotypes circulated that positioned black Americans as inferior, childlike and emotionally unrestrained. Alain Locke, who was a prominent leader of the Movement, argued that this ideology resulted in the myth of the ‘Old Negro’, who was ‘more of a formula than a human being - a something to be argued about, condemned or defended, to be ‘kept down’ or ‘in his place’, or ‘helped up’, to be worried with or worried over, harassed or patronized, a social bogey or a social burden.’²¹ He further contended that ‘the thinking Negro even has been induced to share this same general attitude, to focus his attention on controversial issues, to see himself in the distorted perspective of a social problem.’²² After the mass migration of black Americans from rural areas to cities in the early twentieth century, however, Locke observed that a new consciousness had

¹⁸ D. Willis, *Reflections in Black*, p.35.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.42.

²¹ A. Locke (eds.), *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (Albert & Charles Boni, Inc, 1925) reprinted (New York: Touchstone, 1997), p3.

²² *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

formed in these black urban communities that countered white perceptions. Qualities and feelings of self-determination, self-respect and pride were at the forefront of this developing consciousness. In 1925, he wrote that ‘the mind of the Negro seems suddenly to have slipped from under the tyranny of social intimidation and to be shaking off the psychology of imitation and implied inferiority.’²³ Explaining this new consciousness, he argued that ‘in this new group psychology we note the lapse of sentimental appeal, then the development of a more positive self-respect and self-reliance; the repudiation of social dependence.’²⁴

Black studio photographers presented their sitters as embodiments of the essential character traits of the ‘New Negro’ that Locke described, to not only represent the ‘uplifting’ qualities of the sitter but to also help foster and develop this group consciousness. Describing the photographs produced by Cornelius Marion Battey of Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. Du Bois, for example, Willis argued that ‘the collective visual message was that of racial pride and dignity.’²⁵ Similarly, James VanDerZee’s images were described as ‘formal and carefully composed works, in which the subjects often appear both heroic and self-aware.’²⁶ Turner’s own portrait produced by Scurlock (Figure 6.1) exemplifies how photographers visually conveyed these characteristics in their photographs. In this image, Turner’s upright posture, intense and direct stare, neutral and carefully positioned facial expression, and smart attire present him as a particularly dignified man; his sense of self-worth is evident in the way he carries himself and is dressed in this image. Similarly, Scurlock’s portrait undoubtedly conveys a message of pride (a sense of satisfaction with one’s achievements). Turner’s success is not only evident in the mere fact that he was posing for a studio portrait, but is also made clear in the way he is dressed. Thus, through visualising Turner’s dignity and self-respect and visually representing his achievements, this image was one of many that were designed to represent, foster and spread a sense of collective black pride and this new communal consciousness.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.10

²⁵ D. Willis, *Reflections in Black*, p.39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.43.

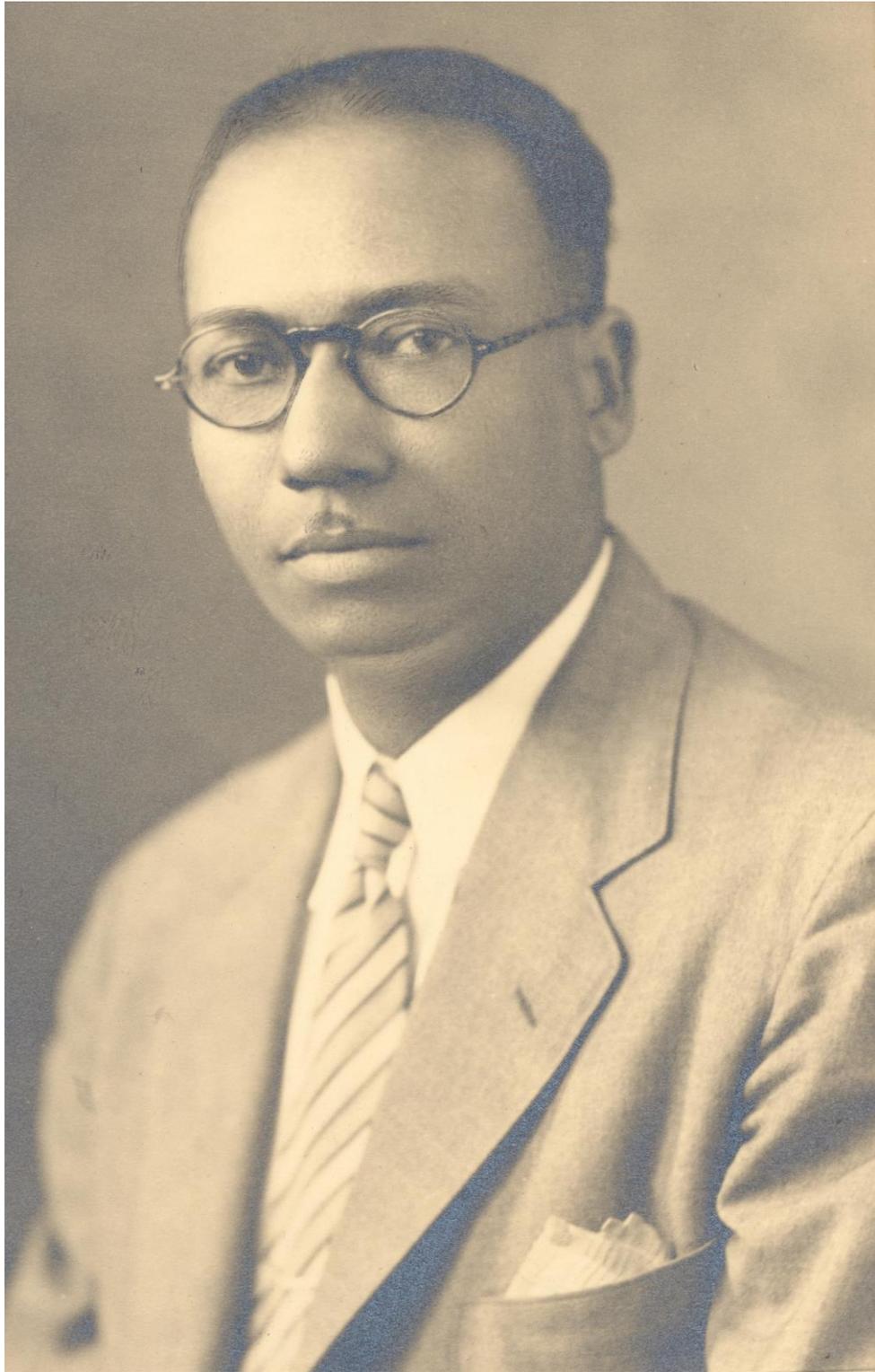


Figure 6.1: Lorenzo Dow Turner Portrait (1930).

Addison N. Scurlock, Lorenzo Dow Turner Papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archive, ACMA PH2003.7064.031.

These studio portrait images that black photographers produced, and the uplifting qualities of the sitters that they conveyed, were also influenced by, and played a part in, counteracting white perceptions of black Americans in this era. Locke argued that this was an important part of the New Negro Movement, as it was imperative that ‘the Negro of to-day be seen through other than the dusty spectacles of past controversy.’²⁷ He proclaimed that ‘the day of ‘aunties’, ‘uncles’ and ‘mammies’ is equally gone. Uncle Tom and Sambo have passed on.’²⁸ In his discussion of FSA photography in the 1930s, Nicholas Natanson contrasted black photographers’ ‘images of uplift and success’ with three forms of stereotypical visual tropes produced by whites.²⁹ The first image played on racial stereotypes and included photographs of ‘the poor but contented black, the faithfully servile black’ as well as the ‘colorful, naturally rhythmic, emotionally unrestrained black.’³⁰ These circulated regularly in magazines such as *Life* and reinforced what Natanson argued was ‘a white man’s Negro, comfortably predictable in an unpredictable age, enviably happy in an unhappy age, consistently entertaining in a mortifying age.’³¹ Other white depictions included presenting black Americans as ‘noble primitives’ or as helpless victims, and the photographs that emphasised the achievements of black Americans were used to counteract this ‘victim’ imagery.³²

Black American photographers, such as Scurlock and Bedou, thus designed their images to counter these racist stereotypes and portray a modern and dignified black culture, and in doing so ‘reflected people who were proud of their race, self-reliant, and demanded full citizenship rights.’³³ Locke hoped that the fostering and projection of this new consciousness - and the personal qualities and feelings that were central to it - would lead to new era of race relations by showing black Americans as successful, self-reliant, and ready for equality. Specifically, he focused on the acknowledgement of black Americans’ achievements; ‘more immediate hope rests in the revaluation by

²⁷ A. Locke (eds.), *The New Negro*, p.5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ N. Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, p.28.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.17.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.18.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.23-24.

³³ D. Willis, *Reflections in Black*, p.35.

white and black alike of the Negro in terms of his artistic endowments and cultural contributions, past and prospective.’³⁴ Further describing this, he stated that ‘the especially cultural recognition they win should in turn prove the key to that revaluation of the Negro which must precede or accompany any considerable further betterment of race relations.’³⁵ Thus, when analysing Turner’s images of the formerly enslaved and the emotion conveyed within them, his decision to be photographed by Scurlock and Bedou, who were conveying Locke’s ‘New Negro’ message in their images, is significant to acknowledge. Taken alongside an understanding of the political ideologies that motivated his recording work that was developed in Chapter Four, this highlights that Harlem Renaissance imagery may well have influenced his photographic work.

These photographers who were working in the 1930s, however, were not only producing visuals in reaction to white photographers but were influenced by a number of black American photographers who created images of prominent African Americans, including those who had been in bondage, since the nineteenth century. According to Natanson, ‘portraits of the “talented tenth” had been the staple of black studios since the earliest days of American photography, and these subjects continued to dominate the depression era work of such leading camerapeople.’³⁶ James Presely Ball, for example, photographed abolitionists and intellectuals such as Frederick Douglass throughout the nineteenth century.³⁷ High profile men and women, such as Douglass, did not only pose for black American photographers, but utilised their images to promote the abolitionist cause and emphasise the need for racial progress. Douglass, in addition, gave numerous lectures about the importance of photography, seeing it as, according to Wallace and Smith, ‘the primary catalyst for social change.’³⁸

Sojourner Truth, an illiterate formerly enslaved woman, also utilised portrait photographs and *cartes de vistes* for abolitionist purposes, which she did by placing an image produced by James J. Randall and Croydon Chandler Randall at the front of a narrative about her life. Her photographs did not conform to stereotypical pictures of

³⁴ A. Locke (eds.), *The New Negro*, p.15.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ N. Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, p.29.

³⁷ D. Willis, *Reflections in Black*, pp.6-8.

³⁸ M. Wallace and S. Smith, ‘Introduction’, p.6.

‘folksy slave life’, and instead echoed visual codes of femininity and whiteness.³⁹ Truth did not use these images solely for abolitionist purposes, however, and Nell Painter has argued that ‘had Truth’s *carte de visite* served only as abolitionist fund raising, Truth might have chosen to pose in settings or costumes that evoked the tragedy of her origins.’⁴⁰ Instead, she carefully controlled her photographs to market her images for profit; ‘Sojourner Truth was willing to use the resources offered by popular culture to replicate and distribute representations of herself for material support.’⁴¹ Thus, Truth controlled both how she was represented, and how images of her were marketed and circulated; ‘she used photography to embody and to empower herself, to present the images of herself that *she* wanted remembered.’⁴² The content of these nineteenth century images, and the various political and cultural debates the photographers wished to intervene in through producing such visuals, undoubtedly influenced how black photographers created and utilised photographs into the 1930s, and had a lasting impact on how black Americans wanted photographers to create their images. Throughout, this chapter will situate Turner’s images within this wider photographic context of nineteenth and twentieth century images produced by, and representing, African Americans.

Analysing Turner’s Photographs

Up to 2000 of Turner’s images are held at the Anacostia Community Museum in Washington D.C., emerging from his research visits in South Carolina, Georgia, Brazil and Africa. These photographs, however, were sent to the Museum without identification, and the people within them were not named. During a project to identify images for an exhibition of Turner’s work, Alcione Amos, a curator at the museum travelled to the Gullah Islands to ask residents to identify people in the photographs. Members of the community did not identify all the subjects of the images and a number of formerly enslaved people who Turner recorded are not identified in any photograph.

³⁹ A. Rohrbach, ‘Shadow and Substance: Sojourner Truth in Black and White’ in M. Wallace and S. Smith (eds.), *Pictures and Progress: Early Photography and the Making of African American Identity [electronic book]* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), p.91.

⁴⁰ N. Painter, ‘Representing Truth: Sojourner Truth’s Knowing and Becoming Known’, *The Journal of American History*, 81.2 (1994), p.483.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.487.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.462.

Four formerly enslaved individuals captured in the images, however, were named, and will be analysed in this chapter: Sam Polite, Diana Brown, Bristow McIntosh and Katie Brown. Chapter 4 analysed Sam Polite and Diana Brown's sound recordings, but Turner also recorded Bristow McIntosh and Katie Brown, and both discussed aspects of slavery in their recordings. Bristow McIntosh was nine in 1865 and spoke about working with his mother in the kitchen for white people, and Katie Brown, at the beginning of her recording, discussed what happened 'when the Yankees came.'⁴³ I did not analyse their recordings earlier in the thesis, however, due to the poor quality of the sound.

To analyse these photographs and the factors that influenced the emotional content of them, this chapter utilises Gillian Rose's critical visual methodology, which ensures researchers focus on four sites of the image: the site of production; the site of the image; the site of circulation; and the site of audiencing. At each of these interpretative sites, Rose argued that there are three different aspects, or 'modalities' that are worth exploring: the technological, compositional and social.⁴⁴ The first two sections of this chapter focus upon the site of the image, and outline what is visually included in the photograph that conveys a sense of emotion, concentrating mainly upon the props, surroundings, emotional expressions and stances. These sections will also scrutinise the general emotional 'feel' of the image, as Rose has noted that 'there are a number of approaches to visual images now which emphasise the importance of the sensory – or affective – experiencing of images.'⁴⁵ For example, she explained that Van Eck and Winters wrote that 'there is a subjective "feel" that is ineliminable in our seeing something and that appreciation of this "feel" should be as much part of understanding images as the interpretation of their meaning, even though they find it impossible to convey fully in words.'⁴⁶ Exploring Rose's three modalities, this chapter will then describe how this visual content and 'feel' was produced or emphasised through the use of certain photographic technologies (such as type of film), through specific

⁴³ Katie Brown, interviewed by L.D Turner, July 7, 1933, ADS Collection LoC, AFS 25661 ADS 1289, Bristow McIntosh, interviewed by L.D Turner, August 4 1933, ADS Collection LoC, AFS 25653 ADS 1281.

⁴⁴ G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, pp.25-26.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.34.

⁴⁶ Van Eck and Winters quoted in G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p.34.

compositions and spatial organisation (how close-up the image is, for example) or are shaped by specific social photographic practices.

As I am particularly interested in how Turner, when producing the images, framed the emotional content and ‘feel’ of the photograph, this chapter will also spend considerable time exploring the site of production. Focusing on the technological modality, the first two sections will investigate how the technologies that Turner used in creating the image ‘determine its form, meaning and effect’; for example, how a specific type of camera angle produced the spontaneity in a photograph.⁴⁷ Concentrating on the compositional modality, these sections will also analyse how Turner visually mimicked a particular genre, namely Harlem Renaissance ‘New Negro’ photography and how this affected the emotional content of the image. Lastly, this chapter will question how photographers, when making the photograph, mobilised ‘social and/or political identities’, examining for example, how Turner visualised ‘race’ in these images.⁴⁸ Moving through each photograph, and focusing on the technological, social and compositional factors at the site of production, will in turn highlight the many influences that shaped this photographic encounter and the resultant image.

Despite the useful nature of Rose’s methodology for building up an understanding of the influence of the photographer’s world-view on the emotional content of the image, it is also important to move beyond such a focus on the photographer and viewer to the subject of the photograph. This involves exploring how the formerly enslaved themselves experienced the encounter, framed the photographs to portray particular emotions, and adhered to - or refused to follow - the photographer’s intended vision. Undoubtedly this is a difficult task, and historians can only hope to uncover traces of their experience. Yet, to aid in this analysis, this chapter explores the images in relation to each individuals’ corresponding sound recordings, other images of them that exist, and wider photographic trends.

When analysing the politicisation of emotion in the photographs, it is also important to consider the viewers’ response to the image, to further uncover how the photographer

⁴⁷ G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p.27.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.30.

shaped the image to present a certain message by attempting to elicit a particular emotional response. The final section of this chapter will again utilise Rose's methodology by outlining how the image was circulated and how various audiences viewed the photograph. In Rose's outline of her methodology, she discussed John Fiske's 1994 work, noting that exploring the circulation and viewing of images involves questioning how the image 'has its meanings renegotiated, or even rejected, by particular audiences watching in specific circumstances.'⁴⁹ Thus, focusing specifically on the emotional dimensions of Turner's images as they circulate, this final section will analyse how the composition of the set of images developed as it moved sites and archives and whether this changed the emotions the photograph elicited in the viewer. The analysis will build upon the work of both Tina Campt and Elizabeth Edwards to explore the viewers', and my own, emotional responses, as both scholars focus on the sensory and affective responses of viewers to photographs.⁵⁰ In doing so, this chapter will question how the moving and archiving of Turner's images changed its intellectual and affective power, and reinforced or undermined the intended 'feel' and message of the photograph.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.38.

⁵⁰ T. Campt, *Image Matters* and E. Edwards, 'Objects of Affect', pp.221-234.

Turner's Framing of the Image



Figure 6.2: Sam Polite [Gullah Informant] repairing a fishing net on St. Helena Island, S.C.

Lorenzo Dow Turner, Lorenzo Dow Turner Papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archive, ACMA PH2003.7064.305.

Figure 6.2 shows Sam Polite, an eighty-nine-year-old man who lived in Frogmore on St. Helena Island, South Carolina. We do not know when Turner took the photograph; however, he produced the recording of Polite on June 27, 1932. According to his appointment book from the same year, Turner also met with Polite on July 1st, 7th, 12th, 19th, 22nd and 28th, allowing two hours for each meeting, so he may have created the photograph on any of these dates.⁵¹ When Lois Turner, his wife, sent the photograph to the Anacostia Community Museum, this image was not labelled or identified. When Alcione Amos conducted her research trip from the museum, she spoke to a ninety-year-old man, called Mr. Legree. When Amos showed Legree the photograph of Polite, he recognised the man in the photograph as Sam Polite. He also explained that Polite taught him how to weave fishing nets when he was younger, a task he was undertaking as he spoke to Amos.⁵² The image shows Polite standing in front of a wooden building, wearing work overalls. Polite positioned his body away from the camera and towards the fishing net, repairing or weaving it. He also turned the upper part of his body, and face, to look directly and intently at the camera. His emotional expression is hard to discern, as he is neither smiling nor frowning.

It is significant that Turner decided to photograph Polite working with a fishing net and wearing work overalls, as he could easily have asked Polite to move away from the net for the photograph or cropped it out of the frame. Exploring Turner's framing of this image using a semiological analysis can begin to illustrate why Turner included this fishing net, and how this object related to wider systems of understanding. In her discussion of visual methodologies, Rose defined semiology as 'the study of signs', explaining that it 'offers a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning.'⁵³ Focusing more specifically on advertising, Rose explained that 'semiologists argue that adverts work by transferring (or trying to transfer) visual and textual signifiers onto their products' and that they use techniques, such as matching colour, to do this.⁵⁴ She further noted that adverts have 'preferred meanings' that become 'preferred readings' when the audience interprets the image through the same cultural and ideological lens as was

⁵¹ Lorenzo Dow Turner Appointment Book 1932, LDT Papers, ACM.

⁵² A. Amos, 'A Coleção Fotográfica de Lorenzo Dow Turner Gullah Bahia Áfricae os Retornados Afro-Brasileiros Presentation', Power-point Presentation, Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum.

⁵³ G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, pp.106-107.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.124.

intended.⁵⁵ Although Polite's image is not an advertisement, it is useful to explore if, and how, Turner used signs or objects in his photographs to reinforce certain ideologies or meanings. Focusing on the composition of the image, the two main 'signs' are Polite himself, and the fishing net. Through linking Polite to the net by including only these two major signs, Turner is giving the image a 'preferred meaning'; he is inviting the viewer to make an instant link between the net and Turner, in turn emphasising that Polite is at work.

Recent semiological studies have explored how photographers create and articulate forms of social difference through the signs they include in an image.⁵⁶ A number of photographs during the 1930s undoubtedly presented a narrative of racial difference through the use of stereotypical signs in their images. For example, Natanson has analysed one issue of *Life Magazine*, published on August 9, 1937, which included a cover photograph of a black farmer who was driving a crate of watermelons to market.⁵⁷ As Turner's image linked Polite to one major object, the fishing net, the *Life* image linked this black farmer explicitly to a crate of watermelons. Unpacking how images of black Americans that included this fruit furthered stereotypical narratives about their character, David Pilgrim argued that 'the depiction of black people eating watermelon has been a shorthand way of saying that black people are unclean (the fruit is messy to eat), lazy (it is easy to grow), childish (watermelons are sweet and colourful), overly indulgent (especially with their sexual appetites) and lacking ambition (the watermelon presented as satiating all needs.)'⁵⁸ Indeed, Tanya Sheehan has noted that 'more than any other thing associated with the black body in the postbellum United States, the watermelon came to embody the limited range of black feeling in the white mind.'⁵⁹ Thus, the creator of the *Life* photograph put forward a 'preferred meaning' in these images, through presenting the black man with this stereotypical object. In contrast, Turner counteracted such stereotypical depictions of black Americans that reinforced social difference through using the fishing net in this image to link Polite, a formerly enslaved man, to his labour. Specifically, by presenting Polite as hard working, he

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.133.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.109.

⁵⁷ N. Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, p.17.

⁵⁸ D. Pilgrim, *Watermelons, Nooses, and Straight Razors: Stories from the Jim Crow Museum* (Oakland: Pm Press, 2018), p.90.

⁵⁹ T. Sheehan, 'Looking Pleasant, Feeling White: The Social Politics of the Photographic Smile', in E. Brown and T. Phu (eds.), *Feeling Photography* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p.142.

counteracted the ‘Sambo’ stereotype that Elizabeth Fox Genovese has noted ‘offered an image of the black man as naturally subservient to the will of the white, as too lazy and supine to care about self-defense, much less the honorable attributes of freedom.’⁶⁰

Although the message of hard work is less obvious in Bristow McIntosh’s image than Sam Polite’s, in Turner’s photograph of McIntosh (Figure 6.3), he again utilised the surroundings to highlight the labour that his subject engaged in. Turner photographed McIntosh in front of his house in Harris Neck, Georgia. He stands upright with his hands by his side and looks straight at the lens. Significantly, like Polite, McIntosh is wearing overalls. Although it is not completely obvious what is on the floor to the right of McIntosh, it seems that he is standing in front of a mound of picked cotton. Thus, in choosing to photograph him in front of this, and depict him in work clothes, Turner was again emphasising the labour that was carried out by the Gullah community.

⁶⁰ E. Fox – Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household*, p.291.



Figure 6.3: Bristow McIntosh [Gullah informant] standing in front of his house in Harris Neck, GA.

Lorenzo Dow Turner, Lorenzo Dow Turner Papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archive, ACMA PH2003.7064.330.



Figure 6.4: Johnnie Campbell [Gullah informant] standing in front of his car in Harris Neck, GA.

Lorenzo Dow Turner, Lorenzo Dow Turner Papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archive. ACMA PH2003.7064.319.

Exploring the wider set of images, the majority of Turner's other photographs of black Americans (not just the formerly enslaved) in South Carolina and Georgia were portrait style photographs of the individual with no other objects in the frame, apart from a house or field. He did, however, include props in some photographs of the younger men and women on the Gullah Islands. For example, a photograph labelled 'Gullah man riding a bull' depicts a black man, in the centre of the image riding a bull, with a basket in his hand.⁶¹ In addition to this photograph, Turner pictured a man who Amos identified as Johnnie Campbell, standing in front of his car. He is well dressed and is wearing a suit, coat and hat. Significantly, these objects that Turner included in his images all signified skill, hard work and success that counter the 'Sambo' stereotype. Although car ownership was not uncommon in the 1930s, as 45% of Greene County's black farmers owned cars in 1934, when a black man displayed wealth through owning an automobile, whites often saw this as a transgression of the colour line.⁶² To understand the experience of black Americans in the South after WWI, historian J. William Harris outlined the reasons that African Americans gave to the Urban League about their migration to the North. These included 'insecurity of property and person, and the pervasive indignities that marked the lives of almost all black men and women.'⁶³ Giving a specific example of this insecurity, Harris argued that 'even spending their newly won incomes could be dangerous, for in Clarksdale, as in many other places, a black man in a car might be stopped for trivial reasons, given large fines for any accident, or even beaten for showing off his prosperity.'⁶⁴ Thus, in his image of Polite and others on the Gullah Islands, Turner utilised objects to counteract negative stereotypical depictions of black Americans, such as the *Life* magazine watermelon picture. Refusing to show the formerly enslaved men as lazy, unintelligent and childlike, instead, Turner presented their hard work, and the material achievements that this work resulted in, through the framing of his images.

Analysing why Turner utilised these props in his images, first, it is important to note that throughout his work he wrote about the importance of counteracting negative depictions of fellow African Americans. As was discussed in Chapter Four, in a

⁶¹ Gullah Man Riding a Bull, Lorenzo Dow Turner, LDT Papers, ACM, ACMA PH2003.7064.316.

⁶² J. William Harris, *Deep Souths: Delta, Piedmont and Sea Island Society in the Age of Segregation* (Baltimore, John Hopkins University press, 2001), p.260.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.218.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

commentary entitled 'Negro Stereotypes', Turner proposed that schools should eradicate these stereotypes by deleting words such as 'darky', 'nigger' and 'black Sambo' from teaching materials.⁶⁵ Similarly, a desire to cultivate black pride and acknowledge black achievement motivated Turner to undertake his Gullah project. In the introduction to his book, K. Wyly Mille and M. Montgomery argued that 'his work opened a way for Gullah people to reclaim and value their past and made possible a new era of learning about the great continent of Africa and the spread of African culture.'⁶⁶ Thus, by showing Polite working skilfully, we must see Turner's photography as another tool, alongside his linguistic and scholarly work, that he used to counteract negative stereotypes of black Americans.

Second, since the invention of photographic technology, white Americans had utilised props in their portrait images to represent ideals of whiteness, class, professional status and, in the case of women, femininity. For example, Mandy Reid has explained that bunches of flowers, books, clocks, dressy attire and jewellery were all included in images of white people, which 'lends the sitter's image the illusion of a class status that was in many cases higher than his or her actual class.'⁶⁷ She explained that photographers, including Joseph Zealy, who produced Louis Agassiz's ethnographic images, 'built their reputations on the basis of the ways in which they employed props to create sentimental images.'⁶⁸ Beginning in the nineteenth century, black Americans, including Sojourner Truth, appropriated this use of props. Exploring Truth's use of objects in her portrait photographs, Reid noted that there is no evidence in her images that she was once enslaved, instead, 'reflecting Truth's appropriation of the visual iconography of feminine domesticity, photographs featuring china cabinets, patterned carpets, a sturdy rocking chair, vases, knitting, books and spectacles show Truth as a matronly woman of means.'⁶⁹ Thus, Reid concluded that 'what Truth attempts to convey in her photographs is not African heritage or ex-slave status. Instead, she strives to represent herself as emblematic of what largely was considered an oxymoron in the nineteenth century: a black lady.'⁷⁰ In a similar way, Turner's images of Polite and

⁶⁵ L. D Turner, 'Negro Stereotypes'.

⁶⁶ K. Wyly Mille and M. Montgomery, 'Introduction', p.xi.

⁶⁷ M. Reid, 'Selling Shadows and Substance: Photographing Race in the United States, 1850-1870s', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 4.3 (2006), pp.293-294.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.294

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.299

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

McIntosh give no indication that they were formerly enslaved and echo none of the stereotypical images of those who had been in bondage, but instead used props to present the labour achievements of such men.

Into the twentieth century black American photographers continued to include objects in their images that depict the 'New Negro'. Moving away from a sentimentalist use of props, these photographers included objects such as cars and horses to present achievement, status and wealth. For example, it is possible that Arthur Bedou's photograph of Booker T. Washington riding his horse influenced Turner's decision to produce an image of a Gullah man riding a bull, particularly as Turner himself chose to visit Bedou to have his own portrait created.⁷¹ Similarly, photographer James VanDerZee, according to Willis, created photographs that 'were based in the political and social upheaval of the early twentieth century. His images define a people and culture in transition and reflect their subjects' sense of identity and self-consciousness.'⁷² Willis focused on one particular image that VanDerZee captured in 1932 of a well-dressed couple, wearing smart attire and fur coats. Significantly, the man sits inside a car, and the woman stands next to it.⁷³ Describing what this inclusion of the car represented, Willis remarked that 'this image of African American material success implies that the migrant's northern experience has been positive and productive; it depicts pride, achievement and ownership.'⁷⁴ Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that through depicting Polite and Campbell's achievements, and including the fishing net and car respectively in their images, Turner conveys each individual's sense of satisfaction with their accomplishments. Thus, alongside his continued calls to counter negative stereotypes in his writing, Turner was also influenced by professional black photographers' use of props, which signified achievement and in turn conveyed a sense of pride, when creating his images of Gullah men and women.

⁷¹ This image can be viewed in D. Willis, *Reflections in Black*, p.55.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.43.

⁷³ This image can be viewed in *Ibid.*, p.65.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.43.



Figure 6.5: Diana Brown [Gullah Informant] standing in front of her house on Edisto Island, S.C.

Lorenzo Dow Turner, Lorenzo Dow Turner Papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archive, ACMA PH2003.7064.312.



Figure 6.6: Katie Brown [Gullah informant] standing in front of her house on Sapelo Island, GA.

Lorenzo Dow Turner, Lorenzo Dow Turner Papers, Anacostia Community Museum Archive, ACMA PH2003.7064.309.

In comparison to the photographs of Polite and Bristow, most of the images that Turner produced of the formerly enslaved did not include objects or props to emphasise their success and the pride that their accomplishments triggered. Yet, in every image, Turner captured the elderly black Americans in confident stances that conveyed similar ‘uplifting’ emotional qualities. For example, Turner created a photograph of Diana Brown (Figure 6.5) in front of her house on Edisto Island in South Carolina. In this, she stares directly at the camera and stands with one arm by her side and another outstretched and holding onto her wooden porch. Brown’s particularly open posture and arm placement means that she inhabits all of the space in front of the doorway, which makes her not only appear particularly confident, but gives an indication of a sense of ownership of the house that she stands in front of. This is emphasised by the way in which Turner angled the lens so that Brown’s body is completely blocking the entrance to her house, and the viewer cannot see a way to move past her. Thus, although Brown does not hold an object that explicitly signifies achievement and hard work as Polite does, her open and strong stance and direct stare presents a similar picture of ownership and pride in relation to her house.

Furthermore, even though some of the men and women that Turner photographed did not present as strong a pose as Polite and Diana Brown, they still presented confidence in their images, and a level of defiance can also be detected in their facial expressions. For example, Turner photographed Katie Brown (Figure 6.6) stood with her hands together and intertwined in front of her, with one foot out at an angle. As is the case with all of the other images of individuals who had been enslaved that Turner produced, Katie Brown stares directly at the camera and presents a fairly neutral, but controlled, emotional expression. If considered in relation to the way in which white researchers had treated the Gullah community and photographed them during the 1920s and early 1930s, this is particularly significant. Photographers were often taking images of the Gullah community that portrayed them as overly emotional and childlike in their emotionalism, to ‘prove’ that African Americans on this island had ‘primitive’ African traits. Moore, for example, took a picture of one of the Johnson children dancing, which according to him occurred as the child ‘rolled up his pants and spontaneously began to dance.’⁷⁵ Evidently, this picture mimicked stereotypical depictions of black Americans

⁷⁵ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.82.

as ‘primitive’, childlike and overly emotional. Indeed, Cooper has concluded, in relation to Moore’s photographs, that ‘in the case of Emmitt and Emma Johnson, Hettie Walker, and the other Sapelo Islanders captured in Moore’s lens, the consequence of their acquiescence was that they were either depicted as relics, painted as exotic, or mocked.’⁷⁶ This context thus makes the narrative that Turner conveyed through capturing the African Americans’ neutral and controlled facial expressions in his images a particularly defiant one, because these photographs resisted widespread white stereotypes and expectations of the Gullah community.

Similarly, through positioning the lens so that each formerly enslaved person is front and centre of the photograph Turner presented all of the individuals in a dignified manner, as worthy of respect. He positioned his subjects as the viewer’s equal, as in each image the viewer does not gaze down upon the former slave; instead they either look directly into the eyes of the subject, or gaze up at them. The particularly respectful way in which Polite photographed each individual is reinforced by contrasting Turner’s images with those produced by Doris Ulmann on the same Gullah Islands for inclusion in the book, *Roll Jordan Roll*.⁷⁷ Within the book, there are photographs, like those captured by Turner, that give the impression of pride and confidence. For example, M.C. Lamunière identified this character trait in one of the photographs, noting that ‘dressed in overalls and workshirt, the subject looks with intense concentration at the camera. His right hand is blurred by movement while he plants the left firmly on his hip; Ulmann seems to have caught him in the middle of a gesture.’⁷⁸ Lamunière also concluded, about this photograph, that ‘the man’s expression is serious, but his pose, hand on hip, does not suggest confrontation. The viewer perceives that he is a proud man, that he takes seriously the responsibilities life has given him.’⁷⁹ These photographs were even praised by prominent black intellectuals. Sterling Brown, who became Folklore editor for the WPA ‘attacks Peterkin’s text, but describes Ulmann’s pictures as “lovely”, revealing a “great deal of the beauty of the country, and the dignity and character of the folk.”’⁸⁰

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.85.

⁷⁷ J. Peterkin, *Roll Jordan Roll: The Text by Julia Mood Peterkin, The Photographic Studies by Doris Ulmann* (New York: Robert O. Ballou, 1933).

⁷⁸ M. C. Lamunière, ‘*Roll, Jordan, Roll* and the Gullah Photographs of Doris Ulmann’, p.295

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p.298.

Despite this praise, caricatures of African Americans and their ‘primitive’ emotions were undoubtedly played on in Ullman’s photographs, stereotypes that were emphasised in the corresponding text. For example, in an image of an unidentified man, he is seen looking at the camera with a smile on his face. Perhaps, the photo itself could be interpreted differently if it was viewed on its own. Yet, as Lamunière remarked, ‘Ullmann’s portraits tend to accompany the character sketches so that the viewer associates the person in the story with the person in the portrait.’⁸¹ In the portrait’s corresponding text, Peterkin wrote that ‘times are not what they used to be for this old man, who has the unmistakable manner of one brought up by gentle folk. He is gentle and gracious and his quizzical smile hardly does justice to his sense of humor.’⁸² This stereotypical description is illustrative of the wider book, which Stephanie Yuhl observed portrays ‘themes of black primitivism, romanticism and simplicity.’⁸³ Lamunière agreed, writing that this project ‘returns to a nostalgia for the old South, portraying “a happy land of kindly masters and contented slaves, dwelling in mutual contentment and enrichment.”’⁸⁴ Thus, contrasting Ullmann’s photographs and Peterkin’s character sketches with Turner’s portraits and sound recordings illuminates the defiantly controlled emotional expressions, confidence and pride that was presented by the formerly enslaved subjects in Turner’s photographs, and suggests that in his images, like in his linguistic work, Turner was attempting to counteract these white depictions of the Gullah islanders that were being created at the same time.

Alongside being influenced by black photographers, such as Bedou and VanDerZee, to use props to present a message of hard work and success, the way in which Turner captured each individual in confident stances and postures seems to be influenced by other similar black photographic practices that were designed to counteract negative depictions of African Americans. In particular, Scurlock, who captured Turner’s own portrait, was known for taking dignified images of black intellectuals and politicians. Describing the images that Scurlock produced with his sons, Willis argued that ‘the Scurlock’s portraits, for the most part, were of images of self-empowerment and self-

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.299.

⁸² J. Peterkin, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p.167.

⁸³ S. Yuhl, *The Making of Historic Charleston*, p.231.

⁸⁴ M. C. Lamunière, ‘*Roll, Jordan, Roll* and the Gullah Photographs of Doris Ullmann’, p.298.

determination. They paralleled Locke's New Negro ideal.⁸⁵ Indeed, Scurlock's portrait of Turner (Figure 6.1) undoubtedly presented him as an accomplished intellectual with these traits, through picturing him in formal dress and capturing Turner's stoic posture and intent stare. Of course, in contrast to the well-crafted, seated studio photographs that Scurlock and others produced, Turner's images of the formerly enslaved do not appear as formal and as explicit in their portrayal of self-empowerment, no doubt because he did not take his images of them in a studio. Yet, it seems that Turner borrowed aspects of this style of 'New Negro' racial uplift photography - the focus on the person, the confident poses, stern, intense and controlled focus on the camera and use of props - presenting and fostering a similar emotional and political message of racial pride. These images, therefore, should not just be seen as illustrations that Turner made on his linguistic project, but also as images that had a defiant political message.

The Former Slaves' Role in Producing their Images

Turner made the ultimate decision as to the angle and composition of each photograph, yet, it is important to also explore the formerly enslaved persons' role in this process, as they were not simply passive bystanders. Whether each individual's stance was their own decision is hard to uncover, as the photographs represent a mere moment during the larger process of photographing each subject. To begin to explore the former slave's part in producing their image, however, it is important to note that each individual appears fairly comfortable in their photograph. For example, Diana Brown's stance is completely open, suggesting she felt a lack of fear or tension when being photographed by Turner. Contrasting the photographic encounters of Ulmann and Turner highlights that Turner's methodology was more conducive to making the subjects feel at ease. As Lamunière argued about Ulmann's project, 'the patronizing tone of *Roll, Jordan, Roll*'s text no doubt reflects Peterkin's long time role as plantation mistress, upon which her involvement and relationship with the Gullah people who surrounded her was based.'⁸⁶ Indeed, she explained that Ulmann's letters in 1929 show that she was looking for 'Negro types'; Ulmann wrote that 'it seems to be exceedingly difficult to get the studies

⁸⁵ D. Willis, *Reflections in Black*, p.42.

⁸⁶ M. C. Lamunière, '*Roll, Jordan, Roll* and the Gullah Photographs of Doris Ulmann', p.298.

in which I am interested – the place is rich in material, but these negroes are so strange that it is almost impossible to photograph them.’⁸⁷ This highlights the contrasting motivations of Turner and Ulmann for creating these photographs and tells us that Ulmann struggled to photograph this group, most likely due to her association with Peterkin, the white plantation owner. This is important to note, as we know that Turner believed that becoming an ‘insider’ in the community was particularly important.⁸⁸ Turner respected the customs of the community and made contact through their leaders, whilst Ulmann and other white photographers found them ‘strange’ and hard to penetrate, and this most likely led to the comfortable nature of Turner’s photographs.

It is also probable that Turner encouraged the formerly enslaved to present their own expressions and stand how they wanted to. Deborah Willis has suggested that when producing ‘New Negro’ imagery, photographers believed that it was important that their sitters had the chance to present their ‘self’.⁸⁹ Self-respect, self-empowerment, and self-worth were essential qualities of the ‘New Negro’ consciousness. Describing their mission to counteract caricatures of black people in mainstream culture, Willis argued that ‘the architects of the ‘New Negro’ doctrine could not, quite naturally, define the African American experience through these images, and so there was a concerted effort to find the ‘self’ in visual images.’⁹⁰ Further to this, she contended that ‘photographs made by the black studio photographers during this period reveal both the creation of the photographer and the self-image projected by the sitter.’⁹¹ As portrait images of black photographic subjects influenced Turner’s depiction of the Gullah informants, it seems likely that he was also inclined to allow them to present aspects of their ‘self’ through their stance and expression. In turn, the way that Turner’s sitters posed for their photographs revealed a lot about how they felt and the message they wished to portray about themselves.

Analysing Turner’s images in conjunction with their sound recordings demonstrates, furthermore, that the elderly black Americans revealed similar feelings and character

⁸⁷ Doris Ulmann quoted in M. C. Lamunière, ‘*Roll, Jordan, Roll* and the Gullah Photographs of Doris Ulmann’, p.300.

⁸⁸ L. D. Turner, ‘Problems Confronting the Investigator of Gullah’, p.82.

⁸⁹ D. Willis, *Reflections in Black*, p.36.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

traits in both mediums, which reinforces that they had space in which to direct their own images. Diana Brown, for example, photographed in front of her house on Edisto Island in South Carolina, stood with confidence and in a stance that seemed to be in defiance of white expectations. That Brown herself chose to stand in this way is suggested by her discussion with Turner. When talking about her life during her interview, she expressed her resistance by being extremely critical towards white men and calling the owner of a white plantation on Edisto Island the ‘red devil.’⁹² Polite’s description of work in his recording also suggests that he may have wanted Turner to photograph him whilst working, and that he was not just directed by Turner to do this. Polite’s recording with Turner, and his WPA interview, both reinforce the importance of labour to Polite. In the sound recording that Turner conducted, he stated that ‘[slavery] make me work, make me work you’re a man.’⁹³ His WPA interview also suggests this more clearly, as he stated that; ‘I t’ink it been good t’ing. It larn nigger to wuk.’⁹⁴

That Polite had a role in making sure Turner photographed him with a fishing net is reinforced if we consider another collection of images of him. The papers of the Penn School, which was an institution founded on Saint Helena Island during the Civil War for those who had been enslaved, reveal that Polite worked as the school’s caretaker.⁹⁵ There are numerous images of Polite in the collection, and most are of him engaged in a form of labour. There are two photographs, for example, of Polite digging a ditch, one of him helping to plant a tree, an image of him in a steer car and, significantly, there are numerous images of him making a shrimp net and dredging for shrimps.⁹⁶ Furthermore, according to Alcione Amos, members of the community on his island remembered Polite for his work even into the twenty-first century; Legree identified him as the man who taught him to weave fishing nets.⁹⁷ This suggests that this

⁹² Diana Brown, interviewed by L.D Turner, ADS Collection, LoC.

⁹³ Sam Polite, interviewed by L.D. Turner, June 27, 1932, ADS Collection, LoC.

⁹⁴ G. Rawick, *TAS Volume 3, Part 3, South Carolina Narratives*, pp.271-276.

⁹⁵ Penn School Papers Collection, 1862-1977 #3615, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁹⁶ Image P-3615/0617ra; P-3615/0645lb; P-3615/0648l; P-3615/0646rb; P-3615/0647la; P-3615/0647lb; P-3615/0647rb; P-3615/0710l; P-3615/1195a, Penn School Papers, 1862-1977 #3615, The Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

⁹⁷ A. Amos, ‘A Coleção Fotográfica de Lorenzo Dow Turner Gullah Bahia Áfricae os Retornados Afro-Brasileiros Presentation’.

occupation was an integral part of his life, and that Polite may have chosen to include the fishing net as he was a proud man and wanted to present himself as a hard working.

Of course, without having access to more information about how Turner produced his images, it is almost impossible to reach conclusions as to the extent to which Turner gave the formerly enslaved men and women space to present themselves as they wished. It seems likely, however, that the taking of the image was a two-way process in which Turner - influenced by the politically motivated 'New Negro' focus on capturing the 'self' - allowed his subjects to 'self-fashion' their image by presenting their defiance, pride, work ethic and achievements. Turner's decision to allow them to present aspects of their own emotions and character was again particularly significant in the case of the Gullah community as they were often compelled by white photographers to pose in front of the lens. For example, Moore took a photograph of a young black woman with a young child, and included it, unidentified, in his article. After speaking to members of the community, Cooper unearthed that this image was of Hettie Walker, and revealed that because Walker was walking down the road Moore and a white island manager, named Cap'n Frank, approached her and asked for a photograph. As Cooper has explained, as Walker needed to be in favour with the white owners of Sapelo Island, she was 'powerless to refuse or protest.'⁹⁸

What is most significant, however, is that even when the Gullah community had little control over the image-making process, they still found ways to 'self-fashion' in their images. Whilst it seems that Moore heavily directed the image of the Johnsons – even pretending that other children were part of their family – the parents dressed themselves and their children to present their self-worth and self-respect. Cooper has expanded on this, contending that 'the Johnsons wore their pride on that sunny day, as though defying the Jim Crow era's characterization of southern blacks as backward and inferior. They used their clothes, shoes, and hairstyles to define themselves as respectable, dignified, and modern.'⁹⁹ It seems, then, that members of the Gullah community found it particularly important to present themselves, in their images, as dignified and respectful individuals. In the case of Turner's photographs, this

⁹⁸ M. Cooper, *Making Gullah*, p.85.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.68

presentation of dignity and pride was a two-way process, in which Turner aided the visualisation of these qualities through his use of props and camera angles. In comparison, when photographed by Moore, the Johnsons had to find ways, before the encounter began, to project this self-fashioned ‘uplifting’ message.

Thus, although this self-fashioning was a personal process, for Turner’s subjects and others on the Gullah Islands, the decision to present themselves with these traits and emotions was in fact political, whether conscious or not. Focusing specifically on images of Frederick Douglass, John Stauffer et al argued that ‘the act of posing was political.’¹⁰⁰ In particular, they noted that his experience of being enslaved made the stances and emotions he expressed in his photographs even more politically charged. They quoted Douglass as stating that a ‘dissatisfaction was constantly manifesting itself in the looks of a slave. [I have] been punished and beaten more for [my] looks than for anything else – for looking dissatisfied because [I] felt dissatisfied – for feeling and looking as [I] felt at the wrongs heaped upon [me].’¹⁰¹ Interpreting this quote, Stauffer et al noted that ‘now Douglass had to turn those facial expressions into sources of power.’¹⁰² To do this, Douglass experimented with poses, moving from what they entitled the ‘defiant citizen’ to ‘elder statesman.’¹⁰³ Discussing some of these expressions, Stauffer argued that the images sent a ‘message of artful defiance or majestic wrath’ as ‘he stares sternly into the camera lens in a dramatic and crafted pose.’¹⁰⁴ We can undoubtedly see variations of these stern stares and artful defiance in the Gullah informants’ poses and controlled emotional expressions in front of Turner’s lens.

Similarly, Sojourner Truth experimented with different poses and stances to present a very distinct version of herself that she utilised to counteract white depictions of black Americans in the nineteenth century. For example, Painter has shown that Truth depicted herself as respectable, namely as ‘mature and intelligent, not reading, but wearing eyeglasses that might have helped her knit and that certainly, like the book on

¹⁰⁰ J. Stauffer, Z. Trodd and C. Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, p.xxvi.

¹⁰¹ Frederick Douglass quoted in J. Stauffer, Z. Trodd and C. Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, p. xxvi.

¹⁰² J. Stauffer, Z. Trodd and C. Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.1.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

the table, gave her an educated air.’¹⁰⁵ She further explained that ‘in none of these portraits is there anything beyond blackness that would inspire charity, nothing of the piteous slave mother, chest baring insolent, grinning minstrel or amusing naïf.’¹⁰⁶ Truth’s images, according to Painter, also stand in stark contrast to the ethnographic photographs created by those such as Agassiz, and criminal mugshots. Thus, explaining how she self-fashioned in these photographs, Painter concluded that ‘Sojourner Truth was seizing control of her replicas: shaping the meaning of the images that she sold by deciding when to have her photograph taken, what to wear, what expression to adopt, which props to hold, and which photographer to patronize, while her photographer adjusted the framing, focus and distance.’¹⁰⁷ Through carefully choosing what to wear, how to stand and what to express, Truth, in turn, made a political statement about her place, as a black woman, in U.S. society. Although Douglass and Truth were high profile figures who likely had more control over the photographic process than the individuals whom Turner photographed, we must not underestimate that for these ‘normal’ black Americans, posing strongly and confidently was a moment in which they made a political statement about themselves and their worth. In the context of the early twentieth century South and the Harlem Renaissance that emerged to counter the racism of the Jim Crow system, any artistic and intellectual depiction produced by black Americans of themselves thus presented a strong, self-determined message of racial pride. This message countered racist narratives of black Americans held by white society and made the case for equal political and social rights.

Exploring Turner’s images in relation to his sound recordings and wider photographic trends therefore reveals that Turner allowed each formerly enslaved person to present their own message about themselves in these images. Writing about the ‘countless black women and men [who] embraced photography as a means of documenting their own existence and celebrating their freedom’, such as those who took photographs at emancipation day celebrations and those who sat for the FWP, Willis and Krauthamer argued that the images ‘offer powerful evidence of how black women, men and children saw themselves and each other: as dignified, beautiful, creative, intellectual, energetic,

¹⁰⁵ N. Painter, ‘Representing Truth’, p.485.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.486-7.

diligent, steadfast, powerful and free.’¹⁰⁸ Turner’s photographs are similar evidence of how black Americans saw themselves and each other, a result of a two-way process between Turner and the formerly enslaved subjects. As such, historians must see the representations of pride with their accomplishments, confidence and self-worth in these images as both politically and personally motivated, being first and foremost a moment of self-fashioning for the former slaves. Yet, this self-fashioning was influenced by Turner’s political agenda, was a political statement made by the elderly Gullah community about their own black identity, and in turn helped Turner present an important message about the self-determination of African Americans.

The Displacement of Turner’s Photographs

This chapter has argued that Turner’s images visualised his formerly enslaved subjects’ self-worth and self-respect, and that he in turn used them to present a narrative of black pride and achievement. In visually capturing these qualities, Turner did not seem to frame his images to elicit a certain emotion in the viewer, but to change perceptions by counteracting negative stereotypical images of black Americans. Thus, an analysis of these images would not be complete without questioning if his images did have an emotional and intellectual impact on the viewer. The remainder of this chapter will explore the circulation and viewing of these images, as Gillian Rose suggests historians do, and ask the following questions: were these images used to intervene in cultural and political debates about race, freedom and citizenship? How did the images circulate, and who viewed them? Was the intended pride and defiance in the images acknowledged by viewers across different places and time periods? And lastly, how did viewers emotionally and/or affectively respond to these images?

The American Dialect Society financed Turner’s 1932/1933 project on the Gullah Islands and as such, the recordings were given to the Library of Congress in 1984 as part of the American Dialect Society Collection and to the Archives of Traditional Music at Indiana University in 1986. The photographs of the informers, however, were not sent alongside their recordings to these repositories. Turner kept the images of his Gullah subjects as well as those he captured in Brazil and Africa. Describing Turner’s

¹⁰⁸ D. Willis and B. Krauthamer, *Envisioning Emancipation*, p.130.

utilisation of these images, Wade-Lewis noted that Turner added them to his university course hand-outs, but that he did not publish the images in a book or article due to financial constraints.¹⁰⁹ Lois Turner Williams, his wife, sent some of his papers to Northwestern University in 1984, including a number of images.¹¹⁰ In November 2003 Lois Turner Williams donated a more substantial number of images - 2000 - to the Anacostia Community Museum in Washington D.C. Alongside his papers (but not the sound recording discs), these photographs became part of the Lorenzo Dow Turner Collection, some of which can be accessed online. His papers and recordings have therefore been spread across numerous archives.

As the photographs were not included in Turner's published book, and Lois Turner only donated them to a public institution in the early twenty-first century, Turner's images have not circulated extensively in public and academic circles since their creation. When exploring how images have circulated, Rose proposed that scholars need to ask what social, economic or political processes are shaping that movement?¹¹¹ It seems that economic factors did in fact limit the movement of the images, as financial constraints stopped Turner from publishing the images in his book. Social and political factors are also likely to have shaped the process of archiving. Turner's position as a black man, and sole African American linguist at the American Dialect Society may have stopped mainstream and predominantly white-led archives truly appreciating his work when it was produced in the 1930s and 1940s. As Verne Harris, a South African archivist has argued, 'they [archives] at once express and are instruments of prevailing relations of power.'¹¹² Further exploring this issue, and focusing upon the South African state archives, Harris argued that 'it was moulded as an institution by apartheid and absorbed apartheid bureaucracy culture', noting that all senior positions were held by Afrikaans speaking white males.¹¹³ He highlighted that 'skewing of social memory is evident' in their records, as 'they documented poorly the struggles against colonialism, segregation and apartheid.'¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ M. Wade-Lewis, *Lorenzo Dow Turner*, pp.82-83.

¹¹⁰ Lorenzo Dow Turner Papers 1915/1973, Melville J. Herskovits Library of African Studies, Northwestern University Library.

¹¹¹ G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p.37.

¹¹² V. Harris, 'The Archival Sliver: Power, Memory and Archives in South Africa', *Archival Science*, 2.1-2 (2002), p.63.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p.72.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.73.

Historians of slavery have explored this issue relating to power and the archive, noting that because of the inherent racism of the nineteenth century U.S., it is the records produced by white men and women about slavery that were predominantly preserved, such as account books and diaries. This continued into the twentieth century, when state sponsored archives were created in the southern states, as ‘a coalition of white hereditary societies and patriotic groups, historical enthusiasts, and professional historians urged that the state actively promote public appreciation of history by funding archives, museums, commissions and public history programs.’¹¹⁵ W. Fitzburgh Brundage explained that at this time the archives, and wider public history projects, focused on ‘the archiving of white civilization’, and that ‘no thought was given to preserving, displaying or analysing the history of the region’s African American citizenry.’¹¹⁶ This meant that only slaveholders’ documents and official records were archived, and any sources produced by black Americans, or black American institutions, were not preserved.¹¹⁷

This lack of record-keeping continued throughout the mid-twentieth century, and Brundage has contended that it was ‘not until the latter third of the twentieth century would the work of archivists and public historians in the South facilitate more inclusive interpretations of the region’s history.’¹¹⁸ Considering the racial discrimination at the heart of southern U.S. archives when Turner was producing his images, it is worth considering that Turner’s papers were not seen as influential and as worthy of preservation as white Americans’ work, such as John Lomax’s, due to his race and the racially uplifting nature of his work. Lomax sent his recordings to the Library of Congress as soon as he produced them so that archivists could preserve them, whilst Turner’s papers and photographs were not archived until way after his death, and were sent by his wife to much smaller archival repositories. Of course, it is plausible that Turner may have chosen to keep the images in his possession to aid him in his scholarly work, yet it is important to acknowledge that the systemic racism of these institutions,

¹¹⁵ F. Brundage, *The Southern Past*, p.106

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.121

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp.121-122

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.136

or at least Turner's understanding of this discrimination, was probably a factor in the process of archiving of Turner's images.

Whether the decision to keep the images was a personal one or shaped by racial politics at the time (or both), the result was that in contrast to the mass circulation of stereotypical images that Turner wanted to counteract in his work, his photographs did not overtly intervene in debates over slavery, racial equality and citizenship that were raging in the early twentieth century. Thus, although his linguistic work had real intellectual impact and shaped knowledge of African cultural and linguistic resiliency, his images did not play a part in wider public debates even though they had the potential to counter dominant visualisations of formerly enslaved people that were circulating at this time. Furthermore, the fact that the images remain in smaller archives rather than the Library of Congress, alongside his recordings, for instance, means that these photographs continue to be underutilised in academic circles.

In a similar way to this study's demonstration that power relations affected the creation and content of sources produced with the formerly enslaved, the fact that Turner's images and recordings have not entered the academic or public sphere, whilst Lomax's and other white photographers became canonical, must be seen as a result of the power inherent in the production of history. Michel-Rolph Trouillot has demonstrated that the process of creating archives involves the selection of producers, evidence, themes and procedures and that power enters into this process. In turn, it can lead to the exclusion of certain producers (ie. Turner) or evidence (Turner's images) and thus the silencing of certain actors (Turner's informants) and narratives (such as ones of racial uplift).¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Trouillot has argued that at four moments during the production of history, silences can enter the process: at the source creation, the moment when the facts are assembled, the making of the narratives, and at the 'moment of retrospective significance.'¹²⁰ These processes are linked, according to Trouillot; 'historical narratives are premised on previous understandings, which are themselves premised on the distribution of archival power.'¹²¹ It is important to therefore acknowledge that the power inequalities that potentially led to the disaggregation of Turner's sources, and

¹¹⁹ M. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, p.53

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.26

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p.55

thus the possible silencing of Turner's formerly enslaved people in the process of archivalisation, was a factor in leading to the lack of use of his sources both in the past and present when writing histories of the institution.

Although the images have not circulated extensively, to explore the responses of viewers to the visuals once they were in the public domain, it's important to analyse how a viewer would encounter them in the archive. As this chapter has outlined, the photographs arrived at the Anacostia Community Museum in an envelope marked 'Gullah Informers', yet the people shown in the photographs were not identified. As part of her research for the 'Word, Shout, Song' exhibition about Turner and his work curator Alcione Amos went on a research trip to the Gullah Islands in an attempt to identify some of these individuals. She initially contacted community leaders on each island who helped her to meet with members of the community. A number of the older island residents were able to identify some of the individuals in the photographs.¹²² Unfortunately, many of the photographs of the Gullah informers and others remain unidentified.

To explore the effect that this lack of identification had and continues to have on the viewer, it's important to note, as Tina Campt does, that photographs are 'affect-laden objects.'¹²³ When analysing images and their impact, she argued that historians must ask 'how do such images register?' and also stated that 'to ask how these photographs register is to attempt to catalogue both a sensibility and a range of sensory affects they display and evoke in others.'¹²⁴ Campt further suggested that photographs are a 'medium that produces affective resonances and attachments in ways we cannot necessarily explain and that are often detached from personal or biographical investments.'¹²⁵ Thus, for both mainstream audiences and scholars who work with these sources, it must be acknowledged that photographs often trigger affective and emotional responses. Since the inception of the technology, photographers have always framed images of the enslaved and the formerly enslaved to evoke various and contrasting emotions, whether it be sympathy, empathy, anger or pride. Although it is

¹²² A. Amos, 'A Coleção Fotográfica de Lorenzo Dow Turner Gullah Bahia Áfricae os Retornados Afro-Brasileiros Presentation'.

¹²³ T. Campt, *Image Matters*, p.16.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.13.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.16.

not clear what emotions Turner intended to elicit in the viewer, apart from perhaps a recognition and appreciation of the achievements of these former slaves and a reconsideration of their views, the unidentified nature of the images undoubtedly changed the affective power of the image. Elizabeth Edwards has argued that ‘photographs are sources that are bathed in humanity.’¹²⁶ When viewing the image of a nameless person, it diminishes the viewers’ ability to connect on a basic level to the historical figure (as I believe Turner intended), as a part of this humanity has been stripped away.

Even once Amos identified some of the photographs, the holding of Turner’s images away from their corresponding sound recordings is significant for the viewer. To explore this, I will analyse my own encounter with the sources, as Gillian Rose has proposed that a critical visual methodology ‘considers your own way of looking at images’, as ‘ways of seeing are historically, geographically, culturally and socially specific.’¹²⁷ As a scholar working in the archives, I initially heard Turner’s recordings at the Library of Congress. When searching for more about Turner, I happened to stumble upon the photographs that Turner captured that are housed at the Anacostia Community Museum. Yet, it was when I listened to the memories of Sam Polite, for example, at the same time as viewing his photograph that these sources had their greatest intellectual and affective impact on me. Once brought together, I was able to build up an understanding of Polite; of how he looked, spoke, felt and wished for people to remember him. Furthermore, it is only when exploring Turner’s images holistically that Turner’s intended message of pride and achievement was fully evident.

Scholars can explore the impact that bringing the sound recordings and images together can have from journalists’ reactions to Turner’s exhibition at the Anacostia Community Museum. Of course it is important to note, as Rose has, that ‘Different locations all have their own ceremonies, their own disciplines, their own rules for how their particular sort of spectator should behave, including whether and how they should look, and all these affect how a particular image is seen.’¹²⁸ Viewers at this museum

¹²⁶ E. Edwards and M. Mead, ‘Absent Histories and Absent Images: Photographs, Museums and the Colonial Past’, *Museum and Society*, 11.1 (2013), p.33.

¹²⁷ G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p.22.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.21.

exhibition may have looked at the images and listened to sound recordings in very prescribed ways, perhaps limiting the emotional power of the sources. Yet, their responses still give an important indication of how writers at the *Washington Post* viewed the photographs and recordings when at the exhibition:

We see a photo of Lizzie Grant, of Harris Neck, Ga., standing in the doorway of a house, her body framed in the wood slats. Her head is covered by a scarf. Her hands seem to be ready to move. She is about to say something -- this effort to speak captured in the photo. We see photographs of Paris and Rosa Capers, of St. Helena Island, S.C., standing in their yard. She is wearing an apron. He is standing straight. He is holding a basket of fruit. We see video of a descendant of Gullah people in South Carolina talking in the early 1930s about how his parents told him not to speak the language outside his house while on the mainland.¹²⁹

Thus, this small commentary highlights why it is important that Turner's photographs and recordings were brought together in this public way at the community museum, and why it is essential that historians analyse these sources in conjunction. Through doing so, not only can we understand more about Turner's intended political message in the images and how he framed the documents accordingly, but can also build up a better picture of each formerly enslaved person, their self-fashioning in the images, and ultimately their memories of slavery.

Conclusions: The Political and Personal Messages in Turner's Photographs

Describing Frederick Douglass's use of photography, Stauffer et al have argued that 'Douglass's awareness of the possibilities of imagery to shape public opinion, coupled with his ability to control and circulate his own image, shaped one of the great battles in American history – a battle between racist stereotypes and dignified self-possession.'¹³⁰ Through exploring Turner's images as well as his recordings, this case-study has demonstrated that as part of this battle, he used an arsenal of linguistic recordings, scholarly writings and, as this chapter has argued, photographs to fight against racist stereotypes and white narratives of the benevolent slavery institution.

¹²⁹ D. Brown, 'Anacostia museum exhibit details how Lorenzo Dow Turner traced Gullah language', *Washington Post*, (August 6, 2010), available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/05/AR2010080506709.html>> [accessed 13.12.17]

¹³⁰ J. Stauffer, Z. Trodd and C. Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, p.xxviii.

Highlighting more about the factors that shaped the documents created by Turner through analysing these images this chapter has shown that, influenced by ‘New Negro’ imagery, Turner presented the formerly enslaved men and women with pride, defiance and dignity, reinforcing the emotional picture painted in his recordings.

Whilst it is hard to uncover the extent to which Turner directed the Gullah informants when taking their photograph, I argue that historians should view the production of the images as a two-way process. Analysing the formerly enslaved subjects’ experience of the encounter in light of wider photographic trends, their corresponding recordings, and other images of the same individuals highlights that the focus on the ‘self’ in black studio photography influenced Turner to allow his subjects to present their own traits, emotional expressions and messages in their image. Thus, the decision to capture the formerly enslaved peoples’ ‘uplifting’ qualities in these images was both politically and personally motivated, a result of Turner’s political influences and the former slaves’ self-fashioning.

Despite the political message of black pride in his images, in contrast to more famous images that intervened in racial debates about black American identity, Turner’s photographs did not play a substantial part in the battle over the memory of slavery and character of black Americans. Because of a lack of will, opportunity, funding, and/or political influence Turner did not publish these photographs in his book and therefore public audiences did not view them. Furthermore, the fact that the images arrived at the archive without identification and are held in a different archival repository from the recordings, also limits the part that these sources could play in the debate over the history of slavery. Viewing the images alone limits our ability to recognise the intended message within these sources; the achievements, self-worth and self-respect of each formerly enslaved individual.

In relation to Turner’s sound recordings, Chapter Four revealed that these sources present historians of slavery with possibilities to uncover more about slavery and its lasting emotional impact, as Turner created them so that the black American interviewees could freely discuss their memories of slavery. This chapter has demonstrated that viewing the recordings alongside his images gives historians further opportunities, as the formerly enslaved were able to convey different aspects of their

personalities through their stances and postures. As such, Turner's oral and visual sources offer a message of racial uplift that is not usually seen in documents produced in conjunction with those who had been in bondage. Turner's images had, and continue to have, the opportunity to offer a different narrative of slavery and black Americans to the one portrayed by white source creators like John Lomax - a narrative driven by black Americans, and not shaped by the influence of white source producers. As long as historians acknowledge the influence of Turner's political agenda when creating the images and recordings, including the stylised nature of these images, these sources can begin to provide an important counterbalance to white source producers' numerous and heavily meditated representations of former slaves.

Describing the images of Sojourner Truth, Nell Painter argued that her 'photographic portraits are not transparent representations of her authentic being, nor do they convey a simple truth... if there is no unmediated access to Sojourner Truth, no means of knowing her with certainty, nonetheless some conclusions can be drawn about how she wanted to be known.'¹³¹ These images are not transparent windows that give us access to the personalities, memories and feelings of the men and women who had been in bondage. Yet, through viewing the images next to their corresponding recordings, a more nuanced understanding of the dignified and proud way in which they wished to portray themselves can be uncovered, allowing a more comprehensive understanding of each formerly enslaved individual, their emotional experiences of slavery and the lasting impact on their lives.

¹³¹ N. Painter, 'Representing Truth', p.487.

Chapter 7: Documenting the Subjects' Life and Character: Ruby Lomax's Images of Formerly Enslaved People

Negroes can never have impartial portraits at the hands of white artists. It seems to us next to impossible for white men to take the likeness of black men, without most grossly exaggerating their features. And the reason is obvious: Artists, like all other white persons, have adopted a theory respecting the distinctive features of Negro physiognomy.¹

During John Lomax's expedition to record folksong in 1940, his wife Ruby Lomax produced photographs of each performer, capturing around 84 images to accompany the project's sound recordings and field notes. The use of photography within similar folklore projects and governmental welfare ventures run by white Americans was common in the 1930s and 1940s in the U.S., and it has been labelled the 'documentary decade'.² Despite the emphasis on 'documenting' the 'real' lives of everyday Americans using these images, as the above passage written for the abolitionist newspaper *The North Star* indicates, since the inception of photographic technology, white photographers used images of black Americans (including the enslaved) to present different narratives about race, slavery and emancipation.³ This chapter explores five photographs Ruby Lomax produced of the formerly enslaved, to argue that in contrast to both John Lomax and Lorenzo Dow Turner, Ruby Lomax was less influenced by debates over racial politics at the time when producing her images, as they neither overtly mimicked racialised stereotypes of black Americans that her husband espoused, nor presented racial pride and uplift.

In this analysis of Lomax's photography, this chapter firstly provides some contextual information about her life as an educator and photographic trends in this era and outlines the methodologies that are used to analyse her images. This chapter is then

¹ 'A Tribute For the Negro' *The North Star*, April 7, 1849. This quote was attributed to Frederick Douglass in J. Stauffer, Z. Trodd and C. Bernier, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, p.xv.

² C. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2003), p.xiii.

³ For an overview of photography of slavery in the U.S. and Brazil see M. Wood, *Black Milk*. For more in-depth work focusing on abolitionists use of imagery see D. Silkenat, "'A Typical Negro'", pp.169-186 and M. Mitchell, *Raising Freedom's Child: Black Children and Visions of the Future after Slavery* (New York: New York University Press, 2008). For an interesting discussion Louis Agassiz's images of slaves in South Carolina, see M. Rogers, *Delia's Tears*.

split into three sections, based on Lomax's styles of photography: portraits, family photographs and snapshots. This analysis will demonstrate that whilst her images highlight the paternalism at play during the encounter, in comparison to John Lomax's politicisation of the formerly enslaved performers' emotions and direction of their expressions in his recordings, when being photographed by Ruby Lomax, the elderly black Americans presented many aspects of their personalities and their feelings at the encounter and Lomax captured aspects of their living situation. As such, this chapter will argue that these photographs offer a varied picture of each sitter's emotional character that both strongly counteracts the monolithic performance of positive emotion provided in John Lomax's recordings, and appear less genre-specific than those produced by Lorenzo Dow Turner.

Similarly to the previous chapter, this case study ends by exploring how these images have been circulated and archived to demonstrate that in order to view these images as the Lomaxes intended them to be seen, historians should analyse them holistically, alongside John Lomax's sound recordings. As the images depict aspects of the performers' personalities that they did not present in their corresponding recordings, these sources provide historians with a rare opportunity to combat some of the silences in slavery's archive and the dehumanising nature of these stark absences, by building up a more complete and layered picture of the formerly enslaved African Americans' memories of slavery, feelings, character traits and experiences when producing the source.

Ruby Lomax's Photography and the 1940 Expedition

Ruby Terrill Lomax was born in Texas, in 1886, and spent much of her working life as an academic and educator. She earned her doctorate in classical languages and then became an associate professor at the University of Texas. As part of her PhD programme she also travelled across the U.S. to undertake fieldwork and summer courses at the University of Chicago and Columbia University. Lomax was interested in advancing women's place in higher education during her career, and in 1925 became

the Dean of Women at the University of Texas.⁴ In 1929, she also founded The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, along with eleven female educators, to further the place of women in education by fighting for better professional preparation.⁵ Thus, according to her short biography written by archivists at the Library of Congress, ‘Ruby Terrill was an accomplished and progressive woman in her time.’⁶ Others have suggested that she was particularly open-minded, such as in Nolan Porterfield’s foundational biography of John Lomax, in which he explained that Alan Lomax (John’s son) ‘found Miss Terrill remarkably liberal and tolerant.’⁷

In 1934, Ruby Lomax married John Lomax, and according to Porterfield, despite the fact that ‘her job had been her life’, after her wedding ‘she was pulled in other directions.’⁸ Three years later she ceased teaching at the university to accompany John on his folklore collecting expeditions. This included his 1939 expedition, in which, according to John Lomax, her activities included being a ‘chauffer, valet, buffer, machine operator, disk-jockey, body-guard, doctor and nurse, wife and companion.’⁹ Ruby Lomax also accompanied John Lomax on his 1940 southern states recording expedition. According to a letter she wrote in 1940 to Harold Spivake, head of the Music Division at the Library of Congress, she used an Agfa-Clipper Special-F-6.3 camera, explaining that ‘it was impossible to get photographs or snaps of all our singers and informants’, but that she was sending back 84 negatives made on this trip to the Library.¹⁰ This suggests that she photographed most of the individuals whom John Lomax recorded on the expedition, including formerly enslaved people, young black Americans, white performers and children. In total 86 images were transferred to the Prints and Photographs Division at the Library of Congress in 1954, and now form part of the larger digitised ‘Lomax Collection’ alongside images produced by Alan Lomax between the 1930s and 1950s.¹¹

⁴ N. Porterfield, *Last Cavalier*, p.296.

⁵ Library of Congress, ‘Ruby Terrill Lomax’, available at <<https://www.loc.gov/item/no94003748/ruby-terrell-lomax-1886-1961/>> [accessed 02.11.18].

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ N. Porterfield, *Last Cavalier*, p.363.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.364.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.402.

¹⁰ Letter from Ruby Terrill Lomax to Harold Spivake, February 7, 1941, Lomax SSRC, LoC, Folder 1.

¹¹ Lomax collection is available at <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/lomax/about.html>>

This chapter focuses specifically on images of five formerly enslaved men and women captured on the 1940 expedition: Harriett McClintock, Alice ‘Judge’ Richardson, Bob Ledbetter, Billy McCrea and Joe and Mary McDonald. I have chosen this small sample of images, as these are the only identifiable photographs that are of those who had been enslaved in this collection, and they also correspond to the sound recordings that were analysed in Chapter Five. The photographs include portraits of the performers, shots of them with their families, and snap-shots of the recording process or other aspects of this encounter. Lomax took the photographs at different stages of the recording process; she captured some on the day of the recording, others the day after. The performer’s home was the site of most of the photographic sessions, but this is not the case with all of the photographs. John Lomax did not seem to be present when Ruby Lomax took all of the images, yet, the photographs of McCrea and McClintock show Lomax in the background.

Explaining why Lomax produced the images, in her letter to Spivake she wrote that ‘we suggest that you have prints made to accompany our field notes’, which made clear that she designed the photographs to be used as visual aids to supplement the field notes and recordings.¹² Apart from this information discerned from her letter, it is harder to uncover why she took the photographs, her methodology for doing so, or even her personal beliefs, particularly in contrast to the number of works published about her husband. Most scholars who mention Ruby Lomax in published work do so in relation to John Lomax, and describe her role simply as his wife.¹³ Despite this, some of her attitudes towards the formerly enslaved people that she photographed in 1940 can be ascertained from excerpts of her letters to her family, which were often much shorter, but more personal, than the typed field notes that were written about each performer.

In Lomax’s enthusiastic letters to her family, she gave an impression of fascination and excitement about each performer. For example, writing to her family on October 14th, she asked ‘did I write you about Uncle Billy, allegedly 117 years old, ex-slave. He can’t enunciate very well, what with all but two tusk-teeth gone, but there’s plenty of life in the old fellow.’¹⁴ Similarly, discussing her meeting with Harriett McClintock, she

¹² Letter from Ruby Terrill Lomax to Harold Spivake, February 7, 1941.

¹³ For example, see N. Porterfield, *Last Cavalier*.

¹⁴ Billy McCrea, John Lomax Field Notes.

proclaimed that ‘I wish you could have been with us today’ also telling them that ‘if only I had a movie camera when we played back some of her songs! Aunt Harriett shouted with laughter.’¹⁵ Continuing to discuss her impression of McClintock, she wrote that ‘she must-a been worl’ly sure enough. She was delightful.’¹⁶ Whilst these reveal Lomax’s fascination with each performer and joy at recording them, in these small excerpts, Lomax also wrote about the performers in an infantilised manner, presenting them as fairly childlike through the use of terms such as ‘delightful’ and ‘old fellow’. The infantilised way in which she wrote about the performers is also paralleled in her use of the terms ‘Aunt’, ‘Uncle’ and ‘Judge’ in the titles of her photographs to describe the performers. Whilst these may have been the terms that John Lomax attributed to each individual, instead of Ruby Lomax herself, her adoption of the words is still indicative of her racial views.

Ritterhouse has demonstrated that these terms of address were part of an everyday racial etiquette which emerged in the South after emancipation.¹⁷ Whilst the derogatory terms ‘Aunt’, ‘Uncle’ and ‘Judge’ were employed by whites during slavery, they continued to be utilised as part of this racial etiquette into the twentieth century to deny black Americans basic respect and symbolically and practically enforce white superiority. Describing this etiquette, Ritterhouse argued that, ‘slaves had not been called “Mr” and “Mrs” and whites were not going to grant freedmen and freedwomen these courtesies either. They would use “Aunt” and “Uncle” or “Mammy” and “Daddy” for esteemed elders as they had during slavery, but for other African Americans’ first names, “Boy” and “Girl” would suffice, and “nigger” would become even more common than before.’¹⁸ Feagin has argued that these terms, alongside other ‘deference rituals’ that were required of black Americans by whites, such as stepping off the pavement and bowing their heads, ‘were implemented to insure that whites in all classes benefitted from a strong sense of racial superiority.’¹⁹ Black Americans, however, did not passively accept these racialised terms, particularly after emancipation. Describing how some freedmen and women responded to being called ‘Uncle’ and ‘Aunt’, Ritterhouse

¹⁵ Harriett McClintock, John Lomax Field Notes.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ J. Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow*, pp.29-30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.30.

¹⁹ J. Feagin, *Racist America*, p.56.

outlined the story of a newly freed black American who shouted at a white man for calling him ‘Uncle’, and told him to ‘call me Mister.’²⁰

Despite indicating that she viewed her performers in a paternalistic manner and that she followed racial conventions of the time when talking to and describing black Americans, from Lomax’s small excerpts, it is almost impossible to uncover how far her views about slavery and African Americans paralleled those of her husband. To build up a more complete picture of the influences on her work, therefore, it is important to explore the wider photographic trends that may have shaped how she depicted each performer. First, it is important to reiterate that numerous stereotypical images circulated in white culture during the 1930s, from those that presented black Americans as ‘happy-go-lucky’ and childlike to photographs that focused on black Americans as ‘noble primitives’.²¹ Furthermore, Melissa McEuen has explained that at this time, when photographers such as Dorothea Lange were starting their careers, there was a ‘burgeoning documentary tradition in the United States that encouraged writers, artists, sociologists, filmmakers, photographers and others to go out into city streets, rural highways, and fields to observe people coping with the effects of economic depression and social dislocation.’²² McEuen has emphasised that white female photographers were pioneers in this trend, as this was a socially acceptable career for women at this time. Photography had long attracted women as it provided a break-away from traditional feminine roles, for example, allowing women the independence to travel alone and direct their own artistic work.²³ Recounting Margaret Bourke White’s experience of being a photographer, McEuen contended that ‘Bourke-White reveled in the freedom and power her position afforded her, intimating early in her career to an old school chum, “I have the most thrilling job in America, I believe. I can go anywhere I want to go and meet anybody I want to meet.”’²⁴ Some of these women worked for government agencies. For example, the Resettlement Administration, which became the Farm Security Administration (FSA) in the late 1930s, employed both Dorothea Lange and Marion Post. As Cara Finnegan has observed, photography was an important

²⁰ J. Ritterhouse, *Growing Up Jim Crow*, p.29.

²¹ N. Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, pp.17-26.

²² M. McEuen, *Seeing America: Women Photographers Between the Wars* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), p.91.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.198

aspect of this agency, and Roy Emerson Stryker was hired to oversee efforts to ‘document the impact of the Depression on American life and to chronicle and publicize New Deal efforts to combat rural poverty’ through the use of this medium.²⁵

From a study of five women photographers – Doris Ulmann, Dorothea Lange, Marion Post, Margaret Bourke-White and Berenice Abbott – McEuen argued that they had various personal and political ideologies and agendas that shaped their photography. In an article on Lange’s 1936 photographs of the ‘plantation owner’ in the Mississippi delta, Kris Belden-Adams studied her agenda, writing that: ‘she wanted these images to expose the pervasive, almost subliminal, nature of this social order that the San Francisco-based photographer saw as peculiar to the South.’²⁶ Yet, Belden-Adams claimed that the images were ‘intended by her to do more than merely document socialized and systemic inequalities’; instead, ‘the oppressed subjects of Lange’s photographs were intended to inspire empowered viewers to help create an opportunity for the oppressed subjects to transcend systemic economic limitations.’²⁷ In contrast, Bourke-White travelled across the U.S. focusing more on using photography as an advertising tool, as she was interested mainly in technology and industrial change.²⁸ In 1934, as a photographer for *Fortune* magazine, she journeyed to the Dust Bowl, to capture images of the droughts. Contrasting her depiction of poverty with Lange’s, McEuen argued that ‘in the Dust Bowl series, Bourke-White failed to capture the residual strength of individuals ravaged by environmental disaster.’²⁹ Further elucidating this, she maintained that ‘whereas Dorothea Lange had illuminated what was left of human dignity amid horrible circumstances, Bourke-White focused on what had been stripped away.’³⁰ Despite these contrasting agendas and depictions, what is notable is that they all had ‘a common desire for their visual images to make a difference, serve a purpose, or influence what Americans thought about themselves or

²⁵ C. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty* p.xi. According to Finnegan, the photographers included Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Russell Lee, Arthur Rothstein, Ben Shahn, Marion Post, John Vachon and John Collier Jr.

²⁶ K. Belden-Adams, ‘Mixed Intentions and Interpretations in Dorothea Lange’s *Plantation Owner, Mississippi Delta Photographs*’, *Southern Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the South*, 24.1(2017), p.4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.5.

²⁸ M. McEuen, *Seeing America*, p.198.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.234.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

other people.’³¹ Throughout, this chapter explores Lomax’s images in relation to these wider genres of photography, visual tropes and photographs produced by other white female photographers, to understand more about the influences on her depiction of each formerly enslaved individual.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.1.

Lomax's Portrait Photographs



Figure 7.1: Alice ('Judge') Richardson, Natchez, Mississippi, at her Daughter's Home, October 18, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x.125 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2015645808/> [accessed 24.10.17].

Figure 7.1 is of Alice ‘Judge’ Richardson, a 92-year-old formerly enslaved woman who lived in Natchez, Mississippi. Lomax took this image on October 18 or October 19, 1940, the day after John Lomax recorded her singing a number of religious songs. Explaining the process of recording and photographing, Lomax wrote in a letter to her family that ‘for two hours Judge sang spirituals and prayed and talked and ‘moaned’ until suddenly she left us. She noticed that it was growing dark; she had left her house open and must see to the safety of her possessions.’³² She also claimed that ‘I returned the next morning to take her picture. She received me cordially and asked me when we would come again.’³³

Alongside detailing when the photograph was taken, this short passage shows that Lomax saw the creation of these images as important for the project. This was not simply an added extra to the expedition, or a hobby for her, but was important enough to warrant her returning to see Richardson the next day for this purpose. Second, it suggests that Lomax revisited Richardson alone, and captured the photograph without any direct influence from her husband. Lastly, we know that on the day that Richardson was photographed, Lomax had met her at least once before. Lomax also implied that they had a comfortable relationship when she wrote that ‘she received me cordially and asked me when we would come again.’³⁴ Of course, since Lomax was a white woman, and almost a stranger, Richardson’s polite demeanour does not necessarily mean that she was at ease with Lomax, but was more likely playing a role dictated to her by white society. Despite this, the letter importantly gives us an impression of how Lomax felt about the encounter with Richardson.

Moving to analyse the image itself, Richardson is sitting in a chair, with her hands in her lap, slightly to the side of the camera shot. She looks straight at the camera, and has a pipe in her mouth. Richardson is wearing a dress or apron, draped around her, and her clothing is old and tattered. She is in a backyard; to the right of her is another smaller broken chair, on the floor are some broken wooden slats, and what looks like a plumbing system is behind her. This photograph visually depicts the dilapidated nature of Richardson’s house and clothing, and by photographing Richardson to the side of a

³² Alice Richardson, John Lomax Field Notes.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

damaged chair with haphazard wooden slats behind her, Lomax made a specific decision to frame the photograph to document this poverty.

To explain why she chose to create the image in this way, it is firstly important to analyse this photograph in relation to the field notes and sound recording that Lomax intended the image to illustrate. Visual historians, such as Rose, contend that it is vital that images are analysed in relation to the written texts that accompany them. Although they are not reducible to these related objects and texts, they nevertheless ‘always make sense’ in relation to them.³⁵ In a letter to her family, Lomax described that ‘the house, whose walls are lined with newspapers, is ramshakled [sic] and mussy rather than dirty; her clothes are shabby, held together with huge safety pins; when I first saw her she had on no shoes and her stockings had only half a foot left.’³⁶ Analysing the image in relation to this description thus shows that Lomax may have simply been attempting to document the situation that she viewed in front of her. At this time, documentary photography was popular as many people believed that photographs could present the ‘truth’ about social conditions. Unpacking this idea, Finnegan explained that ‘according to the rhetoric of documentary, the photograph could serve as direct evidence of what the camera had seen, and thus the image could convey ‘truths’ otherwise obscured by politics or fantasy.’³⁷

The way in which Lomax framed this picture, however, echoes aspects of different politically motivated photography genres – FSA images, eugenicist photographs and anthropological visuals – but does not conform entirely to any one style. For example, like Lomax’s image of Richardson, numerous photographers at the time were focusing upon picturing those who lived in poverty. Some, such as New Deal Agency photographers, were attempting to present their sitters as needing welfare, whilst eugenicists utilised images of destitution to present their subjects as ‘undeserving’ and ‘inferior’ to further their racialised agenda. Writing about these contrasting public attitudes towards the poor, Finnegan emphasised this perceived difference, writing that there was ‘a pervasive distinction between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor, a

³⁵ G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies*, p.22.

³⁶ Alice Richardson, John Lomax Field Notes.

³⁷ C. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty*, p.xiv.

marginalization of the ‘pauper’ as a lazy, often dangerous member of the underclass, and the dominance of the work ethic as a moral and civil duty.’³⁸

FSA photographers framed their images to present a specific message; they wanted to document the poverty that many rural farmers were living in to justify the FSA’s welfare and resettlement policies. Describing this agenda, historian Sue Currell claimed that ‘for the FSA photographers, capturing poverty and squalid living conditions was intended to support the application of welfare and the transition to security and modernity, rather than to establish categories of the deserving or undeserving poor.’³⁹ For example, in 1936, writer James Agee was given a project by *Fortune* magazine to write about the life of a white sharecropper family, ‘addressing the central issues of the day – unemployment and work’, including the different efforts by government agencies to deal with this issue.⁴⁰ He asked Walker Evans, who had worked for the FSA, to photographically illustrate this project. This article became the longer, well-known book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, which provided illustrated stories about three sharecropper families. Discussing the message of this book Jeff Rosenheim, who was a curator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, stated that ‘by insinuating themselves into the lives of three dirt-poor farm families, the authors ask the reader to look straight at the wretchedness and suffering of life.’⁴¹ Further to this, he reasoned that ‘the reader feels complicit in the palpable misery of the subjects as well as in the authors’ act of intellectual and physical trespass.’⁴² Evans achieved this through a number of framing devices and Rosenheim noted, for example, that he focused upon the ragged clothing that the children wore in the photographs.⁴³ Newspapers, magazines, government agencies and museums all reproduced similar FSA photographs, suggesting that Lomax also saw these visual depictions whilst she was a photographer.⁴⁴

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.8

³⁹ S. Currell, ‘You Haven’t Seen Their Faces: Eugenic National Housekeeping and Documentary Photography in 1930s America’, *Journal of American Studies*, 51.2 (2017), p.486.

⁴⁰ J. Rosenheim, “‘The Cruel Radiance of What is’: Walker Evans and the South’ in M Hambourg, J. Rosenheim, D. Eklund and M. Fineman (eds.), *Walker Evans* (Princeton: The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Princeton University Press, 2001), p.87.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.92

⁴⁴ C. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty*, p.xvii.

Eugenicists also emphasised ragged clothing and dilapidated housing in their photographs, but did so as part of a racialised project to present black Americans and ‘others’, namely eastern European immigrants, the disabled, and those with mental health conditions, as ‘degenerate’, ‘undeserving’ and ‘inferior’. As Devon Stillwell detailed, ‘the social, political, and medico-scientific movement of eugenics arose in the United States in response to late nineteenth century concerns about the health of the “American race” (read: white Anglo-Saxon Protestants), which was allegedly under siege by immigrants, criminals and the “feebleminded.”’⁴⁵ As she explained, visual culture was highly important in conveying the message of eugenics, including photography of both white and black Americans.⁴⁶ Currell explored the use of visuals in the eugenics movement in an article about a group of images of white families in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Analysing *Mongrel Virginians*, a eugenicist case-study that was circulated in the mass media in the mid-1920s, she commented that ‘photographs showing isolated, dirty and deteriorated residences – often in a state of collapse – accompanied the text to illustrate that occupants were feebleminded and could not look after their property, justifying eugenicists’ demand for segregation and sterilization.’⁴⁷

Lomax’s image of Richardson, however, does not fit entirely into either style. If I contrast Evans’ photographs with the portrait of Richardson, a difference is evident. Although Evans’ series of portraits documented the poverty that these families lived in, he often focused upon the ordered and clean nature of his subjects’ houses. Rosenheim recounted that Evans was ‘stunned’ by one of his sitters home; ‘watching her work with the simple broom kept in the kitchen corner, he mused that everything in the cabin “might be licked with the tongue and made scarcely cleaner.”’⁴⁸ Accordingly, Rosenheim noted that ‘this absolute clarity is evident in Evans’s photographs of the kitchen.’⁴⁹ In contrast, Lomax angled the image so that the broken chair was included, presenting Richardson’s home neither as neat nor tidy, and depicting her as incapable of looking after her house. This perhaps suggests that in contrast to the FSA photographers’ depictions of ‘deserving’ white families, Lomax was imitating the more

⁴⁵ D. Stillwell, ‘Eugenics Visualized: The Exhibit of the Third International Congress of Eugenics, 1932’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 86.2 (2012), p.210.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.208-210.

⁴⁷ S. Currell, ‘You Haven’t Seen Their Faces’, p.485.

⁴⁸ J. Rosenheim, “‘The Cruel Radiance of What is’”, p.92.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

racialised eugenicist photography that used photographs of extreme poverty to display the ‘degenerate’ nature of black Americans and ‘others’. Yet, in her corresponding letter about Richardson, Lomax does not present Richardson as entirely ‘undeserving’, and thus the image should not be interpreted as entirely mimicking this eugenicist photography. In this piece of writing, she did not describe her as lazy or unclean, instead labelling the house as ‘ramshakled [sic] and mussy rather than dirty.’⁵⁰

Despite not entirely conforming to either genre of ‘poverty’ photography, her image does present Richardson, in part, as an ‘other’. The photograph suggests a rigid version of social and racial categories by presenting Richardson as very separate from the viewer. Lomax achieves this through angling the photograph so that anyone viewing the image looks down at Richardson sat in her chair. Significantly, this contrasts with the angle of Evans’ portrait of Bud Fields, a white sharecropper of a similar age to Richardson. In comparison to Lomax’s placement of the camera to situate Richardson below eye level, Evans ensured that the viewer must look up at Fields in a mark of respect, as according to Rosenheim, Evans affectionately commented that he was ‘the shrewdest and wisest’ and ‘a sort of father to us.’⁵¹ In presenting Richardson as beneath the photographer, but as the central element of the photograph, this image also echoes some elements of the anthropological photographs commissioned by Louis Agassiz in the mid- nineteenth century, produced to ‘prove’ the inferiority of black Americans. In 1850, for example, Joseph Zealy photographed seven enslaved persons from South Carolina as ‘types’ or ‘specimens’ to prove Agassiz’s theory about the anatomical and physiological differences between races. At this time, according to Mandy Reid, both racial science and photography were equated with the idea of truth, and ‘early photography and racial science functioned as mutually authorizing epistemologies that capitalized on their implicit value-free authenticity to impute value judgements about their black subjects.’⁵² Accordingly, Zealy and Agassiz framed the photographs to visualise social differences and categories; the enslaved subjects were the focus of the image, placed stripped to the waste or naked, looking directly at the camera.

⁵⁰ Alice Richardson, John Lomax Field Notes.

⁵¹ J. Rosenheim, “‘The Cruel Radiance of What is’”, p.91.

⁵² M. Reid, ‘Selling Shadows and Substance’, p.287.

By photographing Richardson in a chair, staring at the camera, and the main focus of the photograph, Lomax's photograph invokes a similar perception of the 'specimen' and, in turn, 'otherness'. In her study of Agassiz's images, Molly Rogers argued that anthropological photography changed and progressed in the twentieth century. At this point 'ethnic type was no longer to be found exclusively in the "physical characters" of a person, but could also be found in his or her "life and habit."' ⁵³ This new type of anthropological photograph would show the subject in 'native costume and perhaps engaged in some traditional occupation.' ⁵⁴ As Richardson is pictured in her own surroundings, and the photograph does not just focus on her body but on the yard she is seated in, her image more accurately echoes this new type of genre of 'life and habit' anthropological photography. The inclusion of the pipe adds to this sense of the anthropological nature of the photograph, through presenting a type of 'native costume.' Again, however, Lomax's image is not as explicit and extreme in its portrayal of difference and otherness as these anthropological images, as Richardson is not presented naked, nor is her image used as part of a wider set of photographs to 'prove' the difference between races.

From exploring the series of photographs that Lomax captured in 1940 that this chapter discusses below, it is, in fact, fairly evident that she was not attempting to show Richardson as a 'type', 'specimen' or subject as Agassiz and others did. Whilst the photo undoubtedly reflects some racialised visual conventions used by others to present inferiority, primitiveness and 'otherness', this image more accurately incorporates elements of the 'black-as-extreme-victim' genre of photograph that Natanson claimed pervaded in the 1930s. ⁵⁵ In contrast to the explicitly racist underpinnings of Agassiz's anthropological images, left-leaning photographers often produced these 'victim' depictions. To illustrate this genre of photography, Natanson provided the example of Margaret Bourke White and Erskine Caldwell's photographic collection *You Have Seen Their Faces*. In this book, Bourke pictured black Americans, more so than the white people she photographed, 'lying, sprawling, crouching, kneeling, huddling' while 'camera angles and lighting accentuate the hopelessly distorted.' ⁵⁶ This, Natanson

⁵³ M. Rogers, *Delia's Tears*, pp.287-88

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.287.

⁵⁵ N. Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, p.24.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.26.

argued, created ‘visions of the pathetic’ which ‘reinforce[d] customary relationships between the powerful and the powerless.’⁵⁷ This ‘victim’ trope stands in contrast to Evans’ portraits and Agee’s writings about ‘deserving’ poor whites in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. According to literary theorist Janet Holtman, Agee made his own distinction between his work and these images that presented black Americans as victims, by labelling the portraits in *You Have Seen Their Faces* as ‘sensational, condescending and brutal.’⁵⁸

In a similar way to the photographs in *You Have Seen Their Faces*, the camera angle, dilapidated surroundings and Richardson’s vacant stare combine to present a picture of vulnerability, frailty and poverty. By choosing to capture Richardson seated, the viewer is invited to question whether she is too frail to stand. Other photographs exist that have similar content to this one, but the photographer does not frame the image to emphasise such vulnerability. For example, Doris Ulmann’s photograph of a Gullah woman with a pipe, captured in the 1930s, depicts an elderly black American woman seated (perhaps on a window sill) with her hands in her lap and a pipe in her mouth.⁵⁹ She is staring to the side and slightly upturns her mouth to hold the pipe in place. Despite the similarities between the two photographs in terms of subject and content, Lomax’s framing of her photograph to include the run-down yard and clothes, and Richardson’s vacant but direct stare, presents a level of vulnerability that Ulmann’s photograph of the elderly black woman does not imply. Thus, perhaps Lomax was attempting to elicit sympathy from the viewers of this image for the plight of Richardson by documenting, and emphasising, her situation of poverty. In turn, however, this reinforced a power/powerless dichotomy in this portrait, and visually reflects the infantilised and paternalistic way in which Lomax viewed Richardson and the other formerly enslaved people she encountered on this expedition.

This analysis has focused upon how Lomax framed this image, yet the production of this photograph was a two-way encounter. It is important to question how Richardson experienced this power dynamic at the encounter and how she presented herself within

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ J. Holtman, ““White Trash” in Literary History: The Social Interventions of Erskine Caldwell and James Agee”, *American Studies*, 53.2 (2014), p.42.

⁵⁹ J. Peterkin, *Roll Jordan Roll*, p.161.

the picture. Focusing specifically on the emotion within the image aids in this examination, as Richardson does not display an obvious emotional expression or posture. Of course, emotional expressions are not self-evident and can be hard to recognise in others. Yet, in this photograph the viewer cannot read Richardson's emotions at all, as her eyes seem vacant, staring at the camera with little expression. This facial expression is again similar to Agassiz's photograph of an enslaved woman named Delia. Molly Rogers analysed Delia's emotion in this image, and argued that 'there was something else, something about the woman, that was difficult to pin down. She was both "there" and "not there."' ⁶⁰ To explain this, Rogers noted that 'physically she was fully exposed, every detail of her upper body on display and minutely recorded by the camera, but at the same time there was a complete lack of emotional presence in her picture ... Most unsettling were her eyes, which gazed out from the picture unflinchingly but were blurred in an otherwise sharp image, as if filled with tears.' ⁶¹ Of course, Richardson is not naked, and is not as exposed as Delia. Yet, her whole body and 'life' is on display, and her eyes communicate no emotional presence.

Rogers, in her study, demonstrated how difficult it is to gain access to the experiences of those who Zealey photographed. Describing the image of Delia, she observed that 'to write Delia – not just write about her, but to write her experiences, to write what she saw, to let her speak for herself – is strictly speaking not possible. History does not reach to that place. But to imagine what she saw, this can be done.' ⁶² Rogers suggested that historians cannot gain access to the experiences of the slaves who Agassiz photographed, but that it is important to acknowledge their humanity in the face of those who considered them merely 'racial types'. She proposed that historians utilise Toni Morrison's example of moving 'between what can be known for certain and acts of imagination, the actual and the possible.' ⁶³ Thus, Rogers' study is based heavily upon archival work but she also 'approached the material imaginatively in an effort to fill some gaps in the record and to situate Delia and the other people who were photographed centrally in this story' using the words of formerly enslaved autobiographers, for example. ⁶⁴ She begins each chapter with an imaginative piece of

⁶⁰ M. Rogers, *Delia's Tears*, p.6

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.xxiv.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.xxv.

writing from each subject's perspective. For example, writing from Delia's point of view, she imagined her experience of the photographing session, of her being told to 'please hold still' and of how 'she tried, she tried to be still, but the sun blinded and the shadows beckoned and she wanted to be invisible so that neither would matter.'⁶⁵ After imagining the photographer directing Delia to not move, she then wrote that 'she felt herself disappear.'⁶⁶ Thus, Rogers imagined that Delia's emotionless stare reflected her wish to be obscure and to fade away.

In contrast to Rogers' attempt to recover Delia's subjectivity, Tina Campt contended that to uncover the subject's experience, including the tension between pride and vulnerability that is often seen in vernacular photographs, historians must 'listen' to the images, focusing on the stillness in such photographs. She explained that 'listening to images is constituted as a practice of looking beyond what we see and attuning our senses to the other affective frequencies through which photographs register.'⁶⁷ Historians must acknowledge that the quiet or stillness in the faces and postures of the sitters are a performance; 'what appears to be motionlessness is, in fact, a tense and effortful placement.'⁶⁸ Furthering this argument, she noted that scholars should read any stillness in photographs through the lens of 'statis' which she defined as 'effortful *equilibrium* achieved through a labored balancing of opposing forces and flows', with these forces, or tensions, being social, historical, political and visual.⁶⁹ Reading Richardson's vacant and still facial expression using this concept of 'statis' in turn highlights that this was not simply an unconscious silence or vulnerability, but a performance. Richardson had to balance opposing forces and tensions that were framing the photographic situation to create this emotionless expression.

As Richardson also spoke to John Lomax and this was recorded, it is also possible to gain an understanding of these forces or tensions. Most notably here, John Lomax's feeling rules that he forced upon his performers was a factor, or 'opposing force', that could influence how the elderly black Americans acted at this related photography

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.4

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ T. Campt, *Listening to Images*, p.9.

⁶⁸ T. Campt, 'Performing Stillness: Diaspora and Statis in Black German Vernacular Photography', *Qui Parle*, 26.1 (2017), p.157.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.158-159.

session, even if he was not present. Reading Richardson's vacant emotional stare as a performance with an understanding of some of the forces at play during her encounter with Ruby Lomax thus highlights a possible act of resistance and self-fashioning on Richardson's part. When being photographed by Lomax, she refused to present any emotion and thus play to John Lomax's wider feeling rules. Camppt has examined a similar type of refusal in relation to photographs of black Germans in the 1920s and 1930s, in which she interprets the stillness or 'statis' in this portrait photography as a 'refusal to recognize an ideology that refused them: the ideology of racial purity and German homogeneity.'⁷⁰ Similarly, Richardson's facial expression may well be read as what Camppt terms an 'act of refusal' to play to the dominant emotional rules of both John Lomax and wider Jim Crow society. Thus, 'listening' to Richardson's stillness of emotional expression, through the lens of 'statis', helps to uncover the 'delicate labor of balancing the multiple forces and flows' that she had to engage in to reach such stillness, which came with being a formerly enslaved person who was photographed by a white woman in this era of segregation.⁷¹

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.163.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.168

Lomax's Family Photographs



Figure 7.2: Uncle Joe McDonald, Aunt Mollie McDonald, and daughter Janie McDonald, near Livingston, Alabama, November 3, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2015645827/> [accessed 24.10.17]



Figure 7.3: Aunt Harriett McClintock at her home near Sumterville, Alabama, with great grandchildren, November 3, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007660084/> [accessed 24.10.17]



Figure 7.4: Uncle Bob Ledbetter, with group of his 'great-grands' at his granddaughter's home, Mooringsport, Louisiana, October 10, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007660078> [accessed 24.10.17]

The images that Lomax captured of three formerly enslaved performers alongside members of their family do not replicate the poverty, vulnerability and victimhood that Lomax implied in Richardson's photograph. Instead, the elderly black Americans, their children and grandchildren all stand in a range of poses and stances and present numerous emotional expressions. In Figure 7.2, Joe and Mary (Mollie) McDonald are photographed standing up with their daughter Janie McDonald, with Mary on one side and Joe on the other. Mary McDonald looks at the camera, as does her daughter. The picture does not seem necessarily natural or comfortable; Joe and Mary McDonald both stand awkwardly with their hands by their sides. They do not present an obvious emotional expression as they are neither frowning nor smiling, but they also do not stare at the camera in a vacant way as Richardson did. The expressions and stances in Harriett McClintock's family photograph (Figure 7.3) are similar to the McDonald's. McClintock stands holding a young grandchild, and next to her are two other small grandchildren. Both of these children stand in fairly formal poses; the smaller boy has his hands behind his back, whilst the older girl has her hands in front, clasped together. McClintock and all of the children are looking straight at the camera, but again, no specific emotional expression is discernible.

The families' emotional expressions in both of these photographs contrast starkly with the feelings that they presented in their performance to John Lomax. During the recording of both McClintock and the McDonalds, John Lomax enforced a strict emotional etiquette by telling the McDonalds to laugh in their recordings, asking leading questions to McClintock about the fun she had during slavery, and ensuring that they sang happy, up-beat songs.⁷² Throughout the McDonalds' performance in 1939, John Lomax prompted them to laugh and listeners can also hear this expression throughout their 1940 recording. McClintock, too, can be heard laughing in her interaction with Lomax and she continuously sang up-beat songs whilst describing her positive memories of her childhood in bondage. In turn, John Lomax presented a picture of the elderly African Americans' personas as overly positive and childlike within these recordings. Ruby Lomax however, did not direct the formerly enslaved in her images to present this positive and simplistic emotional character. In complete contrast, the

⁷² Joe and Mary McDonald, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 30th, 1940; Joe and Mary McDonald, interviewed by J. Lomax, May 27th, 1939; Harriett McClintock, interviewed by J. Lomax, October 29th 1940.

formerly enslaved performers appear standing awkwardly and uncomfortably. The two families' tense poses undoubtedly reveal the power at play during the photographic process, particularly in contrast to the relaxed poses of Turner's subjects that were analysed in the previous chapter. Their stances reveal that Lomax likely directed each individual, in a paternalistic manner, to stand in these neat formations and with their hands clasped by their sides in a respectable pose. She did not, however, overtly position her subjects to adhere to her husband's 'happy-go-lucky' stereotypical narrative.

Similarly, Bob Ledbetter did not adhere to the smiling stereotype in his family photograph (Figure 7.4). Instead, he stands in a particularly strong, dignified and confident pose in this shot. Ledbetter showed this confidence through his stance; in the photograph, his grandchildren surround him and he stands in front of them, one foot slightly to the side, posing with a walking stick. His hat covers his eyes, and he looks away from the camera. Ledbetter's decision to stand in this way is particularly significant given white hostility towards confident displays of black masculinity in the Jim Crow era. Under Reconstruction, despite some attempts to limit black political involvement, black men were able to undertake political leadership roles. In a backlash to this during the final decade of the nineteenth century, however, Gilmore has argued that the 'New White Man' emerged, a group of middle-class white men who 'embraced the racialization of manhood'.⁷³ Manhood, in their eyes, was encompassed by the ability to vote, have sexual choice and inhabit freedom in the public sphere, and was only for the white man.⁷⁴ When black men gained the freedom of public space – such as black soldiers during the Spanish American/Cuban War – and further displayed confidence and happiness whilst doing it, white Americans were not only hostile, but subjected them to extreme physical violence. Any displays of black masculinity, such as by these soldiers, were framed by whites in print to present the African American men in both an infantilized and animalistic way.⁷⁵ Thus, Ledbetter's presentation of himself with pride and confidence in this photograph created by a Jim Crow era white

⁷³ G. Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p.61

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.64.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.78-82.

photographer must be emphasised, considering the denial of, and hostility towards, black 'masculine' traits and political and personal rights in this era.

Although Ruby Lomax framed and directed the images to some extent, as the arranged poses of the children in a number of these images indicate, it is significant that she did not prompt the formerly enslaved subjects to smile or laugh as her husband did. Lomax could have easily directed each individual to present an exaggerated smile when she took their picture, as images of black Americans with this expression were widely circulated in magazines at this time. Describing the development of this smiling trope, professor of art Tanya Sheehan noted that in the postbellum era and into the early twentieth century 'photographers began producing commercial photographs by the tens of thousands in which black sitters bare their teeth for the camera.'⁷⁶ This stood in contrast to the expected expressions of white Americans. In mid-nineteenth century photographic literature, photographers instructed white sitters to close their mouths to construct a respectable facial expression. Famous photographer Marcus Aurelius Root, for example, explained that a closed mouth showed 'a consistency and evenness of temper.'⁷⁷ The commercial images of smiling black Americans therefore presented them in contrast to respectable and restrained white subjects. Furthermore, they played on stereotypes of black American character as inherently childlike by highlighting that the black Americans sitters 'refuse[d] to (or simply cannot) contain their emotions, suggesting that they may not be easily contained and controlled by white society.'⁷⁸

In comparison to the highly directed recordings of her husband, Lomax documented aspects of the former slaves' living arrangements and character that she noticed during their meetings. As Richardson's image visually depicted the poverty that was described in her field notes, the awkward poses of the McDonalds and dignified stance of Ledbetter correspond to character traits that the Lomaxes described in relation to them, but that do not come across in the recordings. For example, in the field note about the McDonalds the Lomaxes explained that before they started to sing, laugh and shout when being recorded, they were self-conscious and embarrassed to perform, but 'as they chatted about which one should sing which song all embarrassment and diffidence

⁷⁶ T. Sheehan, 'Looking Pleasant, Feeling White', p.142.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p.129.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.142.

soon vanished.⁷⁹ This shyness can be seen in the image that she produced. Similarly, Ledbetter was described as ‘intelligent, possessing natural dignity and poise’ in the notes about him, and again these are traits that can be seen within the photograph.⁸⁰ This pride was, however, lost in the overall impression of his character in the recording, as John Lomax presented him in an almost infantilised and childlike way through continually, and aggressively, prompting him to sing in different ways.

Perhaps, then, these images should more accurately be seen as examples of vernacular photography. Exploring this genre, Campt utilised Brian Wallis’ definition of vernacular photography as ‘banal photographs, often recorded by the most ordinary photographers, small-town studio operators, professional photographers on assignment, dads with cameras in the backyard.’⁸¹ Continuing to describe this genre, Campt quoted Wallis as stating that ‘one hallmark of these vernacular photographs is that they belie no apparent aesthetic ambition other than to record what passes in front of their camera with reasonable fidelity.’⁸² From the range of emotions and stances that are in her photographs (that also often correspond to other writings about each person) it seems that instead of managing the situation to present a stereotypical picture of black Americans, Lomax tried to record what was before her – the poverty of Alice Richardson, the McDonalds’ embarrassment and Ledbetter’s pride.

This range of emotional expressions that the formerly enslaved people presented when Lomax photographed them also highlights that they experienced the recording situation and photographic session in different ways. Although it is extremely difficult to explore how the elderly black Americans experienced this situation, what Richardson’s emotional vulnerability, Ledbetter’s pride and the McDonalds’ tense expressions all suggest is that the formerly enslaved men and women did not have to perform to the same emotional etiquette as when they were recorded by her husband. In turn, they did not have to engage in the same level of emotional labour, as they did not have to manage their feelings or perform to the same extent. Of course, we cannot discount the power dynamics at play when Lomax took the photographs of her subjects, and the everyday

⁷⁹ Joe and Mary (Mollie) McDonald, John Lomax Field Notes.

⁸⁰ Bob Ledbetter, John Lomax Field Notes.

⁸¹ Brian Wallis quoted in T. Campt, *Image Matters*, p.8.

⁸² *Ibid.*

emotional etiquette that black Americans had to adhere to in the presence of white people. The tense poses of the McClintocks' and McDonalds' reveal this. Yet, they did not have to perform the same happy and up-beat emotions that they did when in the presence of her husband.

Furthermore, the formerly enslaved performers were not passive within this photographic situation. When exploring their experience in front of the lens, it is important to acknowledge Camp't's argument that 'the social life of the photo includes the intentions of both sitters and photographers as reflected in their decisions to take particular kind of pictures.'⁸³ Furthermore, she argued that analysing images 'also involves reflecting historically on what those images say about who these individuals aspired to be; how they wanted to be seen; what they sought to represent and articulate through them; and what they attempted or intended to project and portray.'⁸⁴ In Ledbetter's image, it seems fairly evident in his pose that he wanted the viewer to see him as proud and dignified and wished to articulate this message through this family portrait. Not only was he participating in an 'act of refusal', as Camp't terms it, through rejecting the emotional etiquette enforced by John Lomax during the wider encounter, but was also defying wider stereotypes of black American character that posited black Americans as lazy, emotional, violent and dangerous.

Ledbetter was also making a distinct statement about his place within his family by presenting this dignified stance in front of his grandchildren. Analysing a large set of family photographs of black Europeans from the early twentieth century, Camp't emphasised that historians must view these images as 'sites of *articulation* and *aspiration*; as personal and social statements that express how ordinary individuals envisioned their sense of self, their subjectivity, and their social status.'⁸⁵ Focusing specifically upon an image of the Ngando family taken in Hamburg in 1920, where a black father stands at the back and to the side of his white wife and children, Camp't argued that historians must read this image in relation to two contextual pieces of information. It must be analysed alongside the personal experience of migration of this

⁸³ T. Camp't, *Image Matters*, p.6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.7

family and within the ideological context of the time; as ‘a refusal to recognize an ideology that refused them: the ideology of racial purity and German homogeneity.’⁸⁶

In a similar way, it is vital that when historians scrutinise Ledbetter’s image, they acknowledge the personal experiences of black families in the U.S. and wider narratives about their family units that developed across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During the era of slavery enslavers sold children away from mothers and fathers, tore siblings apart and forced spouses to live on separate slaveholdings.⁸⁷ Photographs reflected this situation, as images of black families from this era are scarce. Instead, black Americans were only included in photographs when at the edges of white family photographs, as house servants or ‘mammys’.⁸⁸ Considering the position of black Americans in these photographs, Marcus Wood noted that ‘the familial photographic archive is, in the context of slavery, an agonizing and agonistic space to negotiate’ because ‘the slaves occupy peculiar and liminal spaces within this virtual family.’⁸⁹ As Ledbetter is a formerly enslaved man, it is undoubtedly important to view his family photograph within this wider context of familial separations under slavery. This longer history of the violence inflicted upon black families makes his articulation of dignity and pride in his stance, at the front of his family, even more significant.

Furthermore, during the 1930s and 1940s professional historians were also discussing the place of black men within the family. Edward Frazier for example, wrote *The Negro Family in the United States* which was published a year before these photographs were captured. In this, Frazier questioned the nature of the black family, arguing that women headed a large proportion of black families because emancipation had a disrupting effect on their family units.⁹⁰ Such a focus on the matriarchal nature of the family continued well into the 1960s, when Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s report *The Negro Family* argued that ‘the negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure, which, because it is so out of line with the rest of American society, seriously retards

⁸⁶ T. Campt, ‘Performing Stillness’, p.163.

⁸⁷ For an interesting discussion of the emotional consequences of separation see H. Williams, *Help Me to Find My People*.

⁸⁸ M. Wood, *Black Milk*, p.194.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.195.

⁹⁰ E. Frazier, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 316.

the progress of a group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male.’⁹¹ Alongside Moynihan, Gunnar Myrdal and Stanley Elkins argued, according to R. King, that ‘black culture was “pathological”’ and highlighted ‘the effects of capitalist modernization as the most important historical context for explaining the nature of African American life.’⁹² It is highly unlikely that Ledbetter was making a deliberate stand against the arguments made specifically by Frazier in this photograph, yet such narratives and stereotypes about the black family were undoubtedly circulating in both public and academic circles at this time. Viewed in the context of this pervasive societal undermining of the black family and men’s position within it, Ledbetter’s presentation of himself in this picture – proudly stood by his grandchildren – could therefore be viewed as both an act of articulation and refusal to adhere to a dominant ideology that stripped him of his ‘masculine’ pride and traditional male role at the head of his family.

Thus, the range of emotions and stances presented by the African American families in these photographs, and Richardson’s portrait, suggest that Ruby Lomax was not directing them in order to present any specific narrative about their character within the images. Whilst she framed the photograph of Richardson to emphasise the poverty she lived in, she did not direct any other individual to convey such a narrative. In contrast to her husband who shaped the recording situation in an attempt to portray slavery as benevolent and black Americans as happy-go-lucky and childlike, Lomax documented aspects of the formerly enslaved performers’ living arrangements and character that were described in the field notes - Richardson’s poverty, Ledbetter’s dignity and McDonalds’ embarrassment - but were not evident within the recordings. As such, at this particular moment of the larger encounter the former slaves did not have to engage in the same level of emotional management, being able to display their own character traits and at times, articulate their own vision of themselves that counteracted popular stereotypical depictions of black Americans from this time.

⁹¹ D. Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 1965). P.29.

⁹² R. King, ‘Domination and Fabrication: Re-thinking Stanley Elkins’ Slavery’, *Slavery and Abolition* 22.2 (2001), p.5.

Lomax's Snapshots



Figure 7.5: Uncle Billy McCrea, sitting in his Yard, Jasper Texas, September 30, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007660042/> [accessed 24.10.17]

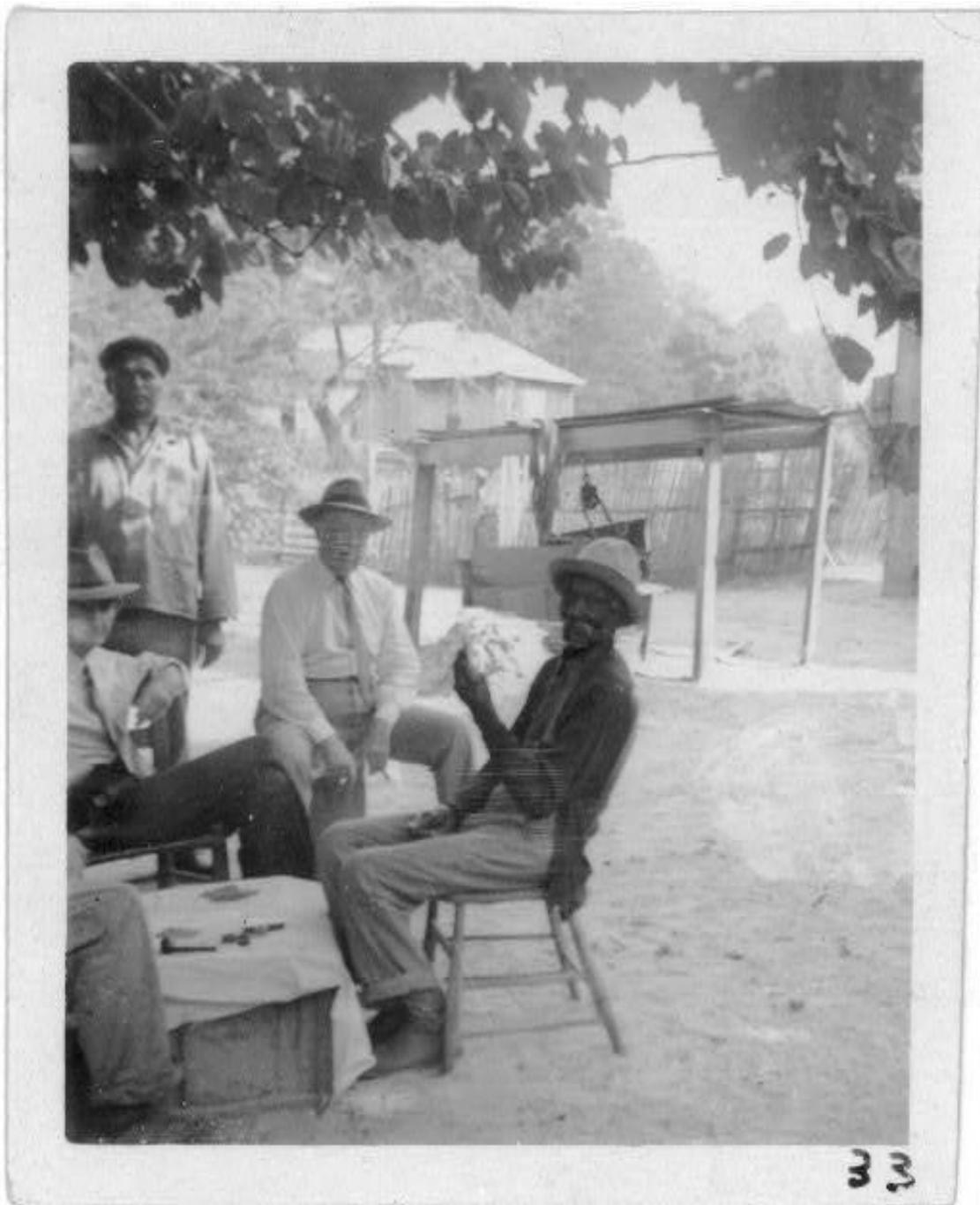


Figure 7.6: Uncle Billy McCrea, (right), with John A. Lomax (center), and friends at Billy's home in Jasper, Texas, September 30, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2007660043/> [accessed 24.10.17]



Figure 7.7: Uncle Billy McCrea, Jasper, Texas, standing at his well, September 30, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at
<<https://www.loc.gov/item/2015647534/>> [accessed 24.10.17]

Alongside portraits and family photographs, Lomax also captured a number of images that are less formal and appear to be a ‘snapshot’, rather than focused entirely on a posed individual or group. Billy McCrea was the subject of three images, taken on his first meeting with the Lomaxes. John Lomax described this encounter in his field notes, in which he wrote that ‘we found him seated in a split bottom chair in the front of his cabin.’⁹³ After this, Lomax explained that ‘my friend went away and Uncle Billy and I talked long after the sun had hidden behind the big trees that shaded his place from the evening sun.’⁹⁴ On this occasion, the Lomaxes did not record McCrea, as the notes detail that he performed in a hotel and not in the yard where Ruby Lomax took his photograph.⁹⁵

McCrea’s stance, pose and expression are different to any of the other formerly enslaved sitters; he does not appear vulnerable, tense, awkward or proud. For example, Figure 7.5 shows McCrea to the left of the shot, seated on a chair. To the right of him is a low table, and there is another person’s leg to the right of this. McCrea sits under a tree, and in front of a fence. He is dressed fairly smartly, with a shirt buttoned to the top, braces and a hat. He does not stare at the camera, but looks down as if in the middle of speaking. Similarly to the photograph of Alice Richardson, McCrea is seated, and Lomax photographed him at an angle so that the viewer of the image looks down at him. Yet, in contrast to Richardson’s photograph, this image does not mimic aspects of the anthropological genre. McCrea does not appear as a ‘subject’ as the inclusion of half of another person in the shot makes the photograph seem less posed. His unfocused expression and appearance of talking suggests that Lomax captured this image at an un-contrived moment. Furthermore, she did not frame the photograph to elicit sympathy or highlight the poverty he lived in; McCrea is well-dressed, pictured in a well-kept yard, and shown in conversation with white men.

McCrea’s stance in his other photographs similarly contrasts with the posed, anthropological portrait of Richardson, and the family images that include members in proud or awkward poses. For example, Lomax captured another image of McCrea next to the table, but from a different angle (Figure 7.6.) This time it is a group shot, showing

⁹³ Billy McCrea, John Lomax Field Notes.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

McCrea, John Lomax and three other men around the small table. They are to the left of the shot, so the viewer can see more of the large yard that they are in. Picturing McCrea alongside Lomax and other white men, two of whom sit alongside him, presents McCrea as an equal and not as an ‘other’, as Richardson’s photograph implies. McCrea looks particularly at ease in Figure 7.7, in which he is pictured standing, holding a mug, next to the structure that appears in the previous photographs. In this image, he looks straight at the camera and appears to be smiling naturally, an emotional expression that contrasts starkly with any of the facial expressions presented in the family portraits taken by Ruby Lomax.

It is possible to probe McCrea’s facial expression further by utilising Campt’s concept of ‘listening’ to an image. Campt has argued that when white photographers created images of black Europeans, the sitters had to balance various forces that often resulted in visible muscular tension in their facial expressions.⁹⁶ For example, examining a set of ethnographic photographs taken in South Africa of a group of black women, Campt argued that ‘their taut demeanour is an active, tense, and expressive practice of both restraint and constraint’ and that ‘the muscular tension they display is an effortful balancing of compulsion, constraint and refusal that vibrates invisibly [sic] yet resoundingly through these images.’⁹⁷ In contrast, it is important to acknowledge that no such tension is apparent in McCrea’s expression, which suggests that he did not have to restrain or constrain his emotions.

To understand why McCrea appeared at ease, it is important to consider that throughout his photographs he appears fairly comfortable, sitting back in his chair and talking. Yet, it is in the photograph of him alone (Figure 7.7) that he looks most comfortable, suggesting it was when he was with Ruby Lomax, and not with John Lomax, that he felt freer to express himself. Whilst, of course, the way in which John Lomax directed his informants and enforced an emotional etiquette can account for McCrea’s less relaxed postures when in the presence of him, it is also possible to question whether gender played a small part in producing a more relaxed atmosphere for all of Lomax’s subjects. In relation to the collection of interviews for the WPA project, John

⁹⁶ T. Campt, *Listening to Images*, pp.57-58.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Blassingame argued that ‘generally, the stories are most revealing when the informant and the interviewer were of the same sex; black interviewers obtained more reliable information than white ones; and white women received more honest responses than white men.’⁹⁸ While this point is arguable, perhaps this project - as a combined interview and photographic encounter - adhered to the same gender stratification as the WPA interviews, and the fact that Ruby Lomax was a woman allowed for a greater ease between the photographer and those she photographed. If it is accepted that women often obtained more honest information in their interviews than men, it is possible that McCrea felt more able to present his true personality when in front of Ruby Lomax than her husband when being photographed. Whilst the main reason for this difference in atmosphere is undoubtedly the Lomaxes’ different methods when interacting with their subjects, the gendered dimensions of this encounter may have also led to this.

Indeed, alongside Lomax’s images, many female photographers at this time also managed to capture the distinct character of their sitter and present them with dignity, such as Dorothea Lange’s famous photographs of rural farmers and migrants in the U.S. Describing Lange’s photographs, McEuen stated that ‘from the desperate yet proud individuals who were her subjects, Lange created an inextricable combination that proclaimed a powerful message - she recorded personal character wrapped in adversity in order to argue that government funds could promote stability in the nation if they were distributed to people whose personal initiative and self-respect remained intact.’⁹⁹ Many people judged the images produced specifically by women as the most successful and significant to emerge from this era, due to the quality of their work. As McEuen recounted, when attempting to put together an exhibition of photographs from the New Deal era, curator Edwynn Houk ended up selecting works created mainly by women, in contrast to many exhibitions that feature male photographers more prominently. This was because they ‘offer[ed] the best and most significant images produced in photography during the twenties and thirties.’¹⁰⁰ Though it is difficult to decipher the reasons for this gendered difference, the ability of female photographers, in particular, to capture their subjects’ character and present them with dignity suggests that perhaps

⁹⁸ J. Blassingame, ‘Using the Testimony of Ex-Slaves’, pp. 487-488.

⁹⁹ M. McEuen, *Seeing America*, p.105.

¹⁰⁰ Edwynn Houk in M. McEuen, *Seeing America*, p.2.

the sitters were more at ease with the female photographers and thus gender did have an impact on what Lomax could capture during the photographic situation.

It is still important, however, to question why Lomax was willing to capture a variety of emotional expressions in her images, in contrast to her husband, particularly as she did seem to hold some stereotypical beliefs about black Americans. Her images of McCrea reinforce my suggestion that Lomax was concerned with documenting the situation she saw in front of her, and was hence not necessarily shaping it to put forward any specific narrative about African American character as her husband and Lorenzo Dow Turner did. Lomax did not frame McCrea's image, in other words, to present him as vulnerable in an attempt to elicit sympathy, as an 'other', or in a stereotypical manner as either happy-go-lucky or 'primitive'. Instead, Lomax's images of McCrea, as in the case of her other photographs of the formerly enslaved, document an aspect of his encounter with the Lomaxes that they wrote about in their description of him. The field note about McCrea explains that he 'was a bit timid of the microphone and talked and sang most freely when we were seated under the shade in front of his cabin.'¹⁰¹ This situation of sitting in front of his cabin is the scene that is shown in the first two photographs, and the ease that McCrea felt at this moment can be seen in his expressions and postures. This thus documents an aspect of the wider encounter between McCrea and the Lomaxes that listeners cannot perceive from just analysing the recordings, as McCrea does not appear comfortable when performing for John Lomax. Instead he stated that, 'I didn't want come, my voice is not good.'¹⁰²

Exploring the wider set of images that she produced on the 1940 expedition further reinforces the idea that Ruby Lomax was breaking away from John Lomax's influence, and his racialised understanding of black American character, when she simply documented the situation in front of her. In this series, there are images of white men and women standing alone or in groups in front of houses or trees, looking directly at the camera, in the same way that the elderly black Americans did. In Figures 7.8 and 7.9, for example, the two groups of children appear in strikingly similar formations, at the same angle, with a similar rural scene behind them. The emotional expressions and

¹⁰¹ Billy McCrea, John Lomax Field Notes.

¹⁰² Billy McCrea, interviewed by J. Lomax, September 30th 1940.

stances of the white sitters also echo the images of the formerly enslaved. For example, in a photograph of three white women, Mrs. Elizabeth Fulks, Mrs. Valbertina Kimball, at Mrs. Fulks, each person is looking directly at the camera and smiling.¹⁰³ Similarly to the images of former slaves, however, others such as H. R. Weaver do not smile and look both tense and awkward.¹⁰⁴ Unlike her husband, therefore, who was highly influenced by stereotypical narratives about black American emotion, and Turner who was attempting to counteract such stereotypes, Ruby Lomax was not shaped, to the same extent, by these ideologies when producing her photographs of formerly enslaved people. Taken at a time when images in magazines such as *Time* and *Life* exploited white stereotypes of black Americans by showing the ‘poor but contented black, the faithfully servile black ... the colorful, naturally rhythmic, emotionally unrestrained black’, it seems that Lomax resisted this narrative of racial difference, by not only documenting the range of character traits that the elderly African Americans presented, but also capturing her black subjects in mostly the same light as her white ones.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ ‘Mrs Minnie Smith, Mrs Elizabeth Fulks, Mrs. Valbertina Kimball, at Mrs. Fulks home in Stanton, Texas’, September 1940, Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2007660022/>>

¹⁰⁴ Ruby Terill Lomax, ‘H. R Weaver, singer of ‘Ox-driving song’ at his home, Merryville, LA’, October 1, 1940, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <<https://www.loc.gov/item/2007660076/>>

¹⁰⁵ N. Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal*, p.17.



Figure 7.8: Joan and Jean Grant and friends, J.E. Grant Plantation, near Rome, Mississippi, October 23, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax, nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington D.C., available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2015645811/> [accessed 24.10.17]

Figure 7.9: Henry Truvillion's children (4 of the 5) in his flower garden, Newton Texas, October 3, 1940.

Ruby Terrill Lomax nitrate film, 1.5 x 1.25 in, Lomax Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington D.C., available at <https://www.loc.gov/item/2015647540/> [accessed 24.10.17]

Lomax's Images in the Archives

To fully understand Ruby Lomax's intended message in these images and whether she used the formerly enslaved subjects' emotions as a tool when creating the photographs, it is important to explore the feelings that she intended to elicit in the viewer, and the changes in affective responses to these images across time and place. The first place these images were moved to was the Library of Congress, since Lomax's husband, John Lomax, became Honorary Consultant and Curator of the Archive of American Folk Song in 1934. A memo from Alan Lomax, his son and assistant in charge of the Archive of American Folk Song, to Harold Spivacke suggests that the Library financed the 1940 expedition. It explains that 'John A. Lomax has requested the Library to finance another recording trip for himself and his wife, Ruby Terrill Lomax, through the South.'¹⁰⁶ He justified this by writing that 'the field trip will mean, as all Mr. Lomax's field trips have meant, an important addition to the Library's collection' and that it 'will result in a body of material which will be invaluable to both scholars and creative artists who are examining or using the archive later on.'¹⁰⁷ Lomax sent these photographs to the Library of Congress and the library then transferred them from the Archive of American Folk Song to the Prints and Photographs Division in 1950, which means that the images are not stored with John Lomax's corresponding sound recordings and field notes.

Archivists digitised the images as part of the Lomax Collection in 1999 and they are now available online and with no reproduction restriction. Bob Ledbetter and Billy McCrea's photographs also appear alongside their sound recordings on the Library of Congress's online resource *Voices from the Days of Slavery*. Despite this, historians have not utilised these photographs; they do not appear reproduced in historical accounts of enslavement and its legacies, nor do historians discuss them in detail. This is surprising given that the Library of Congress digitised the photographs over a decade ago. The photographs have, however, entered the public sphere to a greater extent than the academy, and the public can even buy reproductions of the photograph of Harriett McClintock, for example, on Amazon for \$11 as 'wall art.'¹⁰⁸ Similarly, the website *Voices from the Days of Slavery* has gained attention in popular circles; even the British newspaper *The Telegraph* included an article reproducing the photographs and

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Alan Lomax to Harold Spivacke, April 2, 1940, Lomax SSRC, LoC, Folder 1.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Photograph available at: <<https://www.amazon.com/Photo-Harriet-McClintock-Sumterville-Americans/dp/B0137FN3IA>> [accessed 01.12.17]

describing the sound recordings in 2015, commemorating 150 years since the abolition of slavery.¹⁰⁹ Thus, although the Lomaxes never published the images in their studies and the library only digitised them in 1999, the financial and political backing from the Library of Congress, in contrast to Turner's images, allowed for their mass circulation in the twenty-first century through their digitisation.

Throughout, this chapter has demonstrated that Lomax intended her images to be illustrative by presenting aspects of the character and lives of each formerly enslaved individual. In digitising the photographs and holding them away from the sound recordings, however, the Library of Congress have transformed the images from being what Lomax intended them to be – illustrative and documentary – to something entirely different. The public can now use them in a variety of different ways, from journalistic illustrations to lone pieces of art, yet it is harder to view them alongside the recordings and field notes Lomax produced them to illustrate. Visual historian Elizabeth Edwards has argued that this re-fashioning of an image is common, and she points to a range of changes that can occur, noting that 'private photographs become archives, analogue objects become electronic digital code, private images become public property, and photographs of scientific production are reclaimed as cultural heritage.'¹¹⁰

Despite the fact that photographs change purpose regularly, for historians who are interested in uncovering the intended message of an image, it is essential to acknowledge that any re-fashioning of a photograph can change the viewer's perception of it. The movement of the image during its time in the archive from a material object to a digital photograph has affective and sensory consequences for the viewer. For example, Campt has contended that often, family photographs 'were taken and circulated by the amateur photographers who shot them – the friends and family members of the subjects featured within their frames' and thus 'they were taken not only to be seen but also to be *held*.'¹¹¹ Making a similar argument, Edwards wrote that 'the stories told with and around photographs, the image held in the hand, features delineated through the touch of the finger, an object passed around, a digital image

¹⁰⁹ D. Millward, 'Slaves in their own words: Recordings of a lost world', *The Telegraph*, (02.07.2015), available at <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/11709057/The-voices-of-slavery.html>> [accessed 13.12.17]

¹¹⁰ E. Edwards, 'Objects of Affect', p.225.

¹¹¹ T. Campt, *Image Matters*, p.18.

printed and put in a frame and carefully placed, dusted, and cared for, are key registers through which photographic meanings are negotiated.¹¹² Although Lomax did not intend her images to circulate in family albums or between friends, she did produce them as photographs that had a sensory dimension. As they can now only be held in the Photographs and Prints Division if the digitised version is not of sufficient quality (which is not the case for these images), for the scholar who is analysing the message within these images, it is important to acknowledge that this lack of materiality reduces the viewer's sensory appreciation of them, a material aspect that they were intended to have.

Similarly, the holding of Lomax's images away from the corresponding recordings changes the way that viewers' affectively respond to them and also reduces how much can be deduced about the people pictured within them. Exploring my own archival encounter with these images, when brought together, the former slaves' voices in the recording are humanised, as the recordings went from being abstract historical sources, to a person's story who had a visual presence, emotional expressions and self-fashioned stance. Similarly, the unknown person in the image was given a voice with memories and feelings when the two sources were brought back together. Although it is hard to put into words my emotional or affective response to viewing these images, nonetheless my personal identification with the photographs increased when I viewed them as illustrative documents. It is difficult to know if my own affective response to Lomax's images was the reaction that Lomax intended, as she did not necessarily utilise certain techniques to elicit a specific affective response. Yet, through creating the images to illustrate the recordings of each subject and the situation in front of her, she implicitly humanised the documents and infused them with an affective power that scholars can only appreciate if they undertake a holistic approach in relation to the two corresponding source sets.

It is also significant that at the time of production of these sources, the photo-text was a particularly popular genre of photography. Numerous books such as *Roll Jordan Roll*, *You Have Seen Their Faces* and *Let Us Know Praise Famous Men* were produced that combined images of the formerly enslaved, sharecroppers, and poverty stricken rural

¹¹² E. Edwards, 'Objects of Affect', p.224.

farmers with quotations, colloquial writing or passages of text to represent ‘American life’. As Caroline Blinder has recently demonstrated, the link that the authors and photographers made between image and text was seen as a way ‘to link the outward visual representation of subjects with their inner lives’ and ‘render not just the external landscape but also the internal – even emotional – landscape of the people living there.’¹¹³ As this chapter has demonstrated, Lomax seemed to be influenced by the documentary style of many photographers and writers such as Julia Peterkin, Doris Ullman and Walker Evans, who used accompanying text to give their subjects a level of agency within the image.¹¹⁴ It thus seems even more likely that Lomax intended her images to accompany the corresponding sound recordings to enrich her photographs with a level of humanity and give her subjects some agency.

As scholars can better understand Turner’s intended message of black achievement in his images through a holistic approach to the sources, this analysis of the archiving of Lomax’s images thus reinforces, that using this approach, historians can illuminate Lomax’s illustrative intention and gain a more complex understanding of the factors that shaped the content of the photographs. Importantly, however, as is the case with Turner’s images, it also aids historians in building up a more complete portrait of each formerly enslaved person, as Lomax’s images visualise an aspect of their personality and feelings that were not presented in their recordings.

Conclusions: The Case for a Methodologically Holistic Approach

Within the images of the formerly enslaved that Ruby Lomax captured, these elderly African Americans present a range of emotional expressions and stand in a number of different postures and positions. Exploring the poise and confidence of Ledbetter’s stance; McCrea’s comfort and ease; the vulnerability presented in Richardson’s image;

¹¹³ C. Blinder, *The American Photo-Text, 1930-1960* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2019), pp. 2-4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.232. Blinder also importantly argues that whether the photographers bestowed the desired agency onto their subjects within these images is perhaps debatable and carries numerous ‘ramifications.’

and the awkward poses of the McDonalds and the McClintocks in their family photographs, this chapter has argued that Lomax was simply aiming to document the situation in front of her. Using a variety of photographic styles, techniques and genres, and perhaps influenced by the work of white female photographers, she presented aspects of the her subjects' lives, characters, emotions or experiences of the expedition that were described in their field notes but not always included in the corresponding recordings produced by her husband. At times, Lomax documented information about their lives, such as Richardson's poverty, that scholars cannot gain access to through just listening to her recording. Yet in Ledbetter's photograph, he presented himself with dignity and pride, which is a character trait that Ledbetter did not present to the same extent in his recordings as John Lomax forced him to adhere to continual prompts. By capturing these varying emotions and characters, Ruby Lomax did not use the former slaves' emotion as a political tool as many source producers, including Turner, did at this time. She did not shape her visual portrayal of these individuals to adhere to the same racialised narrative that framed her husband's recordings, and thus, the images and recordings produced during the same expedition present very different narratives about the formerly enslaved people who were the subject of them.

Historians must also read these photographs as moments of negotiation and articulation between Lomax and her subject, even though she was a white woman. At points, Lomax seemed to direct the formerly enslaved men and women in a paternalistic manner to stand in certain 'neat' formations and poses. Despite this direction, some individuals had the space to participate in 'acts of refusal', rejecting dominant narratives about black American character and families. Moreover, the range of emotions presented in these images also highlights that in comparison to the emotional labour they undertook when being recorded by John Lomax, at this particular moment during the wider encounter with the Lomaxes, the elderly black Americans did not have to conform to the same emotional etiquette, or manage their emotions to the same extent, to adhere to this specific set of feeling rules.

Through exploring the content and production of these sources, as well as the archiving of the images, similarly to the previous case-study, this chapter has ultimately demonstrated that historians must analyse these images, sound recordings and field notes together, as this is what the Lomaxes intended. Not only does this add to the

affective power of the images, but also provides the viewer with an added layer of information about the Lomaxes' encounter with each formerly enslaved individual, as they visually document the ease that McCrea felt with Ruby Lomax and the embarrassment of the McDonalds. Perhaps more significantly, however, at times the images also illuminate aspects of the former slaves' self-fashioning within the photograph that they could not present in the recordings. Thus, viewing these sources in a holistic way not only adds complexity to our understanding of the production of the oral and visual sources created on this expedition, but also goes some way towards counteracting the silences within slavery's archive and limitations of single source sets, as it allows scholars to access further traces of the formerly enslaved persons' voice within the documents when they appear.

Conclusion

Focusing largely upon the collection of WPA interviews produced with formerly enslaved people in the 1930s, historians of American slavery have used imaginative methodologies to answer questions relating to the everyday experiences of the enslaved. The emotional impact of slavery's violence on those who experienced it, however, has been harder to unearth and many historians have remained reluctant to explore this interior aspect of the lived experience of slavery. Simultaneously, despite recent studies observing that the WPA interviews were heavily shaped accounts of the experience between the interviewer and interviewee, there is still a tendency by some scholars to utilise the WPA sources without an understanding of how they were created and the myriad factors that shaped their content. Building upon this trend in methodological approaches to contribute to the expanding literature about the emotional experiences of the enslaved, this thesis has asked a different set of questions about a range of textual, oral, and visual sources by probing the political, personal, cultural, emotional and technological factors that shaped the emotional content. Through analysing how emotion was discussed, shaped and performed by the formerly enslaved and framed, manipulated and edited by those creating the source sets, the 6 case-studies have shown that political battles over the memory of slavery interacted with the personal agendas and feelings of the interviewee, interviewer, editors, appraisers, folklorists, linguists and photographers to shape the emotions that the elderly black Americans expressed. Through exploring the manipulation and framing of the formerly enslaved peoples' emotion that occurred during the production of each source, this thesis has more readily uncovered what can, and cannot, be seen, heard and understood in each set of documents about slavery and its emotional impact.

This thesis has reached conclusions that further our understandings of the complex range of factors that shaped the production of six sets of documents produced in the 1930s with those who had been enslaved. First, it has demonstrated that the emotional content of the sources examined here often reflected battles, which raged in the 1930s,

over the cultural memory of slavery and the place of black Americans in society. In relation to the WPA project, Catherine Stewart has argued that ‘because African American history was being recovered but also shaped in response to debates about the South’s economic situation and the “Negro problem”, the extensive records of the Ex-Slave Project yield opposing perspectives on the meaning of black identity and black citizenship.’¹ Arguing that it was not just WPA interviews that were framed by these competing cultural narratives, this thesis has shown that John Lomax, when producing his sound recordings of those who had been enslaved whilst on his folklore project, was heavily influenced by paternalistic and romanticised narratives of slavery. Writing about slavery as a ‘civilising institution’ and black Americans as a ‘merrier-hearted race’, Lomax ensured that his recordings, and the emotions expressed by his black American performers, reinforced this message.² At the recording encounter, Lomax presented a set of ‘feeling rules’ that the singers had to adhere to, meaning that each individual performed their emotional expressions in accordance with Lomax’s emotional etiquette. This meant that the elderly men and women only sang up-beat songs from slavery, described loving their work in the field, and regularly laughed when Lomax prompted them to.

Lorenzo Dow Turner’s interviews with the formerly enslaved Gullah community countered the romanticised picture painted in Lomax’s recordings. Turner was a black American scholar who held ideas that reflected the political ideology of the New Negro Movement, including a focus on countering benevolent depictions of the antebellum South and negative stereotypes of African American culture. In his work, he emphasised the achievements of black men and women, to foster a collective feeling of black pride. These ideologies influenced the way he interviewed each Gullah informant, as Turner asked probing questions and became particularly familiar with those he interviewed. This led the elderly black Americans to express a range of emotions during their recordings, including pride in their labour achievements and defiance against white racism. Similarly, when photographing the same individuals, Turner included props and positioned the former slaves in stances that echo the images produced during the Harlem Renaissance of the proud, confident and successful ‘New Negro’.

¹ C. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery*, p.8.

² J. Lomax, ‘Self Pity in Negro Folk Songs’, p.141.

Influenced by contrasting cultural and political memories of slavery and narratives about black American character, Lomax and Turner shaped and utilised the interviewees' emotional expressions in their documents as tools to reinforce their competing political agendas.

This thesis has demonstrated, however, that although black American interviewers and photographers often elicited more wide-ranging emotional responses from the formerly enslaved, race and racial politics was not the sole determinant of the emotional content of these sources. Reaching my second conclusion, Chapter 7 highlighted that when Ruby Lomax photographed elderly African Americans that she encountered on the 1940 expedition, she did not politicise their emotion in the same way as Lorenzo Dow Turner and John Lomax. Influenced by other white female photographers and the documentary tradition of the 1930s, Lomax photographed the former slaves' living conditions, aspects of their personalities and the variety of emotional expressions that they displayed, using a range of photographic genres and styles. Whilst her images reveal, in some cases, that she directed her subjects to stand in particular poses, she did not frame the images to reinforce the same racialised 'happy-go-lucky' narrative that her husband's recordings presented. Thus, the formerly enslaved performers presented a much wider range of emotions in her photographs than in their corresponding recordings.

Third, by focusing specifically on emotion in these documents, this thesis differs from studies that place their attention on the politics of the FWP and reveal that the wider cultural narratives about slavery often interacted with the source creator's personal feelings and more private agendas to shape the content of the documents. John Lomax, for example, held a personal nostalgia for the 'Old South' and a fascination with the 'loyal' black Americans whom he encountered in his youth. This nostalgia meant that he valued black American music, but this appreciation interacted with his belief that slavery was a civilising and benevolent institution, to ensure that he directed and restricted the former slaves' emotional expressions. Similarly, at the Florida FWP, politically motivated questions about how workers should write-up the interviews to appeal to white readership shaped their work, leading to stereotypical descriptions of the interviewees' emotions being included within the interviews. Viewed within the 'white racial frame', however, these descriptions also reveal that the writers' personal

feelings of nostalgia for the 'Old South' also shaped such accounts. These sketches evidence that stereotypes about black Americans and strongly held emotions toward them interacted with political considerations about how the history of slavery should be presented to white readers to shape how black American emotion was written about in their interviews.

The fourth conclusion that this thesis has reached, and perhaps the most important, is that the production of each set of sources was a two-way process. The formerly enslaved men and women often had their own political and personal agendas that they brought to the encounter and purposely shaped the emotions that they presented to the interviewer or photographers accordingly. The Ex-Slave Club of Miami illustrates this impeccably. The elderly black Americans joined the Club to fight for pension rights, and this seemed to shape how they described their experiences of slavery, as each member solely included positive emotional recollections of their time in bondage. In contrast, some individuals who were interviewed by the NWU had a different agenda when telling their stories. Margrett Nickerson, for example, was motivated by a desire to tell the truth to her interviewer, as her resentful feelings towards her enslaver had diminished over time. Displaying a different personal motivation when telling his story and sitting for a photograph, Sam Polite evidently wished to present an image of himself that emphasised his pride in his labour achievements.

Lastly, although each African American had a different reason for giving their testimony or posing for a photograph, through focusing on emotion in these documents, at times this thesis has uncovered traces of their emotional experience at the encounter, and the differing levels of emotional labour that went into the process of producing the source. In the Florida NWU sources, the interviewers used phrases that indicate how emotionally difficult it was for the interviewees to discuss their experiences of punishment and sexual abuse, beginning to highlight their emotional investment when giving their testimony. In Turner's recorded interviews, however, the feelings that discussing this profound violence triggered are more starkly evident, as the otherwise unspoken pain and anger can be *heard* in their voices. Similarly, some of the steps that the formerly enslaved men undertook to manage these feelings, such as pausing or raising their voice, can be observed, highlighting the emotional labour they undertook within this interview setting. In complete contrast to the emotional work required of the

elderly black Americans when discussing their traumatic memories, those interviewed by John Lomax had to engage in a more traditional form of emotional labour, performing and suppressing their feelings in accordance with his emotional etiquette. This analysis has therefore gone some way to unearthing the former slaves' emotional investment in the process of creating these documents, crucially highlighting that they had different experiences when giving their testimony or being photographed depending on their own agenda and the motives of those producing the source. Throughout the six case-studies, this thesis has therefore outlined the emotional manipulation that went into the production of many of these sources produced with formerly enslaved people, but also how the black American subjects resisted such manipulation, had their own agendas and at times fully emotionally invested themselves in telling their story.

In providing these conclusions, this thesis has contributed to debates within the history of emotions, literature relating to U.S. history in the 1930s, and discussions about slavery's cultural memory. Although it was not the main aim of this research, through focusing on emotional expression in these documents, this thesis has provided a set of case-studies that discuss how emotional expression was articulated, performed, feigned and politicised during the process of creating these sources. This gives an insight into the emotional expectations that existed during the Jim Crow era, and how racial politics impacted upon emotional expression in the 1930s. Through exploring a range of documents from the 1930s, this thesis has also contributed to understandings of race relations in this era. It has argued that numerous men and women, including secretaries, historians, linguists and folklorists, travelled across the U.S. capturing the testimony of the formerly enslaved, and that debates about slavery and black citizenship influenced the work of these disparate people. For scholars of the U.S. in the early twentieth century, this highlights the pervasiveness and continued importance of slavery in the minds of those creating these documents and how this could ultimately affect the production of historical sources.

Significantly, these debates about slavery's memory, the Civil War, and black Americans' place in U.S. society that occurred in the 1930s have evolved but are still raging in the U.S. today. Like black Americans who were fighting oppression in the 1930s – such as Lorenzo Dow Turner – members of the Black Lives Matter Movement,

in hauntingly similar ways, are still opposing society's systemic racism by emphasising the voices of those who have experienced such oppression. Discussions have also erupted over the place of Confederate Monuments in cities and university campuses that again bring to the fore, and place attention upon, the cultural discussions that were being had in the 1930s about slavery and the rights of black citizens. Discussing these memorials, the American Historical Association explained that 'commemorating not just the Confederacy but also the 'Redemption' of the South after Reconstruction, this enterprise was part and parcel of the initiation of legally mandated segregation and widespread disenfranchisement across the South.'³ Numerous Americans have called for the monuments to be taken down from prominent places due to their links to the defence of slavery, as well as the role of such monuments in intimidating black Americans who resided in these areas. Others, however, continue to idealise the Confederacy and see it as part of their cultural and racial identity. Within the context of these continued debates about slavery, the Civil War and race relations, this research has provided more information about how contrasting narratives about the institution evolved and crucially, how these seeped into seemingly 'objective' sources.

Most importantly, it has been the main aim of this thesis to build upon and interject in the long-running methodological debates, that stretch from the work of George Rawick and John Blassingame to Sharon Ann Musher and Catherine Stewart, about the nature of U.S. slavery's archive and how to most effectively use documents produced in conjunction with the formerly enslaved to write about the lived experience of slavery. Fundamentally, this thesis has grappled with questions about the emotional content that can be accessed within textual, oral and visual sources produced in the 1930s, in order to utilise these more effectively in writing both *critical* and *accessible* histories of the emotional lives of the enslaved, and thus contribute to the developing historiographical field that focuses on the emotional impact of enslavement in the U.S. In recent years, these questions relating to how scholars can use slavery's sources to write about the feelings of the enslaved have been asked by historians of slavery who focus on different archives, most notably in the Caribbean, such as Sasha Turner who has argued that 'an archive that transformed people into marketable commodities restrains what is

³ AHA Statement on Confederate Monuments, August 2017, available at <<https://www.historians.org/news-and-advocacy/statements-and-resolutions-of-support-and-protest/aha-statement-on-confederate-monuments>> [accessed 22.01.19]

recoverable of the intimate lives of the commodified.’⁴ Focusing on the experiences of female slaves, Turner wrote that, ‘enslaved mothers and their children enter the archive in little more than fragments. Snippets of their lives, loves, and losses emerge from records imputed with the possibility of yielding profits.’⁵ Specifically, Turner questioned how we can explore feeling; ‘absent from the archives are enslaved women’s feelings about childbearing and how the specter of death that hovered over the womb shaped maternal desires and practices.’⁶ Marisa Fuentes asked a similar question in her work about the archive and women’s enslavement in the Caribbean; ‘how do we narrate the fleeting glimpses of enslaved subjects in the archives and meet the disciplinary demands of history that requires us to construct unbiased accounts from these very documents?’⁷

In the case of U.S. slavery, historians have access to more than ‘fleeting glimpses’ of the experiences of the enslaved; we can actually *listen* to voices of those who experienced the institution. Fuentes’ question, however, is still relevant when using ex-slave documents produced in the U.S. to write about the lives of the enslaved, as this thesis has shown that the elderly black Americans’ testimony from the 1930s was so heavily framed by the source creator that often only fragments of their experiences are revealed. This thesis has begun to answer Fuentes’ question, in relation to U.S. slavery, by developing and modelling a methodology that can be used to reconstruct the story of how the documents were created, and in turn reveal the complications of each source set when attempting to write about the emotional lives of the enslaved. Sasha Turner has argued, in relation to her study of maternal grief, that she ‘tried to make sense of how enslaved women dealt with the loss of their children while recognizing the limits imposed by archival invisibility.’⁸ Turner explained that it is important to acknowledge the limits of the archive, but also that ‘historians aiming to arrive at a fuller understanding of enslavement must recognize not just the physical pain inflicted upon the body’ but focus upon the emotional pain of enslavement – the ‘invisible scars.’⁹ The documents I have explored are never ‘transparent representations’, to use Nell

⁴ S. Turner, ‘The Nameless and Forgotten’, p.234.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.232.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.233.

⁷ M. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p.1.

⁸ S. Turner, ‘The Nameless and Forgotten’, p.245.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.245 and p.234.

Painter's term, of the African Americans' experiences of slavery or their personalities.¹⁰ They are, of course, framed by the time that elapsed since the Civil War and the formerly enslaved peoples' experiences in the intervening years, as well as the current context. Similarly, focusing on emotion, it is almost impossible to know exactly how another person feels today, let alone a person who lived almost 100 years ago, when they were describing how they felt 70 years prior to giving the interview. It is important, however, to acknowledge when sources can position us as near as we can possibly get to the former slaves' emotional experiences of slavery, and conversely when the source should not be used due to the extent of emotional manipulation.

Taken at face-value without an understanding of the Ex-Slave Club's mission, for example, the WPA interviews present a narrative of slavery as a benevolent institution. Only when we delve deeper into the creation of these interviews does it become apparent that their discussions were heavily framed by the Club's campaign for pensions, and thus these interviews are less reliable traces of the emotional experiences of slavery. What can be deduced, however, from analysing these Ex-Slave Club sources is the impact of the Great Depression on those who had been enslaved and how they relayed their memories of slavery as well as their attempts, as a group of formerly enslaved men and women, to change their situation. From probing the recordings that John Lomax made of elderly black Americans singing and briefly discussing their experiences of the institution, Chapter 5 also argued that these are highly choreographed encounters and performances, in which the performers continually expressed emotions that were in accordance with Lomax's feeling rules. As such, the recordings include particularly mediated descriptions of their experiences of bondage, and cannot be used to accurately reveal how they felt about the institution.

In contrast, through probing Lorenzo Dow Turner's interview methodology, this thesis has demonstrated that within these recordings historians can get as close as is conceivably possible to understanding the lived experience of slavery, and how formerly enslaved people felt when they were in bondage. Turner fostered a sense of trust between himself and his informants and gained the support of the community. Through being able to hear the interview between Turner and his Gullah informants,

¹⁰ N. Painter, 'Representing Truth', p.487.

another dimension of the encounter is revealed, as is the rigour and integrity of his approach. Crucially, in the recordings we can also listen to some of the unspoken pain and anger in the voices of those giving their testimony about the punishments they received, giving an indication of the emotional impact that this punishment wrought and the lasting emotional legacies of such violence. These sources highlight the complexity of formerly enslaved peoples' emotional experiences of slavery and continued feelings towards the institution, ranging from the pain, anger and sadness that violence triggered, to the weariness and pride that many people giving their testimony felt in relation to their labour, and concluding with their complex feelings towards emancipation.

This thesis has also shown that by bringing fragments of testimony together and exploring all of the documents that were produced during one WPA era project, it is possible to discuss, with greater clarity and coherence, the emotional experiences of the enslaved. In the case of Turner's sources, through exploring his recordings alongside the photographs produced of the same individuals, I unearthed more about how the elderly black Americans wished to be viewed and the message they wanted to present to the world. Sam Polite, for example, evidently wanted to emphasise his labour achievements - even during slavery - and exploring his photographs highlights this. In the case of Ruby Lomax's photographs, analysing these alongside her husband's recordings displays aspects of the subjects' personalities, living situations and experiences with John Lomax that historians cannot grasp from listening to the recordings on their own. In both cases, therefore, the photographs add to understandings of the personality of each formerly enslaved individual and thus infuse historians' work with greater humanity. To both counteract the silences in the archive and create an accessible and usable past in the context of continued oppression of black Americans, resistance to this oppression, and recurring debates about slavery and its legacies, it is important to use photographs and sound recordings that combat the dehumanisation that was a central part of the slavery institution. Therefore, this thesis argues, and demonstrates, that careful selection and correlation of these documents - particularly when focusing on emotion - is essential and most effective in writing histories of the lived experience of slavery.

This study has focused primarily on methodology; it has developed a set of tools and strategies to understand the dynamics involved in the source creation and in turn uncover the possibilities and limitations of each source set. I have argued that Turner's recordings provide a window into the many emotions that slavery triggered, and thus began to document the interviewees' emotional experiences of enslavement. Due to the focus on method in this thesis, however, I have not utilised these areas of possibility to write a sustained history of the emotional lives of the enslaved. It is highly likely that more oral and visual sources exist, such as those created by Turner, that were not intended as 'Ex-Slave Projects', but that include the testimony of men and women who had been enslaved. In the future, smaller archival collections need to be extensively mined and carefully combed to find such testimony or photographs, and a similar methodology applied to truly understand the complex factors that shaped their content. Similarly, there are undoubtedly WPA interviews that have been overlooked due to not being obvious 'sets', perhaps by a single interviewer or in a specific town, that provide more possibilities than others for historians wishing to understand the lived experience of slavery. Uncovering these sets, and bringing them together with Turner's recordings for example, would allow for a thorough but critical history of the emotional lives of the enslaved to be written. Similarly, this methodology can be applied to a range of historical sources, not only those related to slavery, to acknowledge the limitations of the archive that relate to that field of study.

To return to Benjamin Botkin's quotation cited at the beginning of this thesis, he wrote that 'from the memories and the lips of former slaves have come the answers which only they can give to questions which Americans still ask: What does it mean to be a slave? What does it mean to be free? And, even more, how does it *feel*?'¹¹ This thesis has explored Botkin's conclusions about the questions that can be answered from analysing documents produced with formerly enslaved people, demonstrating that although these sources are highly emotional and emotive documents, they do not provide clear and transparent access to the elderly black Americans' emotional experiences of slavery. Historian of emotion Susan Matt has written that 'in the end, there is a gap between what people felt and what historians can know about those feelings, yet there is nevertheless a value to be found in recovering these faint traces of

¹¹ B. Botkin, *Lay my Burden Down*, p.1.

past generations' sensibilities.'¹² As Matt has argued, and as my research has revealed, there are limits to what historians can know about the most intimate part of the enslaved experience. It is imperative, however, that we begin to undertake this analysis to acknowledge the multifaceted and complex emotions and that can be heard within these documents, and this thesis has developed a critical methodology to do so. Writing about various methods used to explore the colonial archive, Ann Stoler has argued that 'reading only against the grain of the colonial archive bypasses the power in the production of the archive itself.'¹³ In the case of documents produced in the 1930s with the formerly enslaved, my case-studies have demonstrated the need to heed Stoler's advice, and acknowledge the power in the production of them. This thesis has uncovered some of the power dynamics - the emotional framing, emotional manipulation, emotional resistance, and emotional labour - that were central to the production of these documents, and crucially revealed which sets of sources, produced with the formerly enslaved, provide greater access to the 'faint traces' of the 'invisible scars' of enslavement.

¹² S. Matt, 'Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of the Emotions', in S. Matt and P. Stearns (eds.), *Doing Emotions History* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), p.44.

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