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**‘it will come at last’: Acts of Emancipation in the Art, Culture and Politics of the  
Black Diaspora’**

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emancipation

ɪ,mɑnsɪ'peɪʃ(ə)n/

*noun*

noun: **emancipation**; plural noun: **emancipations**

1. the fact or process of being set free from legal, social, or political restrictions; liberation.

‘Friends and fellow-citizens: We have met here today to celebrate . . . this the twenty-third anniversary of the inauguration of freedom as the ruling law of the British West Indies. The day and the deed are . . . as a city set upon a hill. All civilized men at least, have looked with wonder and admiration upon the great deed of justice and humanity . . . . The event we celebrate is the finding and the restoration to the broken ranks of human brotherhood, eight hundred thousand lost members of the human family. It is the resurrection of a mighty multitude, from the grave of moral, mental, social, and spiritual death, where ages of slavery and oppression, and lust and pride and cruelty, had bound them. Here they were instantly clothed with all the rights, responsibilities, powers, and duties, of free men and women.’ Frederick Douglass, speech on West India Emancipation, 1 August, 1857.<sup>i</sup>

‘I am thankful there is a beginning. I am full of hope for the future. A power mightier than man is guiding this revolution; and although justice moves slowly, it will come at last.’ Harriet Jacobs, ‘Flag Presentation at L’Ouverture Hospital in Alexandria, VA’, 1 August, 1864.<sup>ii</sup>

For enslaved African Americans in the antebellum period, emancipation was wrote large as the most pressing of political imperatives stemming from the most fundamental obligations of justice and humanity. That it could be achieved individually was clear from the activities of countless runaways, fugitives, cultural and political activists, Douglass and Jacobs included, who escaped territories of enslavement to become self-emancipated subjects on free soil. That it could be achieved collectively was evidenced by the success of the Haitian Revolution with its army of enslaved and free black persons. West Indian Emancipation confirmed that freedom could be arrived at by political persistence and economic argument. As Douglass’ and Jacob’s presence at related memorial events as well as their words attest, celebration of key dates in the

international calendar of emancipation served a dual purpose, it opened up commemorative spaces that gave meaning to political struggle, but also fused the memory of freedom's attainment with the hope of triumph yet to come.

The elusive 'city on the hill' to which Douglass referred would eventually rise on US soil. In 1865, at the end of the Civil War, 4 million formerly enslaved people became free a country which had until then upheld the legality of bondage, provided moral exculpation to slaveholders, and privileged property over freedom even in non-slaveholding states through the enforcement of fugitive slave laws. Although not exactly 'instantly clothed with all the rights . . . of free men and women' – for, indeed, 'justice moves slowly' as Harriet Jacobs noted just a year before, and full economic, social, cultural and political citizenship was still a long way away – Emancipation, initiating a transition from slavery to freedom and from subjection to personal sovereignty, marks the single most transformative event in the history of the African American struggle against slavery. This 'resurrection of a mighty multitude,' as Douglass had previously described West Indian Emancipation, was just that: the emergence of previously enslaved millions whose labour was the mainstay of the plantation economy, as communities and as individuals, into freedom. Late in the day even in circumatlantic terms, with Cuban and Brazilian freedom yet to come in 1886 and 1888 respectively, the thirteenth amendment to the US constitution, declaring that 'Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude . . . shall exist within the U.S. or any place subject to their jurisdiction,' ratified in December 1865, finally aligned the first American republic with black self-emancipatory activities that had been ongoing for centuries, and with the ethical position of black and white abolitionism.

Nationally, it provided literal and symbolic legitimation of United States' claims to underwrite key principles of liberty and equality, delivering some post hoc support for Abraham Lincoln's assertion that the Civil War had a higher purpose when, in 1863, he famously described the United States as 'conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal'.<sup>iii</sup> By linking national sovereignty and Union to personal sovereignty and equality, Lincoln cast the Confederacy as a counter-revolutionary force pushing against the tide of freedom that flowed from the American, but also the French and Haitian, revolutions of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, situating the United States within a wider Atlantic revolutionary history. Victory over the slave power would, he prophesied, enable 'a new birth of freedom,' through which national principles of liberty, democracy and citizenship would eventually find full expression.

Therein lies one of the key tensions in the story of e/Emancipation. Victories over slave powers were routinely if not easily achieved in innumerable acts of self-emancipation by enslaved women and men, which included passive resistance, violent rebellion, religious ritual, trickery, subversion and artistic literary and political revolution. Although ‘[l]acking political standing or public voice . . . slaves nevertheless moved directly to put their own freedom – and that of their posterity – atop the political agenda,’<sup>iv</sup> in a history of Atlantic-wide black radicalism unrelenting in its opposition to systems of human bondage in which the governments of states, empires and colonies had long been complicit. Most significant internationally was the success of the Haitian revolution, which began with a slave uprising in 1791 and ended with Haiti’s founding as the first independent black state – an event that provided a precedent, as CLR James later argued, for the anti-colonial independence movements of the twentieth century.

In all cases, acts of self-emancipation were present and continuous. They predated formal legal Emancipation, though in most cases (excepting successful revolution) the effects were limited to individuals, and the rewards of freedom unstable. In the US, the immediate consequences of Emancipation were obvious - African Americans could no longer be enslaved. But it also permitted a strategic redirection of black political agency. Freedom removed the imperative for abolition at the centre of emancipatory political campaigns, enabling a renewed focus on the forms of literal and representative repression born of slavery and racial discrimination that remained largely intact. And if the slave revolt in Haiti, as Herbert Klein notes, had a profound impact on ‘everything from sugar prices to slave laws throughout the western hemisphere,’<sup>v</sup> correspondingly, as waves of e/Emancipation swept around the Atlantic, major shifts occurred in how notions of subjectivity and citizenship were conceived of, negotiated and enacted in the absence of enslaved persons as literally captive bodies, units of labour and reproductive assets. US national and British imperial territory, for example, could no longer be framed as dichotomous geographies of slavery and freedom. Empire was exposed to the criticism that it was undemocratic and repressive, as ideas of freedom tied to national sovereignty emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. e/Emancipation, in the United States as elsewhere across the diaspora, therefore, marks the beginning of struggle as well as the end: the emergence of imperatives that required the meaningful expression of liberty in social, economic, political, artistic, legal, cultural and often territorial terms.

The multiple uses to which the term emancipation as an assertion of personal

and communitarian liberty can be put, the scattered geographies of its enactment, the creative avenues to its realization and the ongoing tension with Emancipation, the bequeathing of liberty by a higher power, reveal the complexities of emancipation's material, metaphysical and psychological achievement. They also mark the term as a site of struggle, riddled with instabilities of meaning, political provisionalities and ongoing deferral. They point to the many practices of freedom that suggest the need, as Inglis argues, to position "human emancipation away from notions of liberating a pre-existing, essential self toward a more realist or structuralist understanding of power,"<sup>vi</sup> in which emancipation presents as a series of challenge in the contest for which models of resistant subjectivity are forged. And, just as Jacobs and Douglass chose to marshal the anniversary of a previous emancipation as a means of suggesting the impending liberation of enslaved African Americans, they impress upon history the significance of memories and memorializations that mark the progress of emancipatory activity as well as opening up tributary spaces in which the specifics of enslaved experience can be acknowledged and its subjects honoured. This special issue, although precipitated in part by the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of US Emancipation and the 80th anniversary of the West Indian Abolition Act, steps away from ideas of 'Emancipation' as something given or conferred, typically by white power to black subjects, because the historical distortions of agency consolidated by an emphasis on the legal concessions of state power only exacerbates neglect of that psychological, political and aesthetic matrix which positions the achievement of literal freedom as one (very important) step in the achievement of emancipation, but by no means the only one. Together, the articles in this special issue present part of the multiplicity of ways in which emancipation was imagined or achieved. For example, it suggests that the ways in which acts of representation integrate this historical moment to visual and other narratives that themselves constitute moments of liberation are significant because they memorialize radical resistance to enslavement as part of a wider *ongoing* black self-emancipatory counter-narrative. A related argument might be made about the decolonial activities of writers as creative activists in the Caribbean in pre- and post independence periods. Rehearsing, rethinking, relating, narratively reliving heroic acts of liberation in the context of the postcolonial state signals the importance of underlining the historical significance of the achievement of freedom for individuals and communities, while also pointing to the need for ongoing vigilance against the contemporary challenges presented by global capitalism and the complexities of migration and diaspora.

All this emphasizes the centrality of the psychological aspects of emancipation for enslaved or formerly enslaved people, or their descendants. As black testimony and artistry demonstrate, even in the face of extremes of oppression, enslaved subjects recognized his/her desire and for freedom, expressing a fundamental human need for autonomy in representative and political acts that were accompanied, but also predated by, acts of psychological self-emancipation that countermand the attempted dehumanizations of enslavement.

Equally, this issue is concerned to present studies that expand and nuance understandings of what freedom meant to those who did not have it, and the archival, theoretical and critical work that makes it possible to address the memorial and material legacies that continue in the living practices of diaspora, and to inform further archaeological exploration of those sites of liberation. ‘Acts of emancipation’ therefore focuses on the centuries-long pursuit of freedom that infuses the historical and cultural activities of the black diaspora, while taking new stock of the meanings of ‘emancipation’ as a cluster of radical acts – literal, literary, political, revolutionary, artistic and performative – that force, amongst other things, ongoing reconsideration of political, individual, collective and expressions of the idea and practice of freedom, including the continuing legacy of practices of self-emancipation and their effects on the history and societies of the contemporary Atlantic.

In ‘Locating History Within Fiction’s Frame: Re-Presenting the *Epopée Delgrès* in Maximin and Lara’, H Adlai Murdoch identifies often overlooked dimensions of the complex web of resistance, revolution and the assertion of sovereign subjectivity that emerged from the radical currents of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Atlantic. While the Haitian Revolution is rightly cited as an instance of transformative political agency contemporaneous with and carrying the same enlightenment principles espoused by the Declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen, Murdoch’s work points to another, related act of emancipatory resistance that provides a revolutionary patrimony to the island of Guadelupe. Conceivably, this historical episode has been overlooked not only because of the primary instance Haiti provides of emergent statehood, but also because Guadelupe’s departmental status within the French Republic positions it within a national narrative to which acts of black emancipatory heroism remain marginal, one that simultaneously celebrates republicanism and detaches Guadelupe – no less perhaps than other islands in the francophone Caribbean – from the revolutionary history that brought Haiti into being. Murdoch points to the military resistance, born of the activities

of sans culottes noir determined to ensure that subjectivity and citizenship received the same legal recognition in the colonies as in the metropole, and led by Colonel Louis Delgrès of Martinique and Commandant Joseph Ignace, of Guadeloupe, to Napoleon Bonaparte's attempts to re-establish the slave trade and reimpose slavery in the French Caribbean colonies in 1802, as a key moment in the production of Guadeloupan identity. He identifies the defiance of and struggle against the Napoleonic invasion of Guadeloupe as part of a wider culture of black diasporic acts of self-emancipation – a rejection of the social death, subjective annihilation, and violent oppression characterizing the system of racial bondage that formed the bedrock of western expansion and capital accumulation – seeking instead to preserve a community of free subjects and confirm liberty as a universal condition constitutive of Guadeloupan ethno cultural identity. The rebellion is described as part of 'an extended arc of liberatory acts . . . that mark the identitarian activities of Caribbean slaves almost from the inception of the colonial moment to the act of emancipation,' an attempt to preserve liberty, autonomy and self-determination as a way of life for formerly enslaved citizen subjects. Murdoch's subsequent exploration of the representation of this neglected articulation of political subjectivity and personal and communal sovereignty in Daniel Maximin's 1981 novel *I'Isolé soleil* and Christian Lara's 2004 film, "1802: L'Épopée Guadeloupéenne," identifies these works as radical memorializations of what was perhaps the first iteration of Guadeloupan postcolonial subjectivity. As part of a contemporary departmental moment reflecting on the legacy of the francophone Caribbean, the historical significance of this often overlooked act of emancipatory resistance is confirmed by the ways in which it has been recalled, revised and revisioned in these cultural texts, situated as a temporal 'lieux de memoire', part of a psycho-geography of self-liberatory acts that are an essential component of the horizontal relationships defining political community within Guadeloupe, across the Caribbean, and beyond, though they remain peripheral to contemporary [metropolitan and perhaps global] culture. Fusing political and aesthetic goals, *I'Isolé soleil's* deliberate focus on the significant absence of Ignaces and Delgrès from narratives of freedom that conspire in the construction of the French colonial script produces a creative conflation of history and literature performs an unveiling and reinscription of an instance of what Murdoch describes as 'Guadeloupe's occulted history of resistance.' Just as in Maxime's work literary narrative is used to institute instances creative rememory and liberatory frameworks that rehabilitate radical identities based on self-emancipatory heroism,

likewise Guadeloupean director Christian Lara's filmic representation of the Epogèe Delgrès positions the history of slavery and emancipatory radicalism as a political and performative act at the heart of a post-emancipation Caribbean identity defined by the historical and contemporary practice of freedom. Both cultural texts provide related instances of the ways in which 'occulted' instances of liberty and liberation struggle can continue to resonate – to repeat and double in models of resistance that break down the longstanding divisions of colonial encounter, specifically those founded on race, and in doing so provide transformative legacies of contemporary political opposition in national and transnational contexts.

If literary and filmic texts provide gateways to the recovery of acts of emancipatory heroism lost in centralized discourse of revolutionary radicalism and state formation that ignore the racial dimension of slavery and emancipation, or to colonial encryptions of subjection that prevent the iteration of human subjectivity and seek to delegitimize ethno cultural expressions of imagined community in Murdoch's analysis, then Karen Salt's 'Ecological Chains of Unfreedom' turns to the imagined community of the independent nation as a manifestation of black political sovereignty – the legal, cultural, territorial and political confirmation of emancipation's successful territorial articulation, a way of ensuring freedom was politically legible and free subjectivity articulated within structures that were autonomous if, like other nineteenth-century states if not always in identical ways, not always democratically self-determined. Identifying politically independent Abyssinia, Haiti and Liberia as potential objects of study in a scholarly turn to examinations of geographies of dispossession, accumulation and, more recently, debt, Salt positions black statehood as a key expression of black sovereignty but simultaneously points to the constraints faced in the expression of sovereign rights when natural resources are in question, drawing on Dexler to suggest the ways in which the acknowledgement of and respect for sovereignty is mired in histories of racially-based enslavement tainting apparent orthodoxies of human rights and universal worth. Turning specifically to Haiti's historical and contemporary attempts to negotiate international power-plays seeking to delegitimize its claim to the resource-rich island rock, Navassa, she charts a history of extralegal appropriations by the United States rejecting Haiti's territorial jurisdiction. At first, the US intervened in defense of American companies which sought to exploit the island's abundance of phosphate-rich guano deposits – positing as she puts it, national 'rights to shit' (mass noun not intransitive verb). Once guano, extracted largely

by African American conscripted labour – a contemporary iterations of back unfreedom - became commercially obsolete, however, the earlier rhetoric effectively casting Haiti as the *bête noir* of the Atlantic, a violent threat to the legitimate business interests of United States citizens, gave way to its military possession, and latterly to a very different kind of appropriative pretext, one melding old fashioned tales of discovery with a more recent environmentalist logic. This presented ecological conservation as an expedient for a novel form of neo-imperialism providing moral legitimacy to the United States' self-appointed role as 'planetary sovereign,' placing the island under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, making it subject to federal protection, and ignoring Haitian legal claims and the albeit transient presence of Haitians themselves on the island throughout almost 150 years of sovereign contestation. Despite the achievement of statehood therefore, the Haitian ability to exercise sovereignty over its Atlantic territories was limited not just by discrepancies in military, economic and political power in the region, but continually undermined internationally by a variety of rhetorical gestures whose moral authority rested on foundations that ran deep into Haiti's slavery past. In a repeated twist that the history of Navassan case helps illuminate, the dispossession of personal sovereignty entailed in slavery was implicitly linked to a suspicion of the collective expression of black sovereignty and emancipation in independent statehood, a suspicion that permitted international incursions on sovereign authority and legitimated the imposition and maintenance of structures of unfreedom.

Notably then post-emancipatory expressions of political sovereignty asserting independent statehood remain problematic in international fora in which economics and empire coalesce into mutable discourses of incursion, dispossession and exclusion, most recently in the biological sciences. The apparent legitimacy conferred on acts of neo-colonial appropriation by such scientific discourse is reinforced by the contemporary moral weight of ecological or environmental considerations. Political acts of dispossession backed up by scientific and moral discourses positioning themselves as unassailable are of course nothing new, finding manifold precedents across Western histories of colonialism and enslavement. That the human subjects of these dispossessions continue to resonate as moral problems that, in the circular logic of power, require sovereign curtailment, suggests that, like those of statehood, the right to personal autonomy for black subjects remains in question in the post-emancipatory present.

Reversal of this erosion of hard won freedoms requires interrogation of the ways in which intellectual, scientific and economic capital has been accrued, but also, as P Gabrielle Foreman shows, how bodies have been de-subjectified, acts of mourning interrupted, the significance of major life events denied and memories overwritten. The post-mortem objectification of an individual enslaved in life is the subject of Foreman's piece, 'New England's Fortune: An Inheritance of Black Bodies and Bones,' which tracks what she calls the 'continuous possessive investments and emancipatory challenges' stemming from the ongoing reproduction of slave remains as material legacies yielding intellectual and professional dividends to the descendants of slaveholders for more than a century after the ending of slavery in New England. The understandable prominence given Emancipation at the end of the US Civil War in 1865, which resulted in freedom for six million African Americans in the US South, tends to an emphasis on slavery as a Southern phenomenon. Foreman however points to the implication of those states – eg Connecticut – whose relatively early – from the point of view of slaveholders – manumission of enslaved African Americans permitted the development of a view of the Northern states, bolstered by abolitionist activity in the nineteenth century, as racially progressive, in ongoing acts of oppression that exploited in death the bodies of black people enslaved in life. Unravelling the tale of an enslaved man, Fortune, the property of physician Dr Preserved Porter, Foreman maps Fortune's post-mortem separation from communal rituals of burial and mourning, his journey through dissection and skeletonization, his renaming as 'Larry' in a final stripping away of even the identity of chattelhood, his bequeathing as a medical model and a plaything through generations of Porters until finally his remains were donated to a museum and exhibited for decades as items of local interest. In contrast to the picturesque narrative framing their public display, the bones themselves provide an oppositional text which reveals details of the history of violence experienced in life and in death, as well as a monument to histories erased in revisionist accounts of white accumulations of social and medical capital, in which the debt to black bodies goes unacknowledged.

Far from constituting a final triumphant moment of emancipation, death for Fortune and the family and community he left behind signaled a transition from one form of exploitation into another, one unaccounted for in the liberal histories of medical progress, or state narratives of slavery and emancipation. Conversely, the death of John Brown by hanging following his attack on Harper's Ferry with a band of African Americans intending to enable a wider self-emancipatory rebellion, takes on a different

set of symbolic meanings in radical histories of the struggle for freedom. Rather than affirming the ultimate authority of the slave power, John Brown's death at the hands of the state pitted martyrdom against the narratives of law and discipline, using Christian religious beliefs to generate a symbol and aesthetic of resistance that could be repeatedly translated into new historical contexts and political futures. Zoe Trodd's article on 'John Brown's Spirit', traces the self-conscious ways in which, in his final days of incarceration, Brown set about constructing an epistolary persona that was messianic in character, producing death and Christian martyrdom not as images redolent of self-sacrifice in defense of religious conviction, but as functional metaphors of resistance amenable to adaptation and repetition in shifting political contexts. In African-American literary texts therefore, the 'abolitionist aesthetic of emancipatory martyrdom' Trodd identifies as emerging from the public – many were published in Northern newspapers - and private circulation of Brown's letters to his wife, family and friends is recalled and readapted in pursuit of radical emancipatory agendas - freedom from slavery, and, during Reconstruction and afterwards, from lynching, mob violence and the activities of the Ku Klux Klan. It is from Brown's fusion of martyrdom and messianism that Trodd traces the emergence of the image of the crucified black Christ in black anti-lynching writing in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in jeremiadic forms pointing to the need for re-emancipation, and through this the redemption of America. In non-fiction and fiction writing – Trodd explores James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-colored Man* and Walter White's *The Fire in the Flint* - doublings and repetitions of Brown's testamentary body in the image of the crucified Christ become central to a protest legacy in which blood sacrifice provides a model of understanding not only of the need for emancipation but gesturing towards violence as the means by which it will eventually be achieved. Despite the official position of white abolitionism as advocating an end to slavery through means based exclusively on moral suasion, Brown's status as a sacrificial object, born of his treasonous recourse to violence in the effort to overthrow slavery, provides evidence of an emancipatory current at odds with Christian pacifism sure that in the war against American oppression, as Trodd puts it, 'blood would trump ink.'

Radical fusions of emancipatory violence with liberationist religious idealism infuse much black jeremiadic writing with a logic that suggests that in the struggle for emancipation or re-emancipation in nineteenth and twentieth-century America, images of sublime sacrifice do not imply submission to victimization. Rather, the model of

messianic martyrdom – owing more to Catholic than to Evangelical Protestant narrative emphases or iconographic tendencies – provides a model for subsequent iterations of black nationalism which saw the possibility of personal sovereignty in configurations of racial autonomy based on radical reconfigurations of territory, nationhood, and in models of masculine heroism that combined the religious, the secular and a position of oppositionality that placed the radical exegesis of the mortal body, resistant to discipline and obliteration in death, a harbinger of redemption through blood sacrifice, central stage.

John Brown's attempts at emancipation, his subjection to constraint, discipline, the most brutal of punishments and final moldering abjection in the grave, provided the raw material for the symbolic resurrection of his white body as a text of future liberation, in an instance in which the otherwise exclusive alignment of the black body with the condition of enslavement is superseded by the liberatory potential of martyrdom (encrypted with/as blackness) as a form of moral and political indictment with the potential to legitimate liberatory insurrection. The instances of emancipatory typography provided by Brown and his afterlives, the slippages between the religious and the political, black and white, subjection and resurrection, man and messiah, point to the possible existence of wider categories of political subjectivity challenging the condition of 'slavehood' that refuse any alignment of the body with freedom by complicating easy assumptions that (self)emancipation reflects the final triumph of the individual and community over legally, socially or culturally sanctioned oppression. Rather it lends credence to the view that subjugation, coercion and racial tyranny are often the legacy as well as the attendants of slavery, as are the oppositional aesthetics and political models that they force into being. Celeste-Marie Bernier explores a key category of opposition in 'From Fugitive Slave to Fugitive Image in Frederick Douglass's Theory of Portraiture,' noting Douglass' creation of a visual archive that functions as a 'powerful art historical corrective' to white images of black persons, and signaling his interventions in the visual domain as, simultaneously defamiliarizing, regenerative and capable of eroding structures of difference and distance by establishing a visual rhetoric and empathetic identification between viewer and subject. This 'scopic revolution' turns the racialized gaze into an exchange that proffers the possibility of mutual recognition in a future in which new expressive languages breach the surface of reductive representations that refuse the possibility of historical or experiential depth. Expanding on her ongoing scholarship on black visual arts, Bernier

notes Douglass' significance for theories of black portraiture, specifically, in an oeuvre of self-portraiture spanning five decades, his dramatization of 'the face of the fugitive slave' as a means of counteracting the racial caricature prevalent in white visual and popular culture. Creating a thematic and formal persona that echoed his own unresolved fugitive status – literally in the years after his self-emancipation and before his manumission, most of which time was spent outside the United States, and figuratively, within an iconography of resistance that positioned him in the antebellum period as representative of the quest for universal black emancipation, and subsequently as a visual reminder that the project of liberation remained unfinished even in the late nineteenth century - Douglass, Bernier explains, presented a critique of the representation of black subjects by white artists that bore 'witness to his exposure to psychological trauma and . . . claim to . . . the interior complexities of Black subjects otherwise missing.' As his self-imaging testifies, the expression of dissatisfaction that characterized his photographic image was an attempt to translate the 'liminal position of the fugitive slave' into the liberated and liberating concept of the fugitive image, within a dissident iconography that underlines the importance of the visual arena and of scopical and aesthetic revolutions in the ongoing project of freedom. Likewise, Bernier points to the unrealized potential of related routes of scholarly enquiry, notably the need to explore the little noted relationship between frontispiece images and other illustrations and the texts in which they appear, for example in Douglass' literary autobiographies - *Narrative of the Life, My Bondage and My Freedom*, and *Life and Times* - but also in illustrated texts produced by other black writers and artists. These explorations point to the multivalent personal and textual performances at the heart of the transformative representative processes that characterized the early emancipatory project, one that understood liberation as a relative as well as an absolute condition. Like many of the other studies presented here, it points to cumulative processes, in which, over time and with effort, emancipatory activity is materialized: in the generation of archives, the revisioning of history, the identification of the significance of moments of transition, and the creation of aesthetic models that make change possible. But it also provides an indicator of the degree to which many of these potential sites of interrogation remain little understood, because the nuanced and shifting practices of individual and communal freedom around which they are configured stem from the lasting, heritable but often intangible impact of slavery and its afterlives.

This aside, the question of fugitivity brings the tension between individual sovereignty and state power once again to the fore. We can infer from Bernier's reading of Douglass' self-imaging as perpetually fugitive that acts of emancipation continue to be necessary in contexts succeeding traumatic immersion in environments characterized by exploitation, abuse and containment, of which chattelhood stands as an extreme example. If emancipation, however achieved, is a release from the circumstantial immediacy of structures of oppression, the scope and magnitude of the historical cargo of the material, social and psychological experiences that preceded it, and which cannot be left behind in this major moment of transition, implies that freedom, as an existential absolute, is in a state of deferral until such time as full restitution - political, representative, aesthetic and material - can be made. The futurist impulse that makes this deferral a catalyst for cultural production anticipating while simultaneously helping bring into being a fully emancipated future informs Candace Ward's "'In the Free': The Work of Emancipation in the Anglo-Caribbean Historical Novel.' Choosing three historical novels presenting literary acts of self-emancipation across the period from slavery, to emancipation, and into political independence, EL Joseph's *Warner Arundell: The Adventures of A Creole* (1838); Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place. The Timeless People* (1969) and Erna Brodber's Afrofuturist *The Rainmakers Mistake* (2007), Ward examines the ways in which, in response to the Caribbean specificity of their writing presents, these novels negotiate the formal and thematic terrain of historicity and fictionality, the promise and limitations of these intertwined models of narrative and political representation. The rationale facilitating Ward's examination of these three novels revolves around their shared practice of 'novelistic archaeology.' Joseph's novel remembers the Grenadian revolution of 1795-6, in a narrative act that allows fiction to supplement, even to supplant the colonial archive. If Joseph's novel is ideologically conservative, ending with the reinstatement of the earlier economic and social order operating with a modified legal system, Marshall's novel written over a century later expresses anxiety in the face of a persistent (neo)imperialism and the ongoing replication of the relationship between 'liberal metropolitan and . . . peripheral subjects' in the 'impoverished paradise' of the independent island state. But Marshall's historiographic project, Ward explains, however anxious about the contingencies on which an independent, 'emancipated' future might come into being, produces Caribbean characters outside of historical narrative categories typically casting them as either quiescent or rebellious in the face

of histories of marginalization that underpin an impoverished present. In Brodber's more recent novel, past and present co-exist simultaneously, and the acts of novelistic archaeology enacted in the earlier novels are echoed, but also finds literal expression in the unearthing of human remains, sparking a narrative piecing together of a collective history at the end of one age and the beginning of another. In conjunction with Murdoch's work on the francophone Caribbean, with its discussion of the significance of the past in delineating ethno cultural identity that is distinctively Guadeloupian while also providing a more radical reflection of the revolutionary spirit prized by French republicanism, Ward's article confirms the critical importance of tracing and tracking the literary and intellectual history of the Caribbean as a series of inter-related responses to the ways in which the memory of slavery and colonialism is everywhere embedded in quotidian acts of labour, in poverty, in cultural performance and in the ambiguous practices of migration. In doing so it also frames the Caribbean, despite its fragmented geography and linguistic diversity, as a single unitary unit of analysis. Noting a contemporary need to redefine the nation, not in terms of the state, but within a panCaribbean syncretic model rooted in diasporic experience, she also amends Perry Anderson's observations concerning the ambivalent ways in which recent historical novels engage with history, noting that the origins of the metahistorical novel in the Caribbean, as well as the need to understand its metahistorical and metafictional features as less postmodernist than postcolonialist, because of the necessary precondition of postmodernity that is colonialism's modernity. Confronting history therefore necessitates continuing reevaluation, in the present of 'what it means to be "in the free."'

Rituals of memorialization performed in the free and on American soil are the basis of the final article, Marcus Wood's 'Slavery and Syncretic Performance in the *Noite do Tambores Silenciosos*: or how *batuque*, and the *calunga* dance around with the memory of slavery,' which focuses on the ways in which slavery's memory expresses itself in contemporary Afro-Brazilian culture and specifically on the ritual, objects and dance at the heart of the ceremonial recall of a significant moment of transition and body of people marked by their absence: African's who died before entering into slavery in Brazil. Opening with an extracts from Jorge Amado's *Tenda das Milagres*, Wood establishes the dis-ease with which some expressions of elite white Brazilian culture view the syncretic performance of the ritual of the *Noite*, which seems to stem from a deeply held distrust of 'Africa' as a expressive association, as a cultural

source, as a new world inheritance, and as part of the geography of diaspora: in effect as a system of thought, memory and artistic practice that provides ritual structures that allow a 'sublime confrontation with the tragic effects and traumatic memory of slavery.' If in the Caribbean context the novel, as a stable text engaging with metafictional and metahistorical questions that arise as part of the post-colonial condition, including the tensions that arise because of the novel's bourgeois origins and the operations of the global market, works to inscribe changing horizontal affiliations into new imaginings of nation, Wood points to the performances of memory in Northeast Brazil as a model of circumatlantic performance in which specifics of local meaning derive from understandings of circumatlantic cultural diffusion born of slavery. Horizontal affiliations of diaspora with Africa at their core are therefore at the heart of Wood's analysis of the tributary space opened in the ceremonial concatenation of masquerade, drumming and dance, which ends in the silence that marks the end of a journey and the death of countless many. Drawing on a range of explanatory models including etymology, anthropology, museological studies, history and aesthetics, Wood draws out the overdetermined, elusive possibilities of meaning and origin that attend the ritual use of the calunga fetish doll, embodiment of the boundary between 'life and death, the world of the living and the world of the ancestors,' and batuque drumming. At the same time, however, he acknowledges the untranslatability of those meanings into western scholarly discourse. Indeed the incommensurability he notes of these essentially sacred forms and practices with the linguistic idiom more generally underlines the radical twist that lies at the heart of other Latin/Luso American subaltern expression, which insists not that it is unable to speak but that its expressive modes lie beyond the cognate and discursive reach of secondary modes of elucidation. Indeed, Wood seems to be pointing to a commonality of practice in which the aesthetic and the existential are linked in an articulation of the sacred that takes shape as an instance of what Paul Gilroy describes as the 'slave sublime.'<sup>vii</sup>

At the same time, the *Noite*, for all its exceptionalism, is corroboration of the wider claim that, as Alan Rice explains, 'the tropes of survival littered throughout the archive of . . . history'<sup>viii</sup> and Joseph Roach's claim that 'the memories of some peculiar times and places have become embodied in and through performance', with the genealogies of these performances 'attend[ing] to 'counter memories' or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publically enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences.'<sup>ix</sup> Like the other discussions of the work done

in social, cultural and political domains that reflects the pursuit full liberation, Wood's article illustrates the ways in which discussions of the pursuit of emancipation and the practice of freedom can take place across hemispheres, oceans, archipelagos and languages. The discussions prompt consideration of the kinds of symbolic and political acts that capture what it meant to be involved in emancipation more broadly, of 'deed[s] of justice and humanity', great and small, that have deeper psychological, sociological, and political meaning to our understanding of emancipation than is often thought. Equally, they emphasize that elaboration of the philosophical, political, existential and aesthetic questions around the nature of freedom and the nature of emancipation continue to be necessary.

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<sup>i</sup> Frederick Douglass, 'West India Emancipation,' speech delivered at Canandaigua, New York, August 3, 1857. University of Rochester Frederick Douglass Project, <https://www.lib.rochester.edu/index.cfm?PAGE=4398> Accessed 18 January, 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> Speech on the anniversary of the Abolition of Colonial Slavery Act. Cited in Jean Fagan Yellin et al, *The Harriet Jacobs Family Papers*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2: 577.

<sup>iii</sup> Abraham Lincoln, 'The Gettysburg Address.' Speech delivered on 19 November, 1863, The Gettysburg Foundation, <http://www.gettysburgfoundation.org/41> Accessed 18 January, 2015.

<sup>iv</sup> Ira Berlin, 'Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and its Meaning in American Life,' in *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era*, eds. David W Blight and Brooks D Simpson, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), 105-122, 110.

<sup>v</sup> Herbert Klein, *African Slavery in Latin American and the Caribbean*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 208.

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<sup>vi</sup> Tom Inglis, "Empowerment and Emancipation." *Adult Education Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1997): 3-17, 4-5.

<sup>vii</sup> Paul Gilroy, "'Not a Story to Pass On': Living Memory and the Slave Sublime', *The Back Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), 187-224.

<sup>viii</sup> Alan Rice, *Creating Memorials, Building Identities*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>ix</sup> Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circumatlantic Performance*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xi; 26.