Introduction

This book will examine the interplay of various factors that influenced American perceptions of slavery and other forms of unfree, coerced or forced labour in the period after the emancipation of slaves within its own borders. It argues that while, undoubtedly, the shadow of antebellum chattel slavery loomed large in the American imagination, as influential was the model of imperial antislavery practised by European powers, especially after the United States itself developed an overseas empire in the 1890s. However, representations of slavery were not only a battleground on a geopolitical level. They were also used to work out the significance of competing scientific racial ideas, and also became a way for more radical thinkers to express their distaste for such ideas, while proposing new and more broad approaches to labour problems. Abolitionists were far from simplistic humanitarians and often their approach to the problem of slavery was a pragmatic one, designed as much to maintain control and hegemonic order as to give equal rights and opportunities to the world's poorest. This was especially the case when imagining the sexual enslavement of women, as gender and race intersected to provide a potent rhetoric intended to reinforce patriarchal dominance. This period, and especially the early twentieth century, does provide a significant evolution in the ways that slaves and slavery were described and the United States' participation in international efforts to stop the phenomenon of slavery, and also increased endeavours to stamp out coercive labour practices within its own borders, reflected a foregrounding of more radical voices of resistance to the imperial standard.

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Four themes are crucial to understanding slavery in this period: how global and local American concerns intersected; how the definition of slavery evolved; how the United States used slavery to mould its post-Civil War identity; how popular culture provides the historian with a unique vision of the American imagination.

GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONCERNS

For the United States, conceptualising slavery in the late nineteenth century almost always included a reference to their own antebellum chattel slave past. The nature of slavery framed and offered a point of comparison to discussion about slavery and forced labour in all other contexts, whether in the post-emancipation US itself, in American colonies or in the world more broadly. Since 1865, the transatlantic slave system and especially the role of English-speaking North America has also been foregrounded by scholars of slavery, leaving many non-experts with the impression that it was the only form of slavery. School and university curriculums also reinforce the notion that transatlantic slavery is the foremost, if not only, example of its kind. Partly this is due to the important self-expression in recent years of the African diaspora, and also to the availability of resources to study this era. The visible legacy and scars left by the slave era on United States society and culture are also crucial here. In the period immediately after emancipation, the United States struggled, and partially failed, to take account of its slave past. By negating its horrors with the mythologizing and romanticising of the Jim Crow era, the pre-war abolitionist narrative of the importance and power of free labour was minimised, and the opportunity was lost to make more sweeping labour reforms. This manipulation of the story of domestic slavery naturally impacted on the ways that the United States acted in the world in regards to slavery encountered elsewhere.

A transatlantic abolitionist alliance existed in the early part of the nineteenth century and this affected the ways that people on both sides of the Atlantic conceptualised slavery. Britain came to define itself as an abolitionist nation in this period, with its values and self-perception underpinned by religious and economic motives for ending slavery, and thus defining itself as a modern nation. Once the transatlantic slave trade had been legally abolished in 1807, and slavery abolished in British territories in 1834, British abolitionists turned their attention elsewhere within the Atlantic world. As Maurice Bric has argued, the World's Anti-Slavery convention of 1840, held in London, had universal, international

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aims, although almost all of the discussion focused on slavery in the Atlantic world.[1] Bric's work demonstrates that, although the fight against slavery was conceived as a global endeavour, it was US chattel slavery that drew the world's attention. Slavery in many locales was on the agenda at the World Convention, but it is the US context that dominated discussions then and so perhaps it is natural that scholars have since followed this lead and that the US itself found it so challenging to objectively consider slavery elsewhere. American abolitionists always had a problematic relationship with their Anglophone brothers and sisters, but shared the all-consuming goal of ending slavery within the United States. Other types of forced labour and coercive practices, wherever they existed, were rarely considered during this period, rather the chattel slavery of people of African descent was an all-consuming evil for abolitionists. When slavery was abolished after the American Civil War, the American abolition movement had little drive to reconvene and turn globally, as the British one did. Despite an interest in slavery and forced labour around the world, it was the transatlantic context which continued to draw British attention even after it had affected its own abolition in its colonial holdings. Richard Huzzey has shown that while *Uncle Tom's Cabin* created abolition fever among British readers, concerns over the aftermath of slavery in the Caribbean continued to occupy many in Britain. He sees the British and American conceptions of slavery and possibilities for its abolition as being distinct during the middle years of the nineteenth century.[2] I argue that this trend continued in the later period, with two separate traditions that are nonetheless of mutual influence.

As well as an ongoing concern with the Atlantic world, those thinking about slavery in the later nineteenth century also became increasingly focused on Africa and the diversity of its slavery. This had an important conceptual function because in the minds of both British and American readers, 'slavery' as a concept became something more than the chattel slavery found in the New World, and the 'slave trade' something more than the Atlantic Ocean crossing. The concept of Africans as protagonists and not merely victims of slavery was recognised by contemporaries and also grappled with by modern scholars and political leaders who

[1] Maurice Bric, 'Debating Slavery and Empire', in William Mulligan and Maurice Bric, eds., *A Global History of Anti-Slavery Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Palgrave, 2013), p. 61.

[2] Richard Huzzey, *Freedom Burning: Anti-Slavery and Empire in Victorian Britain* (Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 22.

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acknowledge that reparations are a thorny issue when it is impossible to differentiate between the heirs of perpetrators and the heirs of victims. Patrick Manning's work has shown that slavery within Africa in this period was incredibly diverse and that outsiders struggled to grasp its complexity. He sees two separate systems at work with two very different demographic drivers: the East African and West African slave systems.[3] This goes some way to explaining the early confusion and misunderstanding on the part of Americans about the East African slave system, and the desire of conservative American commentators to use global slavery to deflect attention from America's recent history of slavery.

British and American attention when examining slavery was not solely focused on the African continent. The British were increasingly becoming interested in the Ottoman Empire and their reporting of conditions of enslavement found there also caught the imagination of the American public. Yusuf Hakan Erdem has explored the ambivalence of British and American audiences who, on the one hand, railed against such backwards and cruel forms of oppression, but at the same time felt powerless to intervene because slavery was thought to be so embedded within Ottoman culture.[4] The nature of slavery, especially its distinctive features such as the military slaves of the *devshirme* and the female slavery of the Harem fascinated Western readers, who deployed the Orientalist gaze in their assessment of the perpetrators and victims of the system. The plight of female slaves in the Ottoman Empire, prominent in American newspapers in the 1870s, prefigured, by a generation, the later 'white slavery' panic which operated on both sides of the Atlantic, in which campaigners, often with a conservative agenda to reinforce the patriarchy by restricting the movement and freedoms of single women, especially in urban areas, highlighted or over exaggerated the plight of white women trafficked to or within the United States for use as prostitutes. Therefore, slavery and forced labour was a fact of life for many people around the globe – the Americas, Africa and the Middle East and elsewhere – but it was also a global phenomenon in another way. Matthew Hopper argues that slavery in the Indian Ocean world, as well as the Atlantic world, cannot be considered closed systems; both were influenced by global economic trends and developments. To imagine that Indian Ocean slavery was isolated and unique, timeless and static or of a peculiar nature due to the

[3] Patrick Manning, *Slavery and African Life: Occidental, Oriental and African Slave Trades* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 45, 175.

[4] Yusuf Hakan Erdem, *Slavery in the Ottoman Empire and Its Demise 1800–1909* (Macmillan, 1996), p. 72.

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ethnic and religious origin of its perpetrators, is to fall into the trap of listening too closely to the nineteenth century travellers who elucidated it for readers on both sides of the Atlantic. Instead, the demand for labour on the plantations supplying tropical products, which were increasingly sought after in an age of global markets, worked in similar ways on slave trades and slaveries around the world.[5] However, this was also an era in which, increasingly, legal prohibition of the slave trade and slavery impacted on the ways that Americans imagined slaves and slave owners, as local, national and international law worked to fix, but ironically to make more malleable, the definition of slavery.

LEGAL PROHIBITION AND THE DEFINITION OF SLAVERY

The long history of slavery and abolition reveals the incredible diversity in the nature of slavery itself, but also in the ways that it was abolished in different contexts around the world. Abolition could be immediate, as in southern states of the United States, or gradual, as in some northern states, which, for example, began by freeing slaves of particular ages. Abolition was driven by a grass roots movement and resisted by slave-owning power brokers, as in the case of the transatlantic slave trade in Britain, or secured by the erosion of the control of slaves, who left their plantations and sought free labour employment of their own accord, as in the case of some regions of Brazil. A key factor in the abolitions of the nineteenth century onwards was the goal of legal prohibition. Sometimes this post-dated de facto freeing of slaves, but in many cases triggered it, imposing a change of practice on the ground. Legal prohibitions covered diverse jurisdictions, and were enacted on a local, regional, national or imperial basis. Seymour Drescher has surveyed many different abolition models in the Atlantic world region and has shown how political and economic change interplayed to cause legal prohibition of slavery or the slave trade. Crucially for this work, he also charts the importance in the nineteenth century of the expansion of antislavery thinking in the Atlantic world public sphere, showing that this impacted on the perceived potential for freedom understood by the enslaved.[6] This book

[5] Matthew Hopper, *Slaves of One Master: Globalisation and Slavery in Arabia in the Age of Empire* (Yale University Press, 2015), pp. 6–7, 21, 35.

[6] Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: a History of Slavery and Anti-Slavery* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 363.

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argues that it also changed the meaning of the term 'slavery' itself, as the legal prohibition movement of the period solidified the definition of slavery at the very time when forced and coercive labour practices were diversifying and expanding.

Legal prohibition of slavery was a significant development because it marked not only the evolution of practice and definition within particular jurisdictions, but also represented a change on a transnational level. Jenny Martinez has argued that the campaigns to abolish the slave trade were the first international humanitarian campaigns that sought to develop a body of law that would function across national boundaries. She traces the ways in which nations around the Atlantic Ocean region collaborated, with greater or lesser success, to enforce antislavery law. The ostracisation of slave traders through this law-making process meant that by the middle of the nineteenth century, slave traders were perceived by many nations as *hostis humani generis* (enemies of mankind – the moral, economic and legal equivalents of pirates).[7] However, while with hindsight we can see the development of an antislavery trajectory, the extent to which these laws affected the behaviour of individuals and nations undertaking slave trading practices is not always clear. And as Jean Allain's work has pointed out, it was only much later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that international abolition law attempted a truly global, universal reach. Although in 1885, the British suggested at the Berlin conference that slavery was against the law of humanity, this declaration was not adopted as many other nations, for political reasons due to imperial competition, were loath to side with the British. However, Allain has shown that by the early twentieth century, the notion of a civilised nation dominated and nations seeking recognition of their sovereignty on a global scale had to prove they had achieved 'civilisation', including conforming to norms such as the forbidding of polygamy, suttee and slavery.[8] Therefore, for the United States, emerging from a fratricidal civil war fought over the contentious issue of slavery, the attractiveness of imperial antislavery ideology was that it allowed for favourable comparisons with other antislavery powers such as Britain, and also gave the nation a veneer of 'civilisation' on the world stage. But nations merely publicly deploying this antislavery ideology did not always result in an improvement in conditions for the enslaved.

[7] Jenny Martinez, *The Slave Trade and the Origins of International Human Rights Law* (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 13, 114.

[8] Jean Allain, *The Law and Slavery* (Brill, 2015), pp. 88, 124.

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Although the achievement of and reinforcement of legal prohibition was, and still is, an important aspect of antislavery work, it should not be taken as the final measure of success or indeed that it signifies no further need for abolition campaigning. Joel Quirk argues that legal prohibition often only served to push abusive labour practices geographically elsewhere or give it another name.[9] This book builds on Quirk's point and suggests that because some practices continued to exist but no longer fell into the legal definition of what counted as slavery, actually this changed the very nature of what the term 'slavery' meant in public discourse, and it became much broader over time. Therefore, in popular literature, the legal definition of 'slavery' was not adhered to, but rather the term expanded to include a diverse range of practices. This evolution has important ramification for the use of the term in the twenty-first-century context, as neo-abolitionists also include many labour practices and human relationships in the scope of 'modern slavery'.

This expansion is not a rhetorical manoeuvre, but rather reveals the reality of evolving types of slavery. Kevin Grant has conceptualised these as 'new slaveries', emerging because of international legal attempts to prohibit 'slavery' and because of European imperialism. I would add that American imperialism also facilitated the evolution of slavery on a global scale. Grant argues that these new slaveries differ from 'old slavery' in only one regard, their legality. The use of *corvée* and contract labour, with some labourers dislocated from their homes, moving long distances to work, as well as coercive practices designed to encourage the development of new staple crops, were all typical in imperial regions worldwide.[10] Such labour situations did not go unchallenged by activists and in the popular press, but Grant argues that such moral panics as the Congo horror distorts our understanding of slavery in the period, because it suggests that the treatment of workers in the Congo was an isolated incident, whereas in truth it should be considered typical.[11]

However, Grant's all-encompassing definition of slavery is a controversial one. Other scholars such as William Clarence-Smith see 'slavery' as something distinct from serfdom and other forms of tied labour. Clarence-Smith works on the Indian Ocean slave trade, and he argues that in that

[9] Joel Quirk, *The Anti-Slavery Project from the Slave Trade to Human Trafficking* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), p. 7.

[10] Kevin Grant, *A Civilised Savagery: Britain and the New Slaveries in Africa 1884–1926* (Routledge, 2005), pp. 2, 23.

[11] Ibid., p. 29.

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context, slavery existed alongside other coercive labour types. For example, in the pearl diving industry, free labourers worked alongside enslaved Africans and indebted Arabs, who were working off their debts. This was because of the differing nature of slave work in this region. Rather than agricultural work, many slaves were employed in maritime and urban roles, and these better lent themselves to a workforce with a range of statuses.[12] The workers themselves understood their differing position in relation to their masters, but in this book I am interested less in the conditions of enslavement experienced by the labourers, but rather how definitions of and perceptions of the work they undertook evolved over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I argue, as Grant does, that in this period there was a trend to expand the definitions of what counted as slavery, whether for reasons of antislavery activism or, as was often the case in the United States, more conservative goals to defend a particular region against an influx of migrants. It is to the theme of the identity of the United States, and how Americans perceived themselves as individuals, as communities and as a nation, that we now turn.

AMERICAN IDENTITY

Identifying particular labour relations as 'slavery' in the late-nineteenth-century United States, fulfilled the function of forming a bulwark against uncivilised people and practices in order to protect the nation. In the post-emancipation era, commentators in the United States were able to label others as slaves or slaveholders for ideological and economic gain, with little sense of irony given the nation's own recent slave past. As the United States politically used antislavery imperialism to define its humanitarian ideological imperative on a global scale, Americans also labelled 'others' as slaves for more pragmatic reasons. The ambivalent relationship of the country to immigration grew more fraught in this period, especially with the hardening of scientific racial discourse. Migrants from China were the most obvious victims of this trend, considered by nativist labourers to be a threat to wages and their livelihoods, but also associated with the general racial and ideological degradation of labour. Calling Chinese migrants 'slaves' was not a radical humanitarian act, demanding their protection, but a conservative one, demanding their exclusion. As Najia Aarim-Heriot has identified, stereotyping of the community of Chinese

[12] William Clarence-Smith, 'Overview', in Clarence-Smith, ed., *The Economics of the Indian Ocean Slave Trade of the Nineteenth Century* (Frank Cass, 1989), pp. 3, 7.

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labourers as an invasion – a 'flood' or 'swarm' – and individuals as 'dishonest' but 'servile', was an important trend in American popular culture, especially that local to the West Coast, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Identifying the Chinese migrants as 'slaves' and 'enslavers' served the same rhetorical function: to 'other' them and deny them access to American citizenship. This book argues that this urge to alienate the Chinese came simultaneously from a variety of sources, the newly popular newspaper press among them.

Other roots of the depiction of Chinese as slaves and enslavers are revealed by Carter Wilson, who states that the orthodox view of modernity in the United States claims that the old planter class died and the middle class wanted to modernise labour relations. This orthodox view also asserted that, prior to the middle of the twentieth century, it was the white masses who disenfranchised the ethnic other. Wilson challenges this, saying that the white working class was not powerful enough to do that, but rather the planter class survived, reorganised African American labour, and led the nascent industrialisation which expanded the boundaries of slavery-life practices within the United States.[13] Politicians of both political parties, still struggling with the aftermath of chattel slavery within the United States itself, feared the arrival of Chinese bonded labourers would exacerbate racial tensions and might cause race wars.[14] Therefore, they were very keen that the nation be seen, at an international level, as a place that did not tolerate slavery of any type within its borders, but only if that coincided with populist aims of limiting labour competition. Coerced and bonded labour among the African American population was tacitly permitted, provided the public outcry about such practices did not become too loud.

The most significant developments in this period that changed the United States' perception of itself was the acquisition of overseas territories. As seen in Aarim-Heriot's work, racism arising from the working and political classes defined the citizenship of the United States as racially limited because powerful nations were racially homogenous. Eric Love has shown how that idea was also transmitted to discussions about the role of natives in imperial contexts, arguing that identifying the ethnic colonial other as a slaveholder reiterated the idea that they might never be properly incorporated into the American body politic. Such views,

[13] Carter Wilson, *Racism from Slavery to Advanced Capitalism* (Sage, 1996), pp. 79, 94.

[14] Najia Aarim-Heriot, *Chinese Immigrants, African Americans and Racial Anxiety in the US 1848–82* (University of Illinois Press, 2003), pp. 10, 37.

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building on the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, held that any expansionism should be undertaken for the benefit of white Americans, and not to improve the lives of native peoples.[15] Michael Cullinane shows how such ideas moved from universities to the halls of political power, when during the election of 1900 anti-imperialism and liberty became key themes.[16] I argue that even conservative anti-imperialist campaigners used slavery and antislavery to reinforce their position, so that within a generation, even Americans typically hostile to abolition had been able to assimilate antislavery values at the heart of their political identity. This produced an unusual coalition of anti-imperialists that included radical voices such as Frederick Douglass, alongside white supremacists such as Ben Tillman. Anti-imperialists were a significant voice within American politics until World War I, when their unity was challenged by geopolitical demands.[17]

The imperial adventure was also conflicting for the United States because it was unsure how to assimilate a settler colonial community into its sense of self, especially in places such as Hawaii and Alaska where natives who were ethnic others also lived. Settler colonial communities often defined themselves as civilised and modern in juxtaposition with the natives and, as Walter Hixson has shown, however much the natives mimicked white society, they were unable to achieve recognition and assimilation.[18] The settler colonial community, as in European imperial contexts, made use of labour situations that were not always clearly distinct from slavery, such as, for example, in the Hawaiian sugar plantations employing Chinese and Japanese contract labourers. Another pragmatic rhetorical positioning by settler colonialists, for example in the Philippines, made use of accusations of slavery amongst natives to justify military intervention in a particular region, similar to tactics deployed and honed over decades of warfare against the Native Americans of the continental United States. As Michael Salman has shown, slavery was central to the relationship between American conquerors and Filipino natives. Slavery was legally abolished in the Philippines in 1903, but ending the practice in actuality took many more years, and Salman argues that pro-imperialists in the United States used the protracted ending of slavery and slavery-like practices as evidence

[15] Eric Love, *Race over Empire: Race and Imperialism 1865–1900* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004), pp. xvi, 18.
[16] Michael Patrick Cullinane, *Liberty and American Anti-imperialism* (Palgrave, 2012), p. 54.
[17] Ibid., pp. 69, 179.
[18] Walter Hixon, *American Settler Colonialism: a History* (Palgrave, 2013), p. 146.

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of the backwards and inferior nature of the Philippine people, and their unpreparedness for self-government. This did not silence voices who feared that the Philippines were racially unprepared for the abolition of slavery, because inferior races would never accept the self-motivated moral duty of free labour.[19]

The connection between theories of human development, slavery and imperialism is explored in depth by Thomas McCarthy. He argues that, usually hostile to European imperialist theorising, the United States only experienced a union of nationalism and neo-racism at the turn of the twentieth century, as it became an imperial power. In this period, the nation came to be envisioned in racial terms, with strength linked to homogeneity, thus problematising further the position of African Americans, Native Americans and recent immigrants.[20] I argue that in this period, the definition of whiteness extended to incorporate a range of immigrant communities and linked with this is the desirability of their adopting free labour ideologies. Ideally for American conservatives, where it persisted both within and without the nation's borders, slavery and forced labour remained something associated still with the racial other. Radical voices, such as Franz Boas, Frederick Douglass and W. E. B. DuBois persisted though, drawing the attention of the public to slavery and forced labour in terms of a problem that resonated with all humanity and not solely groups in the racial hierarchy deemed to be uncivilised.[21] In order to reclaim such voices, Paul Gilroy argues, we need to move beyond national boundaries and think about the Atlantic perspective more broadly. This book extends this further and tries to develop a more global outlook. Gilroy shows that from the early nineteenth century onwards, transatlantic cultural exchange dramatically influenced both radical and conservative African American perspectives, acknowledging that for some African Americans grappling with concepts of race, nation and culture, there was no benefit in emphasising a pan-African identity, but rather working through double consciousness; they fitted themselves into an alternative racial hierarchy.[22] But both radical

[19] Michael Salman, *The Embarrassment of Slavery: Controversies over Bondage and Nationalism in the American Colonial Philippines* (University of California Press, 2001), p. 99.
[20] Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 8.
[21] Ibid., p. 82.
[22] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Verso, 1998), pp. 6, 24.

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and conservative African American commentators felt compelled to use the story of global slavery to reflect on their own challenging, vulnerable and conflicted position within the United States and this narrative became increasingly influential for white humanitarians too.

When conceiving of slavery, by negotiating complex spaces, framed by racial theories between national identity and imperial goals, American humanitarians used European imperialist theories and the United States' own domestic experience of abolition to create a moral empire. Ian Tyrell has explored the ways in which missionaries and antislavery activists occupied the new expanded public space on an international stage, discussing regions of the world in which the United States had a direct political interest, regions where it hoped to expand its role and regions where reports about various conceptions of slavery supported Americans' sense of their own developing identity in the world. World War I represented an important hiatus, as after the shock of the devastation and extent of loss of life of the war, a sea change took place in the perceived potential of reform, especially religious reform, and of the internationalisation agenda.[23] Domestically, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a crucial period in the evolution of notions of labour, and intellectual narratives were changing on a global scale, as they were in the United States as it examined its own labour relations. There had been a long history of diverse types of unfree labour in the country, but fundamentally, those who worked for themselves were seen as more industrious than those who worked for someone else, because they might grow lazy and careless. This caricature was popular in depictions of chattel slavery. According to David Brody, the abolition message worked in the United States partly because it appealed directly to labour, suggesting that slavery was a system which degraded labour.[24] This message could hit home because it did not require a readjustment of racist beliefs on the part of the American workforce, as shown in the post-emancipation era when ordinary Americans were able to support antislavery values while tolerating slavery-like practices on their own doorstep. The importance of ordinary Americans is central to the story this book tells about conceptions of slavery, and an examination of popular cultural sources shows how ideas were created and reproduced for a diverse readership.

[23] Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World: the Creation of America's Moral Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 24, 240.

[24] David Brody, *In Labor's Cause: Main themes on the History of the American Worker* (Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 10–12.

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POPULAR CULTURE

Textual and visual artefacts of popular culture told the story of the domestic impact of antebellum chattel slavery and communicated to Americans the nature of slavery ongoing overseas. Both were underpinned by racial concepts of 'the other' and played on the American imagination of the period. The late nineteenth century saw the development of mass culture for the first time, and objects and stories depicting cultural difference, especially where it was perceived that that culture was about to be lost, whether in a domestic or global context, were tremendously popular. The idea of a *volkgeist,* or folk spirit, emerged in sociological thinking during this period, and interest in cultural output such as blues songs and Uncle Remus folktales, feared disappearing in the modernising, urbanising world, were a key part of this.[25] For white Americans, this type of popular culture tied into the romantic notions of the slave past, in which all African Americans were contented in plantation life. Kenneth Goings argues that, during the Jim Crow era, yearning for the nostalgic slave past by white households triggered the collection of black memorabilia. Owning black memorabilia for whites stood in for owning slaves, which had been unjustly taken from them. Figurines and other artifacts depicting 'Sambo', the happy slave who defended slavery no matter what his master did to him, and Uncle Mose, the loyal retainer who served quietly and happily, served to metaphorically re-enslave African Americans in the post-emancipation era. For the Lost Cause mythologizing of the American slave past, the concept that slaves had been contented and wanted to serve their masters was fundamental to the world view of southerners.[26] But some black Americans subverted such culture from white hegemonic patterns of musicality and storytelling, to reinforce the idea of distinctiveness, sourced from Africa, while for other black Americans, this type of artefact also reinforced their difference, and indeed progress, from the culture of Africans still living in Africa.

As William Van Deburg has argued, there was a pre–Civil War precedent for the development of a slavery-referring culture designed to control African Americans but providing them with avenues to autonomy. American minstrel shows thrived in the mid-nineteenth century, playing on the racial stereotypes of the era by using stock characters such as Zip

[25] Brad Evans, *Before Cultures: the Ethnographic Imagination in American Literature 1865–1920* (University of Chicago, 2005), pp. 7–9.

[26] Kenneth Goings, *Mammy and Uncle Mose: Black Collectibles and American Stereotyping* (University Press of Indiana, 1994), pp. xix, xxi, 67.

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Coon and Jim Crow, and treating black women in a misogynistic way. These shows bore little resemblance to the realities of slave life, and performers of such shows were nervous of alienating a core audience by not appearing pro-slavery enough.[27] However, Van Deburg does highlight a strand of post-war African American cultural representation that challenged the conservative Jim Crow view, and these were the artefacts that celebrated pan-Africanism and depicted abolitionists as heroes.[28] As Leslie King-Hammond has shown, in rare cases, white producers of culture also showed an empathy with the lives of the enslaved and formerly enslaved in the United States. An example of this is the photography of Huestis P. Cook from the 1890s. A forerunner of the New Deal photographers of a later generation, Cook photographed the interiors of cabins of African American sharecroppers, descendants of slaves who remained in a bonded labour situation; this reflected a new type of aesthetic value and foregrounded the self-expression of this often voiceless class of people.[29] As John Michael Vlach has shown, understanding the depiction of the enslaved and formerly enslaved in this period must be done with sensitivity to the gaze of the producer and the viewer of the artefact. He challenges us to ask whether the gaze is coming from below, showing respect, or from above, taking possession due to a position of superiority.[30] Whether depicting a mode of nostalgia, acceptance or resistance, cultural artefacts from the United States of this period are unified in their concern with slavery and its legacy.

This is also true of the most important cultural output of the period, which impacted the understanding of the world of both white and black Americans, the new types of mass media. Faster global communications ensured that first newspapers and then later radio and the moving picture could transmit news faster and more efficiently and cheaply than ever before. These types of mass media had a homogenising effect on American culture, ensuring that Americans across the country had similar access to the latest reports about slavery from across the world and ironing out

[27] William Van Deburg, *Slavery and Race in American Popular Culture* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 46.

[28] Ibid., p. 120.

[29] Leslie King-Hammond, 'Identifying Spaces of Blackness: the Aesthetic of Resistance and Identity in American Plantation Art', in Angela Mack & Stephen G. Hoffus, eds., *Landscape of Slavery: the Plantation in American Art* (University of South Carolina Press, 2008), p. 71.

[30] John Michael Vlach, *The Planter's Prospect: Privilege and Slavery in Plantation Paintings* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 1.

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local differences in perception. As Andie Tucher has argued, prior to the American Civil War, local concerns were to the fore in newspaper reporting with urban and rural regions deeply suspicious of one another, and international stories were often dealt with cursorily, by copying from other newspapers.[31] However, post-war, the situation changed, and slavery in a global context provided important fodder for newspapers across the United States. This book will examine several peaks in news reporting concerning slavery, including the white slavery in Armenia in the 1870s, and even more strikingly the horrors on the rubber plantations in the Congo in the earliest years of the twentieth century. Newspaper reports and books and pamphlets based on the first-hand reports of black travellers, such as George Washington Williams and William Shepherd, that were cheap to buy, spread the campaign to expose Leopold's misdeeds. Theirs is the 'heroism' in the title of Adam Hochschild's book, before later Edmund Morel and Roger Casement took up the fight against slavery in the Congo.[32] But many pro-Leopold articles and pamphlets also emerged during the years when outrage about the slavery perpetrated in the Congo by the Belgians was at its height, because Leopold and his representatives were master manipulators of the press.[33]

The immediate political reaction to news from the Congo and the reaction of ordinary Americans was possible because of the technological development of new information systems towards the end of the century. By the 1890s, cables were much improved and journalists were able to transmit information more quickly – transmitted across the Atlantic in a couple of hours compared to news on board ship which would take seven days to cross from New York to London. According to John Britton, political tensions seemed heightened and exacerbated because of this increased speed. The news broadcast in newspapers tended to reflect popular cultural values such as an aggressive masculinity, but also Giovanna Dell 'Orto argues, constructed social meaning too. This period saw an increase in American nationalism and this was partly due to the interplay between mass media and popular opinion. Politicians and businessmen were proactive in this sphere, realising that whoever built this technology would control it, and used cable communications to further

[31] Andie Tucher, *Froth and Scum: Truth, Beauty, Goodness and the Ax Murderer in America's First Mass Medium* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994), pp. 88, 95.

[32] Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: a story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Macmillan, 1999), p. 152.

[33] Ibid., p. 237.

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business interests, for example, around the Panama Canal.[34] But newspaper reports, expressed in accessible terms for the layperson, were the most powerful tool in allowing Americans to interpret the complex reports about slavery emerging from foreign correspondents. Despite a fear that the so-called 'yellow press' was eroding American values, the mass media portrayed itself as on the public's side, helping them interpret a complex world.[35] However, Karen Roggenkamp urges us to remember that in mass culture of this period, entertainment was always more important than fact, and finding a 'story', which 'sold', sometimes trumped authenticity of the narrative. This was especially true in genres such as crime fiction and its similarities to true crime accounts of murderess Lizzie Borden in the newspapers.[36] Similarly, when Armenian slavery was exposed in American newspapers of the 1870s, the descriptions of harems and enslavement of white women owed a great deal to fictional accounts describing similar adventures.

American newspapers of this period were also important in conveying messages about racial otherness of different races at home and abroad through their prolific use of cartooning. Three of the most influential were *Harper's Weekly*, *Puck* and *Judge*, all of which played on stereotypes, well known throughout society, to propagate their partisan views about slavery and imperialism.[37] Newspapers were also crucial to the creation of a distinctive African American voice, identity and community, both before the Civil War, when abolition was the focus, and after, when diverse issues such as voting, segregation, lynching and colonisation of Africa appeared frequently in the black press.[38] But, as Gerald Baldasty has shown, in both the black and white press, by the end of the nineteenth century, news had become an important commodity, valued by people at all levels of American society. Increases in literacy, urbanisation and industrialisation

[34] John Britton, *Cables, Crises and the Press: the Geopolitics of the New International Information System 1866–1903* (University of New Mexico Press, 2013), pp. 6, 18–20. Giovanna Dell'Orto, *American Journalism and International Relations: Foreign Correspondence from the Early Republic to the Digital Era* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 3.

[35] Dell'Orto, *American Journalism and International Relations*, p. 64.

[36] Karen Roggenkamp, *Narrating the News: New journalism and Literary Genre in Late Nineteenth Century American Newspapers and Fiction* (Kent State University Press, 2005), pp. xii, 56.

[37] Richard Rice, 'Race and Ethnic Imagery', in David B. Sachsman, S. Kittrell Rushing & Ray Morris Jr., eds., *Seeking a Voice: Images of Race and Gender in the Nineteenth Century Press* (Purdue University Press, 2009), p. 27.

[38] Aleen J. Ratzlaff, 'Ebony Triangle: The Black Newspaper Network in Kansas 1878–1900', in Sachsman et al, *Seeking a Voice*, p. 120.

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all changed the press and people's perceptions of it, as newspapers became big business. From the late nineteenth century onwards, journalism itself changed too, as journalists were encouraged to go and seek out stories for themselves, to make the news rather than passively waiting for stories to come to them.[39] This became an obvious tactic in the early-twentieth-century white slavery panic, centred initially on Chicago and then spreading to other cities. This panic was initially driven by journalism in the short-lived Chicago newspaper *The Day Book*, which had to seek sensational stories to attract both male and female readers as it was advertisement-free. But many newspapers, even the large ones surviving by their advertising revenue, such as those published by William Randolph Hearst like the *New York Journal*, published stories with an increasingly populist appeal, presenting themselves as the people's champions, rooting out and challenging political corruption. New immigrants were catered for with newspapers in their own languages, and indeed Joseph Pulitzer, himself an Hungarian Jewish immigrant, made his fortune marketing cheap newspapers to foreign-born readers before buying the Anglophone *St Louis Post-Dispatch* and the rival to Hearst, the *New York World*.[40] This book argues that stories about slavery from around the world made good copy for ambitious newspapers of this era, and that the stories they published shaped global slavery in the American imagination. However, this shaping did not occur consistently throughout the period covered by this book. Instead, this timeframe encompasses considerable evolution in representations of slavery.

CHRONOLOGY

Interrogating the evolving definition and perception of slavery must naturally take into account change over time and the chronological scope of the research becomes significant. The history of slavery and antislavery is punctuated by important dates that are thought to act as points of momentous change, 1807 being one of the most obvious. However this book will argue that although moments of legal prohibition of slavery and slavery-like practices cannot be ignored, far more important are the undercurrent of economic and cultural nuances that determine the

[39] Gerald Baldasty, *The Commercialisation of News in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 4, 37.

[40] Michael Emery, Edwin Emery & Nancy Roberts, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media* (Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 175, 217.

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attitudes of ordinary people, and of their political representatives, towards slavery as an institution and as a practice. While this book chooses as its starting point the end of the American Civil War and as its end point the start of the First World War, some examples chosen for illustration come from before or after these points. This has been done deliberately so that these moments of change might be interrogated. What really did change at these crucial 'full stops' of history?

This book is about the perceptions of slavery in the United States after the emancipation of chattel slaves was passed into law following the fratricidal Civil War. It specifically addresses the tensions felt in a still-divided nation coming to terms with its 'slavery days' in the antebellum era, while simultaneously addressing continuation of forced labour practices within the United States itself, and in the world more broadly. Therefore, although the context of emancipation is fundamental to the scope of this book, it was also important to show that the intellectual and political trends in the ways that pro- and antislavery campaigners talked about enslavement domestically and globally before the Civil War were directly influential on the discourse adopted afterwards. Antebellum chattel slavery was ideologically and symbolically the reference point for much post-emancipation US debate on the topic but also the ramifications of its legacy were felt in more practical ways as the structures of enslavement, especially, although not solely, in the southern states, were resistant to dismantling and new labour forms, sometimes modelled on the control and order afforded whites by chattel slavery, were constituted. In many ways, although a tremendously important legal change took place in the post-war years, for the United States 'slavery days' were not part of the historic past during the period covered by this book.

Similarly, the choice of World War I as an end point reflects the significance of this cataclysmic conflict on the economic, political and cultural world, not only in the United States but also among the European imperial nations and those colonial subjects who fought for them. This was also a moment of cultural shock and confusion in the United States. The nation had begun to recover from the horrors of its Civil War and had confidently emerged on to the world stage, depicting itself as a modern, progressive, powerful nation to compete with its European rivals. Depressions in the 1870s and the 1890s had caused a few years of pause, but more broadly, the United States grappled with its new role as a regional and even oceanic power. The coming of the First World War created confusion about national identity both in terms of the heritage of its own immigrant population and, from 1917, its hesitant role intervening in European power politics. Despite

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this, there was much continuity between pre- and post-war situations regarding the interpretation of slavery and forced labour on a global scale. Rather, this is a period of the gradual evolution continuing until World War II and beyond, of the ideologies of scientific racism, of international humanitarianism and of radical resistance to labour control.

Between these two milestone moments, the end of one traumatic war and the beginning of another, this book traces some important threads of change in the way that the people of the United States conceived slavery. The manipulation of stories of chattel slavery and the emergence of new forms of forced labour to restrict the freedoms of the formerly enslaved, while they consistently resisted these controls, occupied the American imagination, simultaneously with the assimilation of a global understanding of new forms of enslavement both in territories to which the United States and her citizens laid claim and in the wider world. The ways that European imperial powers used antislavery rhetoric as part of their expansionist doctrine in this era of high empire was influential in the United States, as pro- and anti-imperialists talked about slavery to further their own narrower political ends. During this period, slavery was no longer a problem for discussion within nations (and their empires) as an international voice emerged, drawing a picture of slavery as a crime against humanity and depicting its defeat as part of the inexorable trend towards civilisation and modernity. Supporting all of these threads of discussion about slavery was the emerging discourse around scientific racism and Social Darwinism, which ranked races and peoples according to a racial hierarchy and according to racially predetermined traits and behaviours while, at the same time, recruiting a linear understanding of history in which certain races were ahead and more advanced, and others could be encouraged to catch up if the superior races performed their pedagogical duties. Let us now explore the ways that this book presents the research evidence, gathered from American newspapers (both textual and visual representations) and pamphlets and books published on both sides of the Atlantic by American and British authors, which were influential on the perceptions of an American readership of slavery and the slave trade.

THE RHETORIC OF UNITED STATES SLAVERY

Ways of writing and thinking about slavery did change dramatically as a result of the successful abolition of slavery as an outcome of the American Civil War, but a stark before and after distinction simply does

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not work. Rather the conceptualisation of slavery prior to the war was limited in the minds of most commentators to the chattel slavery of African Americans within the southern United States. The weight of this imaginary was very powerful and later, even when concepts of global slavery were important in the popular mind, moving away from the notion of slavery as something that had only happened in the south prior to the war was very difficult. However, this notion was highly contested during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as many newly freed African Americans and their descendants struggled to resist a narrative that dismissed their experience under slavery as benevolent and nurturing, while working equally hard to resist the labour and criminal justice practices that sought to trap them (and other impoverished Americans) in forced labour situations.

When Americans did turn their attention away from their domestic situations and outwards towards slavery in the region and the wider world, the archetype of their own form of chattel slavery served as a central point of comparison, with almost all other types of slavery and forced labour being compared either directly or implicitly with the slavery of the antebellum south. The ubiquitous symbols of slavery such as chains and whips were depicted both before and after the Civil War by commentators intending to raise awareness of abusive labour practices. But because the legacy of the Jim Crow era meant that the memory of slavery became polarised and distorted, with many white Americans believing in the mythologizing about a benevolent slave past, comparisons were not being made with the true experience of chattel slavery but rather a corrupted memory of it. The reasons for comparison were also often highly political, designed to justify the furthering of the imperialist or anti-imperialist narrative, or domestically, designed to prevent the immigration to the United States of particular ethnic groups. However, also strong was the legacy of the abolitionists' way of talking about slavery, and although many abolitionists turned their attention to new causes in the later nineteenth century, their tropes and narrative structures lived on in the ways that slavery was discussed in the emancipation era. They taught later writers a great deal, for example in the use of first-person narratives to expose the true horrors of slavery, and also in how to construct an ideal victim, as in the case of the white slavery panic. This book argues that powerful notions of what it meant to name something as slavery, or someone as a slave, continued to build and evolve in the period after emancipation, but were strongly influenced by rhetorical practices from the era prior to the Civil War. However, these influences did not emerge

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solely from a domestic United States context, but rather from the nation's interaction with its important cultural influencer, Great Britain, and with others on the global stage.

GLOBAL AND TRANSATLANTIC INFLUENCES

Conceptions of slavery in this period did evolve in response to the further development of a European imperial world as the United States mirrored, and sometimes challenged, the ways that slavery and antislavery were depicted in the European imperial context. The British were especially influential in the construction of a modern antislavery imperialism which some in the United States desired to adopt for their own political purposes. By the end of the nineteenth century, this was not solely a British movement as an international approach to global problems which crossed national borders, such as the slave trade, was becoming increasingly tenable. Complex voices emerged on the global stage, as national political expediency was often challenged by humanitarian organisations working for the good of the enslaved. However, many of these organisations still espoused the liberal values of capitalist development and Christian civilisation, and some doubted the readiness of the enslaved to live fully free and independent lives. But an increasingly radical voice emerged in the early twentieth century which demanded a reconsideration of the racial hierarchy and the doctrine of deterministic progression.

The United States as a political and newly minted imperial nation, wanted to be part of the antislavery consensus built by the British and applied to its territorial holdings, but like the British, it realised that there was a significant gap between the idealistic rhetoric of the abolition of slavery and the pragmatic control of the labouring 'other' whether at home or abroad. Like the British, the Americans manipulated the definition of slavery for their own end and to defend their propensity to act or ignore incidents of labour abuse. While international law was beginning to formulate definitions of slavery and the slave trade, in one sense fixing it, in other ways the definition became more boundless and mutable during this period, as the term was rhetorically deployed more widely than it had been in the antebellum era, when 'slavery' in almost every case meant chattel slavery of people of African descent.

The trade in and movement of slaves became much more of a global concept. After the last transatlantic slaver voyage in 1866, attention turned to other networks facilitating the movement of bound or forced

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labourers, including indentured labourers. Again, the varied uses of the term ‘slavery’ here had political overtones. The conservative use of the term in this context often acted as a justification for the exclusion of free labourers on the grounds that they were in reality enslaved and must not be allowed to pollute the American system. However the more radical use of the term exposed labour injustices and called on governments globally to act to prevent the systemic abuses that allowed capitalists to seek vulnerable workers, coerce them to move across long distances, and then work them in horrific conditions sometimes involving restriction of movement and refusal of wages. Once again, the movement and evolution of ideas is crucial here in tracking the global trends, but so is the experience of the enslaved individuals themselves.

OTHERING OF SLAVES AND SLAVE OWNERS

American authors writing about the experiences of slaves and slave owners and traders during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century used various rhetorical techniques to signal their disapproval of the system, and in doing so often positioned themselves as different from both those who were susceptible to enslavement and those doing the enslaving. This rhetorical distancing served the function of expressing a strong disapproval of the institution of slavery, mimicking the discourse of imperial antislavery, but also refused to admit members of races vulnerable to enslavement into its own body politic for pragmatic and conservative reasons. More radical political interpretations of enslavement sought to tie it to corrupt and corrupting modern economic models of capitalism and colonialism. Both of these types of othering were undertaken using the discourse of scientific racism, showing that both slaves and slavers might be considered beyond the civilised pale. However, such ideological interpretations clashed with the realities of mobilisation of labour in an unequal world, and in order to maintain consistency, definitions of slavery became mutable to allow for such hypocritical although pragmatic prevarication.

In many ways, the othering of the slaveholder was the easiest rhetorical manoeuvre to accomplish. Building on the language of abolition and imperial antislavery thinkers, who had fashioned the British as the archetypical antislavery nation, American writers after the Civil War used racial, ethnic and religious othering to distance themselves from slavers operating in the Indian Ocean world, the Philippines and Africa. When describing harems in the Ottoman Empire, both British and American

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writers exoticised both the master and his sex slaves, using the tropes of fiction to titillate readers with descriptions of hidden coercion and sexual violence. In some cases othering operated on a national level, as certain nations sought to confirm or deny the sovereignty of others based on their ability to deal with the scourge of slavery and the slave trade within their borders. Ethiopians, Hawaiians and Filipinos fell victim to this type of racially informed judgement, which determined that their putative nations were uncivilised and backwards because of the continuation of forced labour and therefore unsuitable for international recognition.

Accusations of involvement in slavery were also used by European and American commentators to profess superiority over other so-called developed nations, their imperial rivals. Accusing an individual or a nation of involvement in slavery, especially if in cahoots with a racial other, was a powerful act and one that caused significant consternation. However, for much of this period, the former slave owners of the United States itself benefited from an effort to reassimilate them into the American body politic and so, rather than continuing the abolitionist antebellum process of 'othering' them and disassociating slave owning from true American values, in the Jim Crow era they were brought back into the political and cultural fold as true Americans once again. Uniting the white Americans after the fratricidal Civil War became more important than enhancing the status of the formerly enslaved.

GENDER

One of the crucial ways in which slavery was understood in this era was in the constant remaking of the vision of the ideal victim. As had been the case in the eighteenth-and early nineteenth-century abolition movements, campaigners realised that depictions of the sexual vulnerability of female victims of enslavement attracted a great deal of interest from readers, many of whom were approaching the stories of sexual abuse with a variety of motives, some humanitarian but others seeking entertainment and still others desiring ways of enforcing control of wayward women. In an era of threatening modernity, controlling women's bodies and women's behaviour was an overriding concern of the conservative patriarchy, who used the threat posed by enslavement as one way to do this. Authors portrayed white women's enslavement as especially heinous, and because of the association of whiteness with innate innocence and vulnerability, white women made the ideal victim, requiring the protection of white males, whether husbands, fathers, brothers or members of the

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criminal justice system. Their whiteness was especially potent when the enslaver was depicted as an ethnic other, for example, the 'lustful Turk' of eastern Europe and the Middle East forcefully taking white women into his harem, or the Jewish or southern European pimp of the domestic 'white slavery' panic in the United States itself. But representation of women's enslavement or potential enslavement was complex and involved a considerable element of victim blaming. Even white women were seen as culpable in their enslavement, being tempted because of their own moral weaknesses, to succumb to the lure of bright lights and luxury that typified fearful representations of the modern city. Such depictions of moral depravity took on even more vicious overtones when coupled with racial othering; black and Chinese women caught up in sexual slavery were frequently blamed for their own situation and thought to be unredeemable and damaged beyond repair.

In a global context, representations of female enslavement were also deployed for reactionary means, claiming that women and children participating in a particular labour form was a justification for a denial of enslavement on the part of colonial powers or their proxies, as the women's labour in this model was depicted as lighter and less severe and therefore unlike slavery. Commentators were also unsure how to react to so-called 'domestic slavery' in Africa and the Middle East in the late nineteenth century. In this form of slavery, women servants and sexual slaves were most desired, and their material and physical treatment did vary from appalling abuse, to positions of respected luxury. Despite these variations, even the best-dressed women who found themselves in this position did not have the basic freedoms of movement, of marriage, of choosing how to raise their own family and were, in essence, the property of their husbands. No wonder then that such a model represented fertile ground for feminists in the United Kingdom and the United States to comment on the position of women, and their lack of freedom, in their own countries.

This last example provides evidence that women did not allow conservative depictions of themselves in relation to slavery to exist unchallenged. Not all women engaged in this challenge: of course, some women adhered to the conservative view of slavery and women's rights shared by their male counterparts, and depicted antebellum slavery with nostalgia, as a lost golden age. But this period is an important one for the continuation in the development of women's activism regarding slavery, sexual violence and their rights in general. Few women were allowed to occupy political roles in the public sphere, but nonetheless, women from the elite

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classes, such as Kathleen Simon, broke through this glass ceiling. Others used a special skill to highlight the failure of the abolition of slavery, such as the photography deployed to such important effect by Alice Harris. For many women, their voices around the issue of slavery were mediated by male allies, who occasionally 'allowed' them to speak for themselves in male-authored slave narratives of the period. Nonetheless, these voices continued the radical tradition within abolitionism that started much earlier in the nineteenth century with women such as the Grimke sisters, whose vision was one of complete social change, as well as the ending of the pernicious labour form of slavery.

SUBVERTING THE NARRATIVES

In the post-emancipation era, and increasingly so in the early twentieth century, more radical voices began to address the question of global slavery, by using it to fundamentally challenge the structures of capitalism and colonialism. These voices proposed a radical reformation of human relations based on equality and the sovereignty of nations, and in many cases used a call for social activism to improve the lives of the enslaved and to eradicate slavery and other forced labour forms as part of a drive towards political revolution. Many of those authors who conceived of slavery in this way came from the newly radicalised 'New Negro' movement within the African American community, but the response of black Americans was certainly not an homogenous one in this period, nor were white Americans immune from the influence of political radicalism, especially as the new technologies of mass media increasingly allowed them to empathise with the plight of the vulnerable around the world.

WHY THIS BOOK?

This book argues that to understand the American cultural and intellectual self-image and its conception of slavery in the post-emancipation era, it is necessary to consider slavery in a global context. Although the nature of and legacy of slavery within the United States was incredibly powerful, Americans were beginning to conceive their nation as an actor on a modern global stage, and understanding mechanisms of forced labour within that world helped Americans define themselves as international actors. They built on their own memories of antebellum slavery but synthesised that with an imperialist antislavery ideology borrowed from Europe. Americans used both of these intellectual trends, along with

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scientific racism, to inform their othering of slaves and slave owners in the period after the Civil War, using the trope of gender to heighten concerns about slavery by crafting and developing the notion of the ideal victim. But powerful counter narratives informed by political radicalism repositioned some Americans in relation to forced labour practices and demanded a reconsideration of the entire system of capitalist, colonialist and racist hegemony.

It is important that we should understand the diverse and mutable meanings of slavery at various historical moments because slavery is ubiquitous throughout history and in all settled parts of the world. Slavery's function has varied across time and place, and by examining its story over the *longue durée* we can illustrate how to protect and defend victims, how we can use the law to prohibit the practice, and how radical activism can change the behaviour of governments around the issue. In the twenty-first century, the meaning of the word 'slavery' is as contested as it has ever been, but nonetheless, forced and coercive labour practices that many define as a form of slavery exist throughout the world, and macro and micro level antislavery activism is required now as much as it ever was. Slavery cannot be dismissed as a phenomenon of the past, nor a phenomenon of the world's poorer regions, but instead should be a concern of everyone regardless of race or nationality. The patterns that emerge in the era covered by this book – the othering of slaves and slaveholders, the flexibility of the definition of slavery in order to defend inaction in the face of injustice – still exist today and by examining their origins in the period following the end of the transatlantic slave trade, perhaps we might be better informed on how to more effectively respond to the slave system. As a work of the discipline of history, this book is underpinned by a desire to learn from the past, not assuming that values and behaviours can be simply transmitted across time, but rather showing the significance and longevity of the structural inequalities that trigger slavery that we still grapple with. The response to slavery must be an interdisciplinary one, and I hope that this book will be read by scholars of all disciplines who are interested in contributing to the fight against slavery, and that it is merely one tool in the toolkit of responses to such problems in the contemporary world.

The primary sources feature popular, populist, political and activist responses to the institution of slavery. They show the defensiveness and territoriality of nations, the economic imperative to make imperialism work, the appeal of lowest-common-denominator racial tropes, and the power of a radical rethinking of enslavement and the relations between races. Despite these sources often being written a century or more ago,

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their themes and concerns are still our themes and concerns when we see labour injustice in the twenty-first century. Understanding the complex responses of people in the past to enslavement can inform our own responses to the phenomenon today, making this story directly relevant. We still require a form of social activism, a new antislavery movement, to challenge the complacency that suggests slavery no longer exists, or the manipulation of the definition of slavery which denies the culpability of the world's most powerful. Let this book be a part of that social activism which seeks radical solutions to abusive labour practices the world over.

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