

Analyzing the Relationship between Transatlantic Slavery and Motherhood in *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave Narrative. Related by Herself*

by

Jessica E. Reyes Roman

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS
in
ENGLISH EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
MAYAGÜEZ CAMPUS
2015

Approved by:

Ricia Chansky, PhD
Member, Graduate Committee

Date

Mary Sefranek, EdD
Member, Graduate Committee

Date

Eric Lamore, PhD
President, Graduate Committee

Date

José Ferrer, PhD
Office of Graduate Studies

Date

Rosita Rivera, PhD
Director of the Department of English, UPRM

Date

Abstract

This thesis begins by exposing the lack of literary study of female slave narratives. It then moves to analyze *The History of Mary Prince* in the following order: 1) Outline of Prince's life: who she was and her origin; 2) A discussion on the development of a slave's identity, specifically Prince's; 3) Prince, a slave who gained empowerment through her role as a maternal figure; 4) Prince's *history* as a text that displays autobiographical tendencies; 5) The public sphere's role in introducing Prince's slave narrative to English society; and 6) The importance of Prince's *history* in the twenty first century. Different theories were used as reference within this thesis such as Paul Gilroy's theory of the Black Atlantic to present how Mary Prince's life experiences as a slave formed her identity along with Patricia Hill Collins's theory of the *othermother* to situate Prince as an empowered, respectable woman in the eyes of British society. Hill Collins's theory of the *othermother* is particularly important in this thesis because it allows the reader to perceive how Prince used her role as an othermother to request ultimately her freedom and expose her experiences to the English public. I also rely on James Olney's essays outlining the conventions for a slave narrative to point out how the manner in which Prince's *History* was edited displays autobiographical tendencies. Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere helps to explain how Prince and Thomas Pringle introduced her *History* into the public sphere in order to gain nineteenth-century British society's acceptance of herself and of other enslaved peoples.

Resumen

Esta tesis comienza poniendo al descubierto la escasez de estudios en el ámbito de las narrativas de mujeres esclavas. Luego, pasa a analizar *The History of Mary Prince* en el siguiente orden: 1) Quién fue Mary Prince y su origen; 2) Una discusión acerca del desarrollo de la identidad del esclavo, especialmente la de Prince; 3) Prince, una esclava que adquiere poder dentro de su condición a través de su papel de figura maternal; 4) La historia de Prince como un texto que presenta tendencias autobiográficas; 5) El papel de la Esfera Pública en introducir la narrativa de Prince como esclava en la sociedad Inglesa; 6) La importancia de la historia de Prince en el Siglo XXI. Varias teorías fueron utilizadas como referencia en esta tesis: 1) La teoría del atlántico negro de Paul Gilroy; 2) La teoría de la *otra madre* de Patricia Hill Collins es también utilizada para argumentar el cómo Prince adquirió poder al crear una reputación respetable como para sí misma como *otra madre*. Esta teoría es de particular importancia en ésta tesis ya que le permite al lector percibir cómo Mary Prince manipulo y uso a su favor su rol como *otra madre* para finalmente pedir su liberación y exponer sus vivencias al público inglés; 3) Las convenciones de la narrativa de esclavos de James Olney fueron utilizadas para resaltar el cómo la manera en que se editó la historia de Prince muestra tendencias autobiográficas; 4) También, la teoría de la esfera pública de Jürgen Habermas se utiliza en ésta tesis para explicar cómo Prince y Thomas Pringle introdujeron la historia de Prince a la esfera pública para obtener aceptación de la sociedad inglesa y luego persuadirlos a apoyar su causa; la cual era obtener su libertad y la de los demás esclavos.

Dedication

In the loving memory of my father, who always believed in me and though he is not with us physically any longer I know that he was always by my side to see me through. For my mother, who was my foundation through my entire journey; had she not sacrificed herself this would have never been possible. For my husband, who never stopped pushing me to continue, even when it was easier to quit. And finally, for my daughter, who was my greatest motivation. You all mean the world to me.

Acknowledgements

It has been a very long journey, but I can finally say it has come to an end. I owe it all to my wonderful committee members, Ricia, Mary and Eric. Ricia, thank you so much for your guidance and for putting on the pressure when you had to. You really opened my eyes when I was too stubborn to want to see. Mary, I will forever be in your debt for all of the relaxing and welcoming conversations we had in your office. I always found our conversations put me at ease even when I thought I should quit because it was impossible to pull this off while I was working full time and also being a full time mom. Thank you. And, Eric, I am going to miss working with you most of all. Thank you for all of your support and patience. I know that you believed in me more than I did in myself and it was your faith in me what pulled me through many, many times. I can honestly say, I couldn't have chosen a better committee director. Thank you all for your guidance and help. If I had to do it all again, I'd do it in a heartbeat with you all on my side. Much love. God Bless.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
RESUMEN	III
DEDICATION	IV
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
TABLE OF CONTENTS	VI
INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 Research Focus	2
1.2 Theoretical Framework: Conceptualizing the Atlantic from a Transnational Perspective	5
1.3 Slave Trade Logistics.....	10
1.4 The Slave Ship	13
1.5 Motherhood as a Mechanism of Empowerment	14
1.6 Prince’s History: A Text of Autobiographical Tendencies.....	16
1.7 Analyzing The History of Mary Prince.....	19
1.8 Conclusion	24
2 MARY PRINCE: VICTIM OF AN IMPOSED MOTHERHOOD AND A NINETEENTH-CENTURY ABOLITIONIST	25
2.1 Review of Scholarship	25
2.2 Abolitionism in Nineteenth-Century Great Britain.....	35
2.3 The Other Mother as a Critical Concept to Study Prince’s History.....	37
3 UNVEILING THE MATERNAL FIGURE IN THE “SUPPLEMENT TO THE <i>HISTORY OF MARY PRINCE</i>”	49
4 MARY PRINCE: STILL RELEVANT IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY	69
4.1 Mary Prince is Honored with a Medal	78
4.2 Conclusion	80
WORKS CITED	82

Introduction

When reading *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave Narrative. Related by Herself (1831)*, one can study how the transatlantic slave trade impacted this literary text. The transatlantic slave trade has been mainly mentioned by historians in reference to its varieties, its impact on the various geographical places, and the cultures that habituated those areas, along with its abolition.¹ Despite the presence of this valuable scholarly work, historians and literary critics have not fully analyzed the representations of mothers, mothering, and motherhood in the literatures of slavery and how the transatlantic slave trade impacted Prince's commentary on this phenomenon.

1.1 Research Focus

This thesis analyzes the relationship between transatlantic slavery and motherhood as represented in Prince's *History*. I use Paul Gilroy's theory of the Black Atlantic to establish a critical framework for this study. As the literary text makes clear, Prince was an individual whose life was shaped by the African diaspora and the geographical movement that accompanied this historical and cultural event. Gilroy's theory thus contributes to an examination of Prince's identities as well as the representations of mothers, mothering, and motherhood presented in her literary text. Furthermore, the specific themes that I discuss in this thesis are: the logistics of the transatlantic slave trade, the effects of transatlantic slavery on the representations of mothers, mothering, and motherhood in Prince's text, Prince's active participation in the abolition of slavery, her references to mothers and acts of mothering, the debate over her reputation found in

¹ Refer to *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* edited by James A. Rawley with Stephen D. Behrendt; *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader* edited by Susan Manning and Andrew Taylor; and, *Routes to Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity, and Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade* edited by David Eltis and David Richardson, among others.

supplementary material included in her *History*, and how Prince's text is still relevant in the twenty-first century.

The main objective of this thesis is to discuss how transatlantic slavery affected the representations of mothers, motherhood, and mothering in Prince's *History* as seen in her representations of maternity and her masters forcing her to become a caregiver for her their children, instead of experiencing motherhood for herself and on her own terms. I also study how Prince became an abolitionist and an active agent in her quest for freedom in Great Britain. Additionally, I explore how Prince and the editor of her *History*, Thomas Pringle, edited and shaped it to present Caribbean mothers in bondage and how she experienced and dealt with humiliation and separation from family and loved ones. In this thesis, I focus solely on analyzing the experiences of the slave mother in Prince's literary text who was exiled and deprived of her maternal rights when she (or her family members) crossed the Atlantic. This analysis will allow me to provide a space where light can be shed upon the relationship between the transatlantic slave trade and motherhood found in Prince's text.

The focus of this thesis is significant because there is a greater scholarly tendency to focus on the analysis of male slave narratives than those written by females. For instance, web users can find more than two hundred male slave narratives and no more than fifty female slave narratives on the University of North Carolina's valuable website, Documenting the American South. Some examples of these prominent male slave narratives include *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*, *Narrative of The Life of Fredrick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself*, as well as *Life and Adventures of James Williams, a Fugitive Slave, with a Full Description of the Underground Railroad*, among several others. The underrepresentation of females in this

significant academic collection indicates that, while the majority of slaves were rendered voiceless, women have traditionally been silenced in far greater numbers and scholarship on the literature of slavery has tended to privilege the studying of the life of the male slave. One of the objectives of this thesis, then, is to understand one female slave's voices through her discussions of mothers, mothering, and motherhood as well as the legacy of slavery as these topics are interpreted by Prince. It is important for the voices of the black female slave to have a space where they can be heard and for literary scholars to understand the nuances found in these texts because it is through their narratives that the reader will be able to witness the extreme effects that the transatlantic slave trade had on familial ties and, most importantly, on bonds between children and their mothers. This depiction of the effects of slavery on mothers in Prince's text will allow the reader to view transatlantic slavery from a viewpoint that has been neglected and overlooked, that is, from the slave mother's viewpoint. As a result, the reader will obtain a clearer understanding of why Prince incorporated consistent discussions of mothers, motherhood, and mothering in her literary text and how these representations impacted her participation in arguing against the slave trade in her autobiographical work.

In order to understand the effects of transatlantic slavery on mothers, the concept of motherhood, and the acts of mothering that are revealed in this narrative, it is crucial for the contemporary reader to understand the realities of transatlantic slavery. The events that resulted from transatlantic slavery and those presented by Prince, I argue, allow her readers to explore a specific historical period in which the slave woman's role as a maternal figure could be used, in certain cultural environments, as a mechanism of empowerment, instead of being perceived as solely burdensome. Through her discussion of mothers, mothering, and motherhood, Prince attempted to invoke reflections and reactions from nineteenth-century readers who could

understand, acknowledge, and/or expose the discrimination, degrading abuse, and sexist attitudes towards black female slaves.

1.2 Theoretical Framework: Conceptualizing the Atlantic from a Transnational Perspective

Paul Gilroy proposed his theory of a black Atlantic “to develop the suggestion that cultural historians could take the Atlantic as one single, complex unit of analysis in their discussions of the modern world and use it to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural perspective” (15). In his seminal book, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, Gilroy makes reference to the notion of a rigid nationality when he writes about absolute paradigms. He clarifies the term “race” within his text as he believes this concept is used to determine who is and who is not British.

Gilroy, as his text indicates, despises the idea of a fixed label, whether it arises from identity or nationality. For Gilroy, identity is the product of multiculturalism. It is what humans acquire, after they have undergone the influence of different cultures. Based on this premise, he claims that individuals of African in various parts of the Atlantic world who experienced (by force or by other factors) the transatlantic slave trade became much more than “African” or even “African American” in particular cases because of the cultural influences they came into contact with. As Gilroy writes: “[W.E.B] Du Bois’s travel experiences raise in the sharpest possible form a question common to the lives of almost all these figures who begin as African Americans or Caribbean people and are then changed into something else which evades those specific labels and with them all fixed notions of national identity” (19).

In this passage, Gilroy specifically uses Du Bois to make reference to those individuals who were constantly moving within the Atlantic and how scholars are not able to place a specific

identity onto individuals like Du Bois, Phillis Wheatley, Frederick Douglass, and Olaudah Equiano, among others. The reason for this inability to fix an absolute identity on these historical figures stems from the fact that they were the products of an enormous mixing of cultures and they were exposed to “the inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas” that resulted from transatlantic slavery (Gilroy xi). As a result, they were subjected to “the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade” (Gilroy xi).

In light of this theory of the Black Atlantic, especially as we turn to the representation of Prince, we can determine that these figures may be understood as those who, in Gilroy’s words, evade “specific labels and with them all fixed notions of national identity” (19). Prince’s text may be read through Gilroy’s framework because she travelled in various parts of the Atlantic world, including multiple places in the Caribbean and eventually Great Britain, and she participated in the intermixture of ideas, influences, and experiences with people from different cultures in these locations. She encountered different cultures because she was forcibly moved from Bermuda to Turks Island to Antigua to London, all crucial points in the Atlantic world for Great Britain and its colonies. Based on the extensive traveling of Prince, we cannot pinpoint one, fixed, and rigid identity that applies to her. Therefore, her text may be approached and read through Gilroy’s theory of the Black Atlantic.

Furthermore, Gilroy theorizes that a black Atlantic culture largely arose out of transatlantic slavery and individuals crisscrossing the Atlantic world. The dominant view that Gilroy unveils and argues against in his text is the incorrect notion that the place of individuals of African descent in Great Britain resulted as some sort of “illegitimate intrusion into a vision of British national life that, prior to their [black settlers’] arrival, was as stable and as peaceful as it was ethnically undifferentiated” (7). Gilroy sees this notion of the presence of individuals of

African descent being “intruders” in Britain as a new form of racism that “aligned ‘race’ closely with the idea of national belonging and which stressed complex cultural difference rather than simple biological hierarchy” (10). The problem with this dominant view, according to Gilroy, is that it implies that there are “pure races,” a troubling term which claims that there are “races” which have undergone no form of intercultural mixing and whose members have not been impacted in any way by other influences, whether religious, intellectual, and/or cultural. Gilroy wants to make clear to his readers that the transatlantic slave trade, the movement of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic, and the exposure of these peoples to various cultures and peoples in the Atlantic world produce a form of intercultural mixing and ultimately impacts how we may understand an individual’s thinking and cultural identities.

Additionally, Gilroy, in his seminal book, resorts to the metaphor of the ship to make allusion to one of the locations where the intermixture of ideas and cultures took place and where the acquisition of hybrid identities emerged. Slave trading in the Atlantic was made possible through the use of ships that transported black captives from one location to the other. Slaves were moved “between nations, crossing borders in modern machines that were themselves microsystems of linguistic and political hybridity” (Gilroy 12). Here Gilroy describes the ships as living settings, and I would go even further to say that they were unique environments in which interactions, of all different types, took place among different social agents. As he writes, “Ships were the living means by which the points within the Atlantic world were joined. They were mobile elements that stood for the shifting spaces in between the fixed spaces that they connected” (Gilroy 16). Gilroy not only attributes diasporic qualities to the Atlantic but also attributes the inevitability of a mixture of a variety of cultures within the space of the slave ship. Furthermore, this cultural contact was made possible through the use of slave ships that served,

at first, as isolating environments in which captives and the crew aboard the ships interacted until the slaves were brought to their destinations and sold in various markets throughout the Atlantic world.

However, aboard the ship, according to Gilroy, a whole new community was found. Gilroy claims that ships were “a means to conduct political dissent and possibly a distinct mode of cultural production” because “the ship provides a chance to explore the articulations between the discontinuous histories of England’s ports, its interfaces with the world” (16-17). Even though Gilroy does not explicitly reference Prince’s narrative, this quote provides a useful framework that enriches a reading of her text. According to Gilroy, new cultures and identities arise out of the intercultural mixing found in the Atlantic world. However, the intercultural mixing that Gilroy refers to is that which is accomplished, not only when people of diverse cultures are sexually active with one another, but also when people of diverse cultures are intellectually active with one another. When people from different cultures exchange thoughts, perspectives, and opinions about the political and public affairs around them, they participate in altering one’s exposure to different cultural models.

This acquisition of multicultural identities is a common characteristic of many cultures. It is because of this intercultural mixing that we cannot assign Prince cannot a fixed or rigid identity because she has been influenced by various cultures’ attempts to try to identify her with only one label or marker robs her of the complex interstices of identities that were so carefully interwoven in her *History*. Certainly, this refusal to identify with one particular culture is precisely what Prince avoids in her narrative.

In his text, Gilroy goes on to explain how his theory of the Black Atlantic rejects the notion of a fixed identity when he writes: “The specificity of the modern political and cultural formation that I want to call the black Atlantic can be defined, on one level, through this desire to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity” (19). In this passage, Gilroy informs the reader that what he calls the black Atlantic is a space where a diversity of cultures, influences, and identities come together and it is for this reason that he rejects the attribution of fixed identities to individuals who were recipients of interchange and exchange in the Atlantic world. Instead of the Atlantic being a place where fixed identities were imposed on individuals of African descent, ones who were enslaved or free, Gilroy wishes for this space to be seen as one where people broke away from notions of a fixed identity.

Significantly, Gilroy informs the reader that the black Atlantic can be used as a means to reexamine history and historical memory when he writes, “The history of the black Atlantic since then, continually crisscrossed by the movement of black people – not only as commodities but engaged in various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy, and citizenship – provides a means to reexamine the problems of nationality, location, identity, and historical memory” (16). In this quote he begins to explain why Prince fought so fervently to be emancipated in Antigua. Prince, although she was born in Bermuda, spent the most significant moments of her life in Antigua; it was there where she joined the Moravian church, entered into marriage, and finally attempted to secure her freedom. The black Atlantic provided a space in which Prince was able to break away from a fixed identity as an enslaved person, one that attempted to establish that she could not determine who she was the moment she was born to slave parents on a farm in Bermuda. From the moment she was born, British colonial society had already labeled her as a

commodity or a thing to be exchanged. Gilroy theorizes that a person's identity is too complex to be exacted because identity is forged by the influences and experiences a person undergoes throughout her or his life. Therefore, Prince's desire to return to Antigua can be attributed to the fact that Antigua became an important part of her life-long process of identity construction. Consequently, Gilroy's theory explains why Prince engaged herself in the struggle for her own emancipation and why, throughout her narrative, she chose to present herself as a responsible maternal figure. The maternal aspect of her life was what British abolitionists ultimately used to help her gain autonomy because it was a means to prove that she was an overall responsible woman who deserved to spend the rest of her days in the place she most identified herself with and viewed as home. However, in order to fully comprehend how transatlantic slavery took part in the mixing of cultural identities and how this intermixing brought about the representations of motherhood that are presented in Prince's text, it is crucial that the reader first learns about the trade routes that put Prince in such a predicament.

1.3 Slave Trade Logistics

This layer of the thesis briefly explores and exposes the logistics of the slave trade routes during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that are pertinent to the narrative of Prince. These routes will be used to analyze Prince's representations of Caribbean slave mothers, acts of mothering, and motherhood. However, for the purpose of this thesis, I have only analyzed pertinent data from the W.E.B Du Bois Institute's Transatlantic Slave Ship Database that evidences the participation of Britain in the transatlantic slave trade. The participation of Britain is of particular importance in this thesis because it directly pertains to the involvement of Prince in the transatlantic slave trade. It is important to acknowledge and become familiar with the trade routes that Prince, and perhaps her mother, were victims of (even if not directly) in order to

understand “the African diaspora and the contribution of Africans to the creation and development of the transatlantic world between 1500 and 1850” (Eltis and Richardson 3). More importantly, these routes serve as evidence that Afro Caribbean acts of mothering and motherhood were significantly affected by the forced migration that resulted from the transatlantic slave trade.

In an attempt to quantify the number of slaves that were carried and traded across the Atlantic, Phillip Curtin, in his *Census of the Atlantic Slave*, provides “the first detailed assessment of the overall volume of the transatlantic traffic in enslaved Africans between 1500 and 1867” (Eltis and Richardson 1). Curtin estimates that “up to 11.8 million slaves embarked at the coast of Africa and 9.4 million arrivals in the Americas” (Eltis and Richardson 1). Eltis and Richardson, in their book, *Routes to Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity, and Mortality in the Atlantic Slave Trade*, offer details on the various data sets from the Du Bois database that present the nation of origin of slave ships, the number of voyages made by each nation, the years covered, and by whom the data was gathered (Eltis and Richardson 4). In one of his analyses, Eltis reports that the British made approximately 1,626 voyages (4). Between 1700 and 1779, Rawley, Behrendt, and Richardson estimate that the British made around 1,600 voyages (4). Jay Coughtry and Behrendt reported that the British/United States (Rhode Island American ports) made 945 voyages between 1709 and 1808, and between 1714 and 1777, Schofield and Richardson determined that British made close to 450 voyages (4). Finally, between 1780 and 1807, Behrendt reported that the British made 3,132 voyages (4).

This particular data set presents the amount of voyages that were likely to have been made by the British from London, ports in the British Colonies, and English out ports to Africa to transport slaves. The voyages made from British (London) and (English out ports) are the

most significant in the case of Prince because it is likely that the ship that transported her parents to Antigua is included in this data set. Similarly, the ships that Prince boarded while in the Caribbean to be transported from Bermuda to Turks Island, from Turks Island to Bermuda, and from Bermuda to Antigua are likely to have been included in the data for British ships. The data set for British in particular demonstrates that Prince was part of a far greater movement. In addition, this data set evidences that a significant amount of voyages were also made by the Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, French, and various others who trafficked enslaved Africans to Brazil, Cuba, and Spanish America (Eltis and Richardson 4). However, as I articulate above, I have only used information pertaining to slave trading by Great Britain. This data set contains little information about the Atlantic slave trade during its first century, but it does cover the years when the transatlantic trafficking of slaves was at its peak as well as the majority of years documented in Prince's narrative. It contains records of over 26,000 slave voyages and contributes to this thesis by quantifying the Caribbean and African diaspora across the Atlantic and allowing it to be used as a tool to cast light upon what Eltis and Richardson refer to as "the human experience of the victims of this tragic chapter" (5). Of course, Prince counts as one of the victims that Eltis and Richardson reference here.

Although Prince was not captured in Africa, she was a descendant of someone who was kidnapped as a result of the slave trade. Nonetheless, she did sail across the Atlantic aboard ships that deprived her of her freedom and transported her to a world of injustice, suffering, and marginalization. The slave trade routes to which she was exposed, as we will discover, were significant factors in determining her fate as well as the resulting dislocation she experienced that led her to take on the maternal roles she presents in her narrative.

1.4 The Slave Ship

A significant point to consider, concerning the transatlantic slave trade, is that this process led the way for the massive racial and cultural mixing that began on the ships that transported slaves across the Atlantic and continued in the ports and future destinations to which they arrived.² Rawley and Behrendt note that, “[The slave trade] impelled one of the great, and little studied population migrations of modern history – the involuntary movement of over 9.5 million Africans to the new world” (4). As part of this involuntary movement, slaves were exposed to extremely harsh treatment, beginning with the way in which they were transported from one location to another, to the emotional, physical, and psychological tolls that this movement forced them to endure. Both male and female slaves experienced these circumstances.

In her book, *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807*, Emma Christopher alludes to the sexual abuse faced by black female slaves while they were onboard slave ships. According to Christopher:

The sexual exploitation of woman slaves subtly differed, in theory if not in nature, from the many other forms of abuse inflicted on the captive Africans transported across the Atlantic because it could in no way be said to have constituted part of the job for which seamen had been hired. It contributed towards the women’s degradation ...The sexual abuse of women on slave ships was more a demanded perquisite of the job of seafaring.
(188)

² It is a well-known fact that most of the massive racial mixing that took place aboard slave ships was produced through the raping of enslaved women by crew members and captains. However, this thesis takes into account a more subtle form of racial mixing, one that includes the mixing of cultural identities that is produced when people of different cultures come together and exchange thoughts and perceptions. This experience, as I argue, ultimately impacts individuals’ cultural identities.

Black female slaves, in this sense, were victims of the slave trade because they were not only subjected to hardships such as sea sickness, restricted spaces, and foul smells produced by the lack of sanitation and decaying human bodies aboard, but they were also physically abused and degraded.³ Sadly, the physical and sexual abuse experienced by female slaves on board and after slavers transported them onto land played an important role in the formation of their identities and influenced the way in which they perceived themselves and their situation within a given culture in the Atlantic world. The main argument I make within this thesis is that Prince's experiences as a slave – including her experiences on board various slave ships – significantly shaped her identities and the ways in which she viewed her role within society. I will expand on this point later in this thesis when I study the correlation between how Prince's experiences led her to take on a unique maternal role in order to resist her condition of an enslaved person.

1.5 Motherhood as a Mechanism of Empowerment

Transatlantic slavery forced Prince to take on maternal roles that eventually separated her from her family and from a voluntary form of motherhood. The transatlantic slave trade that exiled Prince initiated other forms of exile. Prince experienced an involuntary form of exile that excluded her from freedom and, ultimately, to her right to experience maternity for herself. Her involuntary exile was brought upon her through the institution of slavery the moment that she was separated from her family members. However, the decision to remain in Great Britain was made by Prince on her own the moment she chose to remain in England, fully aware that she would have to be without her husband for some time. Prince decided to remain in England for a number of reasons. First, because she was under the impression that her masters would return to

³ The International Slavery Museum of Liverpool has revealed accounts of the hardships that slaves faced on slave ships. This information can be found in their article "Life On Board Slave Ships." This text presents the different forms of abuse that the slaves encountered as well as describes how slaves were treated and examined aboard the ships. The authors analyze the living conditions for slaves during the Middle Passage and provide readers with historical facts and records indicating the amount of slaves who died aboard the ships.

Antigua because they “were going to England to put their son in school, and bring their daughters home” (Prince 86). Second, because she thought that, in England, she could find a cure for her “rheumatism and should return with my master and mistress, quite well, to my husband” (Prince 86). And finally, because her husband “was willing” for her to go since he had heard “that my master would free me” (Prince 86).

It is because of the transatlantic slave trade that Prince only experiences motherhood by being a mother figure for others instead of bearing children of her own. Prince denied herself the maternal right to become a biological mother and experience the bond between mother and child that arises out of child bearing and giving birth to one’s own children in order to resist slavery. In addition, because of transatlantic slavery Prince suffered defamation later in life when she was seeking her freedom. Since Prince was born a slave, she was automatically classified as an object without feelings, intelligence, or rights. It was because of the stamp that was placed upon her at birth that that she attempted to establish a good reputation as a maternal figure for herself and refute all negative commentary regarding her persona at the time she sought her freedom.

Nevertheless, I maintain that, in Prince’s text, motherhood for the black female slave served as a mechanism of empowerment. Although transatlantic slavery was engineered to oppress maternal figures and separate them from their families, Prince managed, in interesting ways, to use her motherhood as a form of resistance against her white oppressors. The intent behind this claim is to acknowledge and praise the courage and determination of those black slave mothers who took a stand in a time when their actions and voices were largely ignored and silenced. As Adrienne Rich states, we can choose to follow “the path of those women who broke through the silence, though often penalized, misconstrued, their work neglected or banned, or

though tokenized in lonely and precarious acceptance, still embodied strength, daring, self-determination; who were in short, exemplary” (84).

In my discussion of the empowering qualities of motherhood, I draw upon Patricia Hill Collins’s seminal book, *Black Feminist Thought*, in which she states that “motherhood can serve as a site where Black women express and learn the power of self-definition, the importance of valuing and respecting ourselves, the necessity of self-reliance and independence, and a belief in Black women’s empowerment” (191). Likewise, Andrea O’Reilly, in *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*, builds upon Morrison’s definition of “motherhood as a site of power for black women” (xi). These texts, along with O’Reilly’s *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*, Sara Ruddick’s essay, “Maternal Thinking”, and others will support my assessment that representations of motherhood serve as a means to narrate the oppression of black slave mothers in Prince’s text; in other words, Prince strategically used motherhood and representations of mothers as a mechanism of defense, resistance, and empowerment.

1.6 Prince’s History: A Text of Autobiographical Tendencies

In this thesis, I also address the fact that Prince’s slave narrative displays autobiographical tendencies, although it was altered in certain ways by her British editor, Thomas Pringle. Nellie Y. McKay, in her essay “The Narrative Self: Race Politics, and Culture in Black American Women’s Autobiography,” explains what makes the slave narrative autobiographical and how it was important for slaves to engage in the act of self-representation as they sought their freedom. McKay informs readers that by

Challenging white hegemony, black autobiographers used narrative to fight their battle against chattel slavery and to engage in the search for political and psychological freedom for all black people...Consequently, the narrative became a historical site on

which aesthetics, self-confirmation of humanity, citizenship, and the significance of racial politics shaped African-American literary expression. (96)

In this quote, McKay argues that black autobiographers manipulated the narrative so that it would conform to their own particular political and historical needs. Hence, through her narrative, Prince presents her sympathetic white audience with experiences that displayed her good nature, her sense of belonging in British society, and her interest in involving herself in abolitionist politics in order to obtain her freedom. If McKay's prerequisites for a narrative to be autobiographical are precise, Prince's narrative most certainly fits the description of an autobiographical narrative because it displays all of the qualities mentioned above. Prince's desire to obtain her freedom led her to appropriate "the master's tools to write... [herself] into being and... into freedom" (qtd. in McKay 97). Prince may have not been able to write her master's language very well, but she did not need to possess a complete mastery of reading and writing because she utilized the power of oration within her text. Therefore, although she did not write her narrative, the text irrefutably displays an autobiographical tendency because it was she who narrated her experiences to Susanna Strickland. McKay writes that by "using the white oppressor's language and black cultural tropes...they ["early black autobiographers"] transformed the racially inferior, abstract African self of the master's text into the ultimately triumphant black experiential self" (97). Prince narrated experiences and made decisions that ultimately showed her oppressors that she understood that, in order to be heard and recognized as a human being with rights within British society, she had to use their language to her advantage. In order to manipulate her master's language in ways that would assist her in her fight for freedom, she had the help of a transcriber, Susana Strickland, and an editor, Thomas Pringle. It was with their assistance that Prince was able to turn her oral narrative into a written one, and

most importantly, into a text that would meet the demands of the autobiographical slave narrative and conform to the expectations of her British reading audience.

In order to position Prince's text into the genre of autobiography and, particularly, the slave narrative, I use James Olney's seminal essay, "I Was Born': Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature." In the description of this master plan, Olney presents the conventions for a slave narrative. These conventions include "[a]n engraved portrait, signed by the narrator," "a title page that includes the claim, as an integral part of the title, 'Written by Himself,'" "a handful of testimonials and/or one or more prefaces or introductions written either by a white abolitionist friend of the narrator...or by a white amanuensis/editor/author," "a poetic epigraph," and "the actual narrative" (50).

Prince's narrative takes on most of the qualities that Olney has outlined for a slave narrative. Although Prince did not include an engraved portrait in her narrative (Olney's first prerequisite), she does include the claim "Related by herself" in her narrative's title. This claim serves as an indicator of the text's autobiographical nature and that the text may be classified as a slave narrative. Based on the phrase, "Related by herself," Prince wants her readers to know that she has orally narrated the factual events that took place throughout her life. However, although Prince narrated her story to Susana Strickland, the written version of her narrative was influenced by the Thomas Pringle's desire to evoke a sense of compassion on behalf of her nineteenth-century British reader towards Prince and her experiences. Nevertheless, by including the claim, "Related by herself," Prince informs the reader that her narrative has undergone editorial influence because it was delivered orally, but it is she who is the primary agent behind its composition.

Although this text can be read as slave narrative, it should not be limited to this genre because the characteristics of the slave narrative ultimately restrict what readers can grasp from this text. Rather, it should be evaluated as an autobiographical work. Prince's work is autobiographical because she relates her own life experiences, regardless of who transcribed it. In her text, the autobiography serves to expose the effects that the transatlantic slave trade had on the representations of mothers, mothering, and motherhood in her history.

1.7 Analyzing *The History of Mary Prince*

It is important to analyze Prince's representations of maternal roles, her identities, and the hardships she faced during her struggle to gain freedom. Prince is a product of the transatlantic slave trade because, before her birth, her parents were already forced to cross the Atlantic aboard a slave ship and, as a result of that crossing, they arrived in Bermuda and it was here where she was born. She was born into slavery in 1788 on a farm in Brackish Pond "belonging to Mr. Charles Myners" (Prince 57), where her mother worked. She relates that when she was born, her "mother was a household slave; and my father, whose name was Prince, was a sawyer belonging to Mr. Trimmingham, a ship builder at Crow-Lane" (Prince 57). However, even before this experience, she was previously sold as an infant along with her mother because, her master, Mr. Myners, had died. Their new owner was Captain Darrel Williams. Williams gave Prince to his granddaughter, "little Miss Betsey Williams" (Prince 57). Once the Williams could not afford to keep Prince, they hired her out to Mrs. Pruden. Pruden was to be her new mistress and the first person to introduce Prince to the world of maternal care giving, a sphere in which she would become very familiar throughout her life.

Under Mrs. Pruden's care, Prince was in charge of "nursing a sweet baby, little Master Daniel" (Prince 59). It was after three months of working for Mrs. Pruden that she was sent back

to the Williams household to be sold. Her new masters were, as she refers to them in her narrative, Captain I— and Mrs. I—. As a slave, Prince was forced to take care of her masters' children and work endlessly, both forms of abuse that resulted from transatlantic slavery's diasporic quality. Being in constant movement from one place to another in order to work and care for her different masters' children left Prince little or no time to experience motherhood for herself.

Captain I— also sold her and as a result she boarded a slave ship and was taken to Turk's Island. There she met her next master, Mr. D—, whom she worked for in the sea extracting salt. On Turk's Island she was forced to work long hours and witnessed many of the "horrors of slavery" (Prince 74). From Turk's Island, she left with her new master, John A. Wood, to Antigua. In Antigua, she continued to care for her final master's children while tending to the house as well. After some time, Mr. Wood asked Prince if she wished to go with him to England and she accepted, so from Antigua they set sail for England. In England, she continued to serve the Wood family although she was very ill and much older. There she gained partial freedom and began to frequent the Antislavery Society where she met British abolitionists who tried to help her obtain freedom, but these efforts were in vain.

Throughout her life Prince was moved around from one location to the next and not once in her narrative does she mention having any children of her own or even wanting any. However, she always did nurse and care for her masters' children and at times she became so attached that it broke her heart to part with them. Prince verbalizes her heart ache when she found out that she would be separated from her masters' children when she says: "I did not like to leave...the dear baby, who had grown very fond of me...Dear Miss Fanny! how she cried at parting with me, whilst I kissed and hugged the baby, thinking I should never see him again. I left Mrs. Pruden's,

and walked home with a heart full of sorrow” (Prince 60). Transatlantic slavery robbed Prince of her freedom, her life, and gave her a taste of what motherhood was like but denied her the right to become a mother herself and experience motherhood on her own terms.

Prince was born in Bermuda and married in Antigua, where she also attended the Moravian church, and was ultimately presented to the abolitionists in Britain by “a woman of the name of Hill” (Prince 91). In both places, she was exposed to British culture, but she encountered it in two different forms. Hence, transatlantic slavery also presented a new cultural reality for Prince. By being part of the African diaspora, Prince became acquainted with people from different cultures with different ideas and perspectives that they shared with her and that affected her way of thinking; therefore, this experience eventually enabled her to become influenced by different cultures and acquire an intermixture of cultural identities.

First, she experienced British culture in the Caribbean by way of her owners who wanted to exploit her, and then she later experienced this culture in Britain where she encountered abolitionists who were willing to help her gain her freedom. All of these locations play a very important role in Prince’s life because they are where she encountered different cultural influences and faced the institution of slavery. In her narrative, Prince not only attempts to change how the British viewed slavery and the slave trade, but she also seeks to change the perceptions of slaves and slavery in Great Britain. This attempt to alter perceptions is seen when she states that:

The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery – that they don’t want to be free – that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I never heard a slave say so...They can’t do without slaves, they say. What’s the reason they can’t do without slaves as well as in

England...They hire servants in England; and if they don't like them, they send them away; they can't lick them...They have their liberty. That's just what we want. We don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment...But they won't give it: they will have work – work – work, night and day, sick or well, till we are quite done up...This is slavery. I tell it to let English people know the truth. (Prince 94)

Prince tells the British public that she, as a victim of slavery, knows the inner workings of the institution because she has lived it in the flesh. She verbalizes her wishes to the British people by saying that they should listen to what she has to say and believe her accounts because she is a viable source. In other words, having suffered the abuses that are inflicted on slaves, particularly female slaves, Prince notes here that her experiences as an enslaved person produce the truth about the institution in her narration.

In addition to this clear interest in abolitionism in Prince's text, I analyze how Prince's maternal role is accentuated in her narrative. In her text, she presents herself as a tenacious motherly figure who enjoys and experiences a different and imposed maternal role. The first of the maternal roles presented in Prince's narrative is displayed by her own mother, while the latter is exhibited by Prince. The representations of motherhood that Prince provides throughout her text, particularly the presentation of an empowering motherhood, can be ascribed to the way in which she came into slavery and her experiences within the transatlantic slave trade and how those experiences affected her familial ties. Prince's narrative, because it was "related by herself," as the cover of Moira Ferguson's 1997 edition makes clear, and written and edited by individuals within the Anti-slavery Society in Aldermanbury, Great Britain, is an autobiographical work. However, in Prince's text, Thomas Pringle, the editor of Prince's narrative, structured the text so it could be edited, marketed, and sold by abolitionists in Great

Britain as a text that displayed the trials and tribulations of a kind, loyal, and responsible maternal figure who deserved to be granted her freedom.

In fact, it is very clear that he had made certain alterations to the oral version of the narrative when writing out the full text when he himself states that the narrative was “pruned into its present shape; retaining as far as was practicable” (Pringle 55). Pringle also states that “No fact of importance has been omitted” and he “went over the whole [text], carefully examining her on every fact and circumstance detailed” (Pringle 55). Furthermore, the fact that Pringle edited this text did not impede its purpose. The purposes for introducing this text to the public were to inform the people of Great Britain of the abuse the slaves underwent in the British colonies, and that, despite the abuse, Prince had always been a loyal, hardworking, and responsible maternal figure both during her time with her masters and in her attempts to gain her freedom and raise funds for herself because of an eye illness that could leave her blind (Pringle 56). Hence, it was the desire to inform the people of England of her experiences in slavery and of her role as a maternal figure in order to gain a means to help her earn her freedom that persuaded her the most to narrate her life story.

Another chapter within this thesis addresses “The Supplement to *the History of Mary Prince*.” This chapter demonstrates how the material presented in this part of the text was manipulated by her last owner, John A. Wood, to defame Prince’s reputation on the grounds of her being an irresponsible and immoral maternal and familial figure. Prince’s remarks on her master and also by her editor, Thomas Pringle, counter Mr. Wood’s arguments and argue for Prince’s freedom on account of her being a responsible and trustworthy maternal and familial figure. Mr. Wood’s main argument for not wanting to give Prince her freedom is that she behaved badly. The material presented in this part of the text was published with the purpose of

shaping the British public's take on the representations of Prince. Therefore, I argue that the supplementary material to Prince's text offers significant comments on mothers, mothering, and motherhood as well as evidence that her freedom was centered around arguments that were based on her reputation as a maternal and familial figure.

I conclude this thesis by presenting how Prince's narrative still inspires contemporary readers in the Caribbean, the reasons why it is an essential literary contribution for this generation, and why the text is still relevant in the twenty-first century. This thesis can only end by presenting how Prince and her achievements are still being acclaimed in the contemporary moment. In order to accomplish this objective, I will discuss the ceremonies that were held in her honor in Bermuda and England and expand on the relevance of her *History* for contemporary readers.

1.8 Conclusion

In this thesis, I map how Prince's owners attempted to rob her of her identities and agency and the ways in which the enslaved, maternal figure of African descent became a victim of the transatlantic slave trade. I also present how transatlantic slavery impacted the representations of mothers, motherhood, and the act of mothering for female slaves of African descent who were victims in institution of slavery in the Atlantic world, as well as analyze how Prince used her role as a maternal figure to participate in the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies. This project, therefore, aims to provide a more complete analysis of the *History* and how the transatlantic slave trade impacted representations of motherhood in this text.

2 Mary Prince: Victim of an Imposed Motherhood and a Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist

“Motherhood—whether bloodmother, othermother, or community othermother—can be invoked as a symbol of power...” (207).

Patricia Hill Collins

2.1 Review of Scholarship

Prince’s slave narrative has been studied and interpreted by a number of scholars for a number of different reasons. Some scholars have analyzed Prince’s *History* and studied the different ways in which she claims agency within her narrative, while others have investigated the covert ways in which she resisted slavery. Other scholars have even studied Prince’s *History* to determine whether or not it can be classified under the genre of the slave narrative. Recent interpretations of Prince’s slave narrative include Sandra Pouchet Paquet’s article, “The Heartbeat of a West Indian Slave: *The History of Mary Prince*,” Alice Deck’s review of the critical edition of *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* edited by Moira Ferguson,⁴ Moira Ferguson’s introduction in her 1997 revised edition of *The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave. Related By Herself*, Barbara Baumgartner’s article, “The Body as Evidence, Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in *The History of Mary Prince*,” and Sarah Salih’s article, “The History of Mary Prince, the Black Subject, and the Black Canon,” found in the book, *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and its Colonies, 1760-1838* edited by Brycchan Carey, Markman Ellis, and Sara Salih.

⁴ Moira Ferguson first published her edition of Prince’s narrative in 1993. However, for this thesis, I have chosen to use Ferguson’s 1997 revised edition of Prince’s narrative because it provides all of the necessary supplementary material along with Ferguson’s own introduction to the text. This text has been instrumental in situating Prince as an important maternal figure.

Pouchet Paquet begins her article by pointing out that Prince's narrative, though it was altered due to intervention from the abolitionist editor, Thomas Pringle, preserves her authorial voice. Throughout her article, she reaffirms that the narrative was both empowering and autobiographical for Prince. Pouchet Paquet references the use of "a West Indian turn of phrase and style of telling" throughout her essay (136). She assures readers of the narrative's autobiographical nature by making allusion to the use of iteratives throughout that narrative which she claims are characteristic of a West Indian vernacular (137). The lack of sexually explicit material within the narrative is also explored by Pouchet Paquet. As she writes, "Social and religious prohibitions surrounding sexually explicit material in nineteenth-century Britain, and legal liabilities attached to the publication of such tracts, placed further constraints on Mary Prince's individual voice" (131). Despite the restrictive contexts surrounding Prince's narrative, Pouchet Paquet refers to Prince as an active agent and abolitionist by claiming that:

Telling her life story is a civic and political act that links Prince's individual quest for freedom as a black West Indian woman to the revolutionary restructuring of West Indian society...In linking her individual life and story to the unmaking of slavery and to the emergence of a new world, Mary Prince becomes an active agent of her society's transformation. (132)

Pouchet Paquet also proceeds to single out the fact that there was a turning point in Prince's narrative. As she states, "The episode in which she intervenes to stop Mr. D- from brutally beating his daughter...testifies to an increasingly defiant and politically aware Mary Prince, who acts independently and on principle, and redefines herself in the process" (138). Here Pouchet Paquet presents Prince as a woman who internalizes the sufferings of those around her and "who puts herself at risk" to serve as a "self-reliant, resourceful, and active agent on her own behalf

and on behalf of others” (139). Pouchet Paquet ends her analysis of Prince and her narrative by addressing what she calls the “values of the heart” presented in the narrative (141). This final section discusses the moments of distress that were experienced by Prince and presents her heart as a site of resistance throughout the narrative. Pouchet Paquet argues that “It is her heart that rejects and resists the slaves’ status as marketable commodities” (143).

Although Pouchet Paquet discusses a number of issues within Prince’s narrative, as I outline above, the significant issue of Prince as a maternal figure is never fully acknowledged nor explored within her valuable article. However, Pouchet Paquet does refer, in passing, to Prince as a woman who has the ability to internalize the suffering of enslaved mothers to such an extent that she is able to identify with them. Pouchet Paquet affirms that Prince portrays this sense of internalization and identification in her narrative when she speaks back to Captain I– when her father is returning her to him after she ran away. According to Pouchet Paquet, Prince “is empowered to speak from a resistant heart as a primary site of self-identification and identification with others. She speaks for herself, her mother, and all enslaved mothers” (142). In her analysis of Prince, Pouchet Paquet maintains that Prince, although she was twelve years old when she confronted Captain I–, was well aware of the lack of power that slave mothers suffered. She establishes that Prince was capable of internalizing the slave mother’s pain and the injustices that were committed against her own mother to make them her own pains and she uses this internalization to resist slavery’s oppressive binding. By internalizing her mother’s and other slave mothers’ pain, Pouchet Paquet argues that Prince was able to speak out against the unjust suffering a slave mother must bear and to understand the slave mother’s maternal role.

Alice Deck, on the other hand, exalts Prince’s narrative in her review of Moira Ferguson’s revised edition of the *History of Mary Prince*. Deck states that “Prince provided the

first lengthy discussion of life for a black slave woman in one of the British colonies, and her *History* contributed to the heated debate over slavery that had raged in England since the 1820's" (297). She comparatively reads Prince's narrative alongside Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. In comparing the two works she finds that "slavery in both the Caribbean and the United States locked black women into the same abusive pattern of existence" (297). She then moves on to reference Prince's self-proclaimed authority within the narrative by focusing on a single phrase: "I can tell by myself" can be read in two ways—that she [Prince] knows what other slaves feel based on how she herself feels about slavery, and that she is confident in her ability to speak by herself as an authority on how slaves feel. She declares herself a more reliable authority on the subject than white men (Deck 298). Deck ultimately provides an overview of the parts of the narrative that Ferguson discusses in her introduction and ends by exhorting the reader to use Ferguson's edition in any serious scholarly discussion on Prince. Nevertheless, Deck, like Pouchet Paquet, also fails to explore thoroughly the relationship between motherhood and its relationship to resisting slavery in Prince's *History* within her helpful essay.

In the introduction to her revised edition of Prince's narrative, Ferguson addresses the central issues pertinent to studying Prince's *History* such as the lack of sexually explicit material within the narrative. Ferguson claims that "Mary Prince's difficulty in being able to present her authentic experience stemmed partly from the form that was required...British female slaves and ex-slaves, by contrast, were either written about in the *Antislavery Reporter* or had little or no opportunity to chronicle, let alone publish, their experiences" (4).⁵ In her thorough analysis of Prince's narrative, Ferguson also refers to Prince as a woman who resisted slavery by remembering the sorrows of her fellow slaves and later by sabotaging her master's plans of

⁵ Ferguson informs the reader that "Prince's *History* was sponsored by the Antislavery Society, who won public support" by writing about female slaves in the *Antislavery Reporter*. "Women whose cause they sponsored could not be seen to be involved in any situation...that smacked of sin or moral corruption" (4).

exploiting her by claiming she was too ill to work and refusing to “accept her status as a slave” (13). In addition, this noted critic acknowledges the fact that Prince’s narrative was likely transcribed and altered in order to serve the abolitionist society in Great Britain. Ferguson states that “Whether Prince’s *History* was reshaped after she dictated her experiences to Susana Strickland, and if so, how much, is hard to say, but many aspects of the *History* do conform to fairly conventional propagandistic slave narratives” (23).⁶ Finally, it is important to note that, within this introduction, Ferguson does acknowledge Prince’s failure to mention any children of her own within the narrative. However, she fails to recognize Prince’s depiction of an experienced motherhood which, as I will argue, was crucial in her fight for freedom.

Similarly, Barbara Baumgartner discusses the strategies used by Prince to resist slavery in her *History*. Baumgartner claims that Prince used her bodily pain and physical ailments to resist her condition as a slave. According to Baumgartner, Prince engaged subtle forms of resistance such as emphasizing and even exaggerating her pains in order to relieve herself from the various tasks that her masters required her to perform. In turn, according to Baumgartner, Prince was able to gain more control over her life and body. Importantly, she also addresses Prince’s failure to mention any children of her own. Prince’s failure “to mention any children of her own is [an]...example of her body [and mind] acting as a sight of resistance” (Baumgartner 260). Here Baumgartner reads Prince’s purposeful manipulation of her body as a way to prevent herself from becoming a biological mother. Notwithstanding, she also addresses the fact that “since Prince never discusses the issue of children, there is no concrete evidence to claim” that she was involved in this form of resistance (260). She continues by qualifying: “[However,]

⁶ While this point may be true, especially considering Strickland’s experience as a writer, it does not necessarily affect Prince’s agency over her text because the narrative is composed of Prince’s life experiences; it is those experiences that ultimately won over white audiences’ sympathy and enabled her narrative to become well known in Great Britain. Therefore, “the shaping of *Mary Prince* into an intelligible, linear, grammatically correct narrative” (Strickland 61) does not necessarily take agency away from her because her experiences, narrated from her mouth, do not stop being her own or less true because someone else wrote them down to make them more understandable for British readers.

given the silence surrounding this method of resistance and given the centrality of Prince's body to her defiance, Prince's failure to bear children and the absence of any articulation to desire to do so strongly suggest another sign of refusal to support the system of slavery" (Baumgartner 260). It is curious to notice, once again, that in this quote material another contemporary reader notices the fact that Prince fails to mention any children of her own or even wanting any children of her own within the narrative, but does not further explore Prince as a maternal figure within her narrative.

Unlike Pouchet Paquet, Deck, Ferguson, and Baumgartner, Sarah Salih, in her recently published book chapter, focuses on the categorization or labeling of Prince's narrative within a specific genre. Salih claims that Prince's history has been "over read" by other authors who seek to categorize the narrative. Furthermore, she claims that the:

Desire to establish "the truth" of slavery no longer motivates most contemporary readers of slave narratives... [And] without that explicit impetus, literary critics and editors appear to be at liberty to reconstruct a text such as *The History of Mary Prince*, to recruit it for a variety of black canons, and to "canonize" its putative author in another sense by describing her as a figure of resistance and the founder of a national or racial tradition. (Salih 123)

Salih argues that it is difficult to place Prince's narrative into a specific genre (slave narrative, autobiography, or in the canon of black British writing) because the text has no "single, stable black subject as its author" and she strongly cautions the reader to be careful when attempting to categorize it (Salih 124).

Based on this overview of scholarship dedicated to Prince, we can see that Prince's narrative has yet to be interpreted and studied as a text that presents an empowering motherhood

as a site of resistance for slavery. The critical commentary on Prince's slave narrative has yet to explore effectively the representations of mothers, mothering, and motherhood presented in her narrative and how those representations contributed in her fight for freedom. As we will discover, these layers of Prince's text are crucial factors in understanding how she experienced and survived the hardships of slavery in the Caribbean and Great Britain. It should also be noted that their interpretations do not directly address the representations of motherhood by Prince in her narrative. Although the previously mentioned readings of Prince's slave narrative are significant in order to analyze and to comprehend what slavery and resistance meant for Prince in the Caribbean and Great Britain, they ultimately limit the range of issues that can be used to interpret and to appreciate the narrative.

In order to fully understand how Prince coped with and resisted slavery, her role as a maternal figure, and her internalization of the female slave's struggles with motherhood must be analyzed and interpreted in greater detail. Once this layer of her text is analyzed and interpreted, readers can both appreciate and understand how Prince presents an alternative to the abused slave mother figure in her repeated insistence that motherhood can be a form of resistance, one that empowered and enabled her to survive her status as an enslaved person and her fight against her oppressors.

Prince demonstrated, through her slave narrative, that motherhood did not have to be burdensome for female slaves; instead, motherhood could be empowering and even serve as a form of resistance. Prince documents how she used motherhood to her advantage and made it a useful tool in her fight against slavery in Great Britain and in the British colonies. Motherhood enabled her to resist slavery in two crucial aspects. First, supervising the masters' children, in her particular case, allowed her to receive some education by learning from the children whom she

nursed as well as the families that she worked for as a domestic or maternal figure. According to her narrative, Prince learned from these children not only elementary lessons on forming letters and specific words, but most importantly, she learned the power of the use of language. From her different masters, she also understood that in order to resist slavery a slave must, at times, be willing to defy her or his master's authority.

As I argue above, the children who Prince cared for as a young person influenced the enslaved maternal caregiver and domestic partner. For example, Prince, in her narrative, states how she began to be educated by Miss Fanny, the daughter of Mrs. Pruden, her second master. In one part of Prince's text, she recollects the following scene:

Dear Miss Fanny! She was a sweet Kind young lady, and so fond of me that she wished me to learn all that she knew herself; her method of teaching me was as follows: Directly she had said her lessons to her grandmamma, she used to come running to me, and make me repeat them one by one after her; in a few months I was able not only to say my letters but to spell many small words. (59)

The influence that Miss Fanny had upon Prince was that she helped her become partially literate through the art of oration and spelling; this way Prince was introduced to the connection that existed between letters, words, and oration. Although Prince was a child, who was unaware and could not acknowledge the lessons she received as a form of empowerment at this time in her life, we can recognize, in her text, that there is a clear relationship between language, oration, and empowerment expressed throughout her text. As a result of her later association with British abolitionists, especially Thomas Pringle and Susana Strickland, Prince realized that in order for her life narrative to be heard she would need to relate her life narrative to someone, and that she would rely on someone who could record and publish it because Prince never learned sufficient

literacy skills to write her life narrative. Prince was fortunate enough to come into contact with Pringle, the secretary of the British Antislavery Society, and Strickland, a writer, who were both abolitionists and individuals determined to transcribe and edit her *History* in a manner that would preserve her voices and appeal to the nineteenth-century British public as well.

Being taught by Miss Fanny, as I have observed, was Prince's first experience with a form of empowerment that arose out of an enforced motherhood. Although she was sent to Mrs. Pruden's home to nurse "little Master Daniel," she also affirms that she spent time with Miss Fanny and Master James, little Master Daniel's sister and brother, when she set out to walk him "by the sea-shore" (59). Prince's frequent interaction with the children led to other lessons for her. Prince describes how she began to learn to read with Miss Fanny when she narrates: "directly she had said her lessons to her grandmamma; she used to come running to me, and make me repeat them one by one after her; and in a few months I was not only able to say my letters but to spell many small words" (Prince 59). As a result of the instruction she received from Miss Fanny she not only became partially literate in English, but she became aware of a way in which she could alter her condition. She learned the potential power behind oral and written traditions.

Prince was aware of this fact and was able to make the connection between both oral and written traditions in her text to comment upon her condition as slave. Prince's realization of the connection between oral and written traditions and the power that they have can be appears at the very end of her narrative when she says, "I will say the truth to English people who may read this history that my good friend, Miss S-, is now writing for me" (Prince 94). Here, at a crucial part in her text, Prince acknowledges to her British reader that voicing her histories is important in order for the truth about slavery in the British West Indies to be known; she also notices that it is

even more important to have it recorded in writing so that it may become accessible to a much larger community of people. Pouchet Paquet reveals that in her narrative, Prince “seizes on the overlap of intention between both worlds [oral and written] as a site of creation rather than conflict” because she wanted the people of England to hear and to read her life narrative so that her condition and the condition of her fellow slaves could be altered (135).

Prince was able to increase her literacy skills later in her life because the Wood’s eldest daughter “taught her to read” (Appendixes, 147). Once her skills were polished through further instruction, she possessed another mechanism of defense against her oppressors because she was able to communicate the injustices committed against her by narrating them so that they could be recorded and published. In learning about language, Prince would later understand what it meant to publish and share a book with a wider reading public. Prince, ultimately, accomplished this work when she decided to narrate her life story to Susana Strickland and allow Thomas Pringle to have it published so that the world would know “the truth” about slavery (Ferguson 94). Therefore, mothering children and engaging in language learning, at this early age, both enabled Prince to create bonds with them and ultimately aided her in her fight for freedom. In this sense, by allowing her to take the place of their children’s biological mothers, her masters were unconsciously contributing to her empowerment.

Throughout Prince’s narrative, her tone enables readers to perceive that she possessed valuable knowledge of the institution of slavery and desired for her readers to regard the importance that her role as a maternal figure held in her fight for freedom. Prince related to Susana Strickland, the transcriber of her *History*, and Thomas Pringle, the editor of her narrative, countless examples of moments in her life in which she was placed in the position of what the scholar Patricia Hill Collins has referred to as an othermother. In her desire to resist the

institution of slavery, Prince merges ideas of abolition and resistance with those of the othermother within her text. In this chapter, I explore Prince's awareness of the benefits of her role as othermother and how it aided her in her efforts to try to secure manumission. In order to accomplish this scholarly objective, I will first discuss Prince's understanding of the abolitionist movement in England and then analyze her representations of maternal figures in her narrative by drawing upon Hill Collins's theory of the othermother and her valuable insights on empowerment and methods of resisting slavery.

2.2 Abolitionism in Nineteenth-Century Great Britain

Throughout Prince's narrative, the reader encounters a woman who was well-informed and aware of her surroundings, especially ones that were relevant to her condition as a slave. While narrating her *History*, Prince confirms, near the end of her narrative, her awareness of proceedings regarding slavery and its abolition in Great Britain when she remarks: "I knew I was free in England, but I did not know where to go, or how to get my living; and therefore, I did not like to leave the house" (Prince 88). At this time, Prince acknowledges that she was aware of her status, as a free woman in England when she was threatened by Mr. and Mrs. Wood, on a fourth occasion, to be put out on the street if she did not comply with the tasks that were demanded of her. She knew she was free in England, but she refused to leave the Wood's household because she also was aware that she was living in an area that was almost completely unknown to her. At that point, she admitted that although she was free, she did not want to leave the household because she was a stranger in England and did not know how to make a living for herself.

This awareness, regarding her state as a free woman in England, likely arose out of her knowledge of Lord William Mansfield's ruling in the James Somerset case which took place in

June of 1772. In this case, Lord Mansfield determined that “James Somerset’s master could not deport him back to Jamaica and return him to slavery” (Carey and Salih 2). Later in 1772, Lord Mansfield passed a legal judgment “which ruled slaves could not be sent out of the country [Great Britain] against their will” (Botkin 197). Therefore, it was understood in Great Britain that, after this ruling, a slave could avoid returning to slavery in the British colonies by fleeing his or her master and seeking refuge in England.

Not surprisingly, Prince’s knowledge of events leading up to the abolishing of the slave trade and the assisting of slaves in British colonies curiously aligns with her leaving her masters’ home and seeking guidance and help from Moravian Missionaries and the British Antislavery Society. When Prince encountered British abolitionists, they had already successfully abolished the slave trade and it is highly likely that the members of the abolitionist society that she became acquainted with kept her informed of their efforts to emancipate slaves in the British colonies as well. Prince arrived in England in 1828 and her *History* was published in 1831, for the first time, which means that she was likely to have witnessed, in some ways, the impact of the abolition of the slave trade act in 1807 while she lived in Antigua. The slave trade act abolished the slave trade but not the institution of slavery, unlike “before the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, [when] buying slaves rather than breeding them was the usual resort of British West Indian slaveowners” (Morgan 91). Therefore, after this act was instituted, it was highly likely for masters to exploit their female slaves so that they would become individuals capable of producing more slaves for their masters. An unwillingness to become an individual who produced slaves for a master would have given Prince a motive for refusing to become a biological mother and settling with what Hill Collins has identified as an othermother.

2.3 The Other Mother as a Critical Concept to Study Prince's *History*

Through her interaction with white children, Prince became the slave version of what Patricia Hill Collins refers to as an “othermother” (192). Hill Collins borrows Rosalie Riegel Troester’s definition of the term othermother, which states that these individuals are “women who assist blood mothers by sharing mothering responsibilities... [which] traditionally have been central to the institution of Black motherhood” (192). Some of the responsibilities and tasks assigned to an othermother include bathing and feeding children, looking out for children to keep them from harm’s way, and washing their clothes. If these responsibilities are taken as prerequisites for those who are to be labeled othermothers, Prince most certainly fits the bill.

It is important, however, for readers to note that Hill Collins only defines the othermother within a context that includes African American women tending to each other’s children. For instance, the examples that Collins consistently provides of othermothers in her text include older African American women who care for and look after other African American women’s children within their communities, mainly while they work. Though she carefully details the context in which othermothers exist, her contextualization ultimately lacks a space for the enslaved person who played the role of an othermother for her master’s or masters’ children.⁷

By placing the othermother within the master/slave context, the characterization of the othermother importantly shifts from that of a woman who exists within the caring and supportive context of the African American community that Collins describes to one who exists within the more harsh and cruel dynamics of the master and slave relationship. For instance, for the othermother in the master/slave context presented in Prince’s narrative, the female slave’s experiences as an enslaved person and those with her own mother greatly influence the female

⁷ In her seminal book, *Black Feminist Thought*, Hill Collins references African American mothers in the context of women who provide “communal child-care” for one another (56). However, she does not make reference to slaves serving as othermothers for their master’s or masters’ children.

slave's attitude and actions as a caregiver for her master's or masters' children. The only time that Prince mentions having had a loving and supportive relationship with the mothers of the children she tended to was when she lived with Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Pruden. Referring to Mrs. Williams, Prince's text states that "next to my own mother, [I] loved her better than any other creature in the world," and in describing Mrs. Pruden, Prince claims that she "did not treat her very unkindly" (58-59). She "describes her indenture to Mrs. Pruden as an extension of Mrs. Williams's household" (Pouchet Paquet 141). When reflecting on the time spent with these two women and their children, Prince displays nostalgia by stating that "those days were too pleasant to last. My heart always softens when I think of them" (59).

This brief period of affection towards the mother of the children she tended to can be attributed to her young age and ignorance of her condition as a slave and caregiver at this point in her life. In fact, Prince openly acknowledges that "This was the happiest period of my life for I was too young to understand rightly my condition as a slave and too thoughtless and full of spirits to look forward to the days of toil and sorrow" (Prince 57). Once she exits Mrs. Pruden's household, her days of forming affectionate bonds with her mistresses were largely over. From this point on, she makes it clear in her life narrative that she did not engage in a friendly or supportive relationship with the blood mother of the children she was made to take care of. We can observe this point not only because she explicitly narrates negative relationships with the blood mothers of her charges, but also because she was not a volunteer othermother, a characteristic of othermothering encompassed by Hill Collins's conceptualization of the term. Rather, she was unjustly forced into this occupation as an othermother because of her status as an enslaved person.

Furthermore, Prince does not take on this responsibility because she feels she must provide support to another member in her community. In this newly discovered context of the othermother, the female must support her master's or masters' children in his or their presence *and* absence and she does so because she has been obligated to because of her status of a slave.⁸ Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that Prince as the othermother in the master/slave context does resemble part of Hill Collins's characterization of the othermother. Specifically, Prince does form bonds of affection with some of the children whom she cared for as if they were part of her own extended family. The othermother forms this bond because her "understanding of family" allows her to "cope with and resist oppression" (Hill Collins 197). For Prince, the role of the othermother allowed her to resist slavery, first, by allowing her access to a limited education and, then, as the means for her to cope emotionally with being separated from her own mother. In this manner, Prince would be able to care for other children in a way in which she would have longed to have been cared for by her own mother.

Throughout her narrative, Prince offers consistent commentary on the condition of an enslaved biological mother of African descent during slavery, even though she never experienced this role. She admits that her mother was not able to tend to her as she yearned for her care because her condition as a slave denied her the right to do so. Evidence of her growing awareness regarding a slave mother's role during slavery can be observed in her text when she speaks up to Captain I-: "I then took the courage and said that I could stand the floggings no longer; that I was weary of my life, and therefore I had run away to my mother; but mothers could only weep and mourn over their children, they could not save them from cruel masters – from the whip, the rope, and the cow-skin" (Prince 70). This quote shows that Prince was not

⁸ Later, in the post-abolition period, black females cared for their masters' children due to the power dynamics in relation to race, politics, and economics. Hill Collins, when writing about slavery within the United States, explains that "othermothers" in many cases helped "bloodmothers who, for whatever reason, lack the preparation or desire for motherhood" (194).

only aware of her condition as a slave, but that she was aware of the impact of slavery on slave mothers in general. Prince informs her oppressor that she is fully aware of how the institution of slavery has left children without the protection of their mothers. However, the act of standing up to Captain I–, despite the fact that she knew that her mother could not protect her, introduces the reader to a Prince who was tired of the abuse and who was willing to stand up for herself and other enslaved persons. Prince’s determination to speak up against her oppressor arose from the sense of grief, suffering, and injustice that was instilled in her by her own mother. Prince gained awareness of her and her mother’s condition through the maternal feelings and experiences that she received from her mother or ones that were denied to her. One account of an occasion in which Prince’s mother instills the sense of grief and sorrow that accompany and torment the slave mother can be observed in her text when she escorts her children so that they may be sold for Captain I–’s marriage: “The black morning at length came; it came too soon for my poor mother and us. Whilst she was putting on us the new osnaburgs⁹ in which we were to be sold, she said in a sorrowful voice, (I shall never forget it!) ‘See, I am *shrouding*¹⁰ my poor children; what a task for a mother!’” (Prince 61). This recollection by Prince represents the degree to which her mother influenced her maternal thinking. Prince recalls her mother’s grief and feebleness when she had to endure the torment of witnessing her children auctioned off to other slave owners. She reveals sincere pity for her mother and her powerlessness in this situation. Pouchet Paquet expresses that Prince’s mother impressed upon her not only “an indelible sense of injustice done to her and her family” but also a sense of the inescapable agony and suffering that slave mothers, in particular, experience due to their condition (141). Also, we should note in this recollection that Prince acknowledges the impression that her mother managed to leave on

⁹ The term “osnaburg” means: “a coarse plain-woven cotton used for sacks, furnishings, etc” (Farlex).

¹⁰ By using the word “shrouding” within the text, Prince compares the selling of her mother’s children to the emotional pain of death, the uncontrollable ultimate separation of loved ones from one another.

her heart and mind because she openly admits that she will “never forget” her mother’s words and sorrow, indicating that those same words and sorrow became embedded within her mind from that moment on. Prince projects the influence that her mother’s words and experiences exerted upon her own maternal thinking when, in a rebellious act, she speaks up to Captain I–, as I have quoted above, and confronts him about the powerlessness that slave mothers suffer from as a direct result of their enslaved condition.

Furthermore, although there is no clear evidence in the narrative to support the claim that Prince willingly and consciously refused to have children, this argument should not be completely dismissed since, as noted earlier, her affiliation with members of the abolitionist society very likely led her to growing familiarity with important issues pertaining to the abolition of the institution of slavery. Knowledge of proceedings regarding slavery and the slave trade at the time likely enabled Prince to think critically about her situation as she witnessed the impact that the abolition of the slave trade had on female slaves. Choosing not to become a mother while a slave could have been a very real possibility in Prince’s life since it would have been an ideal form of resistance; this act, in other words, would have been a less obvious form of resistance compared to “collective rebellion” (Morgan 127), for instance.

Some historians of slavery and literary critics have argued about the types of resistance available to enslaved persons. Baumgartner, for example, quotes James Scott when referring to the types of resistance available to the oppressed and enslaved. Scott refers to this type of resistance as “weapons of the weak” and Baumgartner clarifies this behavior as “indirect opposition to the dominator” (qtd. in Baumgartner 258). According to Scott, some examples of this form of resistance “include foot dragging, false compliance, flight, feigned ignorance, sabotage, theft, and, not least, cultural resistance” (qtd. in Baumgartner 258). Taking upon this

subtle form of resistance would have been very strategic and ingenious on behalf of Prince since, according to Kenneth Morgan, “[b]efore the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, buying slaves rather than breeding them was the usual resort of British West Indian slave owners” (91).

This notion, however, is difficult to prove since Prince does not make direct reference to consciously giving up biological maternity. Nevertheless, it is a valid point to consider when reading Prince’s text and its commentary on enslaved mothers. Morgan, for example, has acknowledged female slaves adopting “anti-breeding attitudes” as a form of resistance, but he acknowledges these attitudes are difficult to prove due to the “lack of slave testimony” (93).¹¹ Baumgartner, on the other hand, claims that Prince deliberately decided to “withhold her work and control her body” when she was with the Woods as a way to resist their authority and not succumb to their will of exploiting her (258). In this sense, a case can also be made for Prince engaging in this type of resistance; that is, in order to keep control over her body and not support slavery, it would be understandable for Prince to have chosen not to bear children. This point could also offer one possible explanation why she never had any children during the time that she lived with her husband in Antigua and why she decided to move to England with the Woods, despite knowing that she would have to leave her husband in Antigua. Prince could have preferred to live away from her husband to diminish the possibility of becoming a biological mother. However, as Morgan suggests, scholars have a difficult time proving the nature of this type of resistance because of the lack of convincing evidence to support the claim (93). Without Prince’s testimony, therefore, a theory regarding her conscientious refusal to bear children to resist slavery cannot be corroborated.

¹¹ Slave testimonials, due to the period in which they were collected, prevented frank discussion of sexual relations and women’s sexuality. A clear example of this is Harriet Jacob’s narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, in which she does not dare to openly discuss the sexual relations that she had during her time as a slave. In the biography provided on the website “Documenting the American South” the contributors note that “Jacobs dreaded writing candidly about the obscenities of slavery, fear that disclosing these ‘foul secrets’ would impute to her the guilt that should have been reserved for” her master (Harriet A. Jacobs).

Baumgartner also recognizes the encumbrance that scholars encounter when trying to locate indirect forms of resistance in a literary text by mentioning that “the subtle and covert nature of this type of indirect resistance makes it difficult to recognize and uncover” (258). Still, it is likely that Prince may have applied this form of resistance since “slaves must often resort to indirect methods of resistance in order to obtain personal relief from lifelong, backbreaking labor and/or to sabotage the goals of the slave owners” (Baumgartner 259). Not bearing children would have saved Prince from having to see them auctioned off, as her mother witnessed the selling of her own children. Prince, as I argue, resisted slavery and the burdens that it brought upon mothering for female slaves from her very early childhood. For this reason, the act of becoming a mother, especially after the slave trade had been abolished, would have entailed that she contributed to the institution of slavery since she was a slave and her children would therefore be born into slavery. Nevertheless, in order to resist slavery, Prince accepted her condition as an othermother and used it to gain control within her masters’ household. As I will argue in the remaining parts of this chapter, the status of an othermother not only allowed Prince to experience motherhood without having to bear any children of her own but it also allowed her to take control of her life by making her indispensable to her masters.

Many examples of Prince as an othermother surface throughout her nineteenth-century slave narrative, thereby highlighting the productive nature of extending Hill Collins’s important scholarly work. At the beginning of her narrative, for example, Prince explains that she was sold along with her mother to “Captain Darrel, and given to his grandchild, little Miss Betsey Williams” (Prince 57). She informs her reader that she was purchased to serve as a companion to Miss Betsey Williams because they were the same age. Clearly, Prince was not bought to be a caregiver at this point in her life, but we should note that she was slowly being introduced to the

world of slave caregivers and companions. Hill Collins acknowledges this behavior when she writes: “Young women are often carefully groomed at an early age to become othermothers” (194).

It is for this reason that when Prince is under Mrs. Pruden’s care she is put in charge of “nursing a sweet baby, little Master Daniel” (4). After three months of working for Mrs. Pruden, she makes it clear that she was sent back to the Williams household to be sold. Her new masters were, as she refers to them in her text, “Captain I— and Mrs. I—” (Prince 63-64). Here she relates that Mrs. I— “put a child into my arms, and, as tired as I was, I was forced instantly to take up my old occupation of a nurse” (Prince 9). By referring to mothering as her “occupation,” Prince demonstrates that she was aware of the fact that she was being prepared for what was to be her new occupation while she was in Mrs. Pruden’s home. This quote is significant because it shows that Prince understood the fate of female slaves in more complicated ways, and this passage supports Hill Collins’s assertion that young women are trained to be othermothers from a very early period in their lives.

After much suffering and working for Captain I—, Prince was ultimately sold to Mr. D—. However, despite working in different physical locations, not much changed for Prince while she worked for Mr. D—. At first she was “immediately sent to work in the salt water with the rest of slaves” in Turk’s Island, but after “ten years [of working]...in the salt ponds at Turk’s Island,” Mr. D— took her with him to Bermuda “to wait upon his daughters” (Prince 71, 75). Significantly, it was at this time that Prince discovered the empowering nature of motherhood because she wished to defy her master in order to protect the child she was in charge of mothering. She vividly narrates the precise occasion in which she understands the notion of mothering—not as a burden—but as a potential source of empowerment. Prince’s text states:

My old master [Mr. D—] often got drunk, and then he would get in a fury with his daughter, and beat her till she was not fit to be seen. I remember on one occasion, I had gone to fetch water, and when I was coming up the hill I heard a great screaming; I ran as fast as I could to the house, put down the water, and went into the chamber, where I found my master beating Miss D— dreadfully. I strove with all my strength to get her away from him; for she was all black and blue with bruises. He had beat her with his fist, and almost killed her. The people gave me credit for getting her away. He turned around and began to lick me. Then I said, “Sir, this is not Turk’s Island.” (77)

On this occasion, Prince displayed courage and extreme disregard for self-preservation. It is important to remember that Miss D— was not Prince’s child, so it is important to recognize that Prince risked her own life for her when she stopped Mr. D— from beating his daughter. She did so because she adopted the persona of a mother to Miss D. As Sara Ruddick explains, “maternal thinking arises out of actual child-caring practices, biological parenting is neither necessary nor sufficient” (107). Therefore, the fact that Prince risked her life for a child that she was forced to take care of can be attributed to the affectionate bond that othermothers build through their relationship with the children they are in charge of.

This scene, moreover, reflects the point that Prince has become aware of her rights concerning the fair treatment of another human being in her text. This scene underscores that she actively resists the harsh treatment brought upon herself and others who are enslaved othermothers by defying her master’s authority and using her position as an othermother to establish and to reinforce her authority. By saying “Sir, this is not Turk’s Island” (77), Prince informs her master that she will not take his punishment any longer because her condition as an othermother demanded that she protect her master’s daughter, even if the abuse was from the

child's own parent. It is important to note that for Prince, Turk's Island represented the world of extreme physical abuse and a place that robbed enslaved persons of their agency and hope for freedom. In Turk's Island, Prince "was immediately sent to work in the salt water with the rest of the slaves" (71). Extracting salt caused her body and those of other slaves to deteriorate slowly. She recalls how their "feet and legs from standing in the salt water for so many hours soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, afflicting the sufferers with great torment" (Prince 72).

Prince also relives the cruel sufferings of her fellow slaves when she narrates the experience of old Daniel.

Poor Daniel was lame in the hip, and could not keep up with the rest of the slaves; and our master would order him to be stripped and laid down on the ground, and have him beaten with a rod of rough briar till his skin was quite red and raw. He would then call for a bucket of salt, and fling upon the raw flesh till the man writhed on the ground like a worm, and screamed loud with agony. This poor man's wounds were never healed, and I have often seen them full of maggots, which increased his torments to an intolerable degree. He was an object of pity and terror to the whole gang of slaves, and in his wretched case we saw, each of us, our own lot, if we should live to be as old. Oh the horrors of slavery! (Prince 74)

Empathy is shown by Prince as she recounts her fellow slave's torments. Turk's Island reminded her of the exploitation, physical abuse, and unbearable degradation that slaves were exposed to. For obvious reasons, Prince knew that she did not want to return to Turk's Island. Nevertheless, while at Turk's Island, she also discovered the responsibility that came with the position of an othermother gave her; the position gave her not only power over the children she tended to, but,

at times, over her master as well because it allowed her to establish how he could and could not treat his daughter. After this event, Mr. D— did not change his behavior with Prince; he still beat her on occasion. However, it must be noted that this event gave Prince the encouragement and even realization she needed to take what little control she could of her life. Prince gained courage after this event and this point can be seen when she says that she defended herself from Mr. D—’s abuse after he struck her on one occasion. On this occasion, Prince not only defended herself but also told Mr. D— that she “would not live longer with him...[and] went away to a neighbouring house” (Prince 78). Through this scene, the reader appreciates how Prince has embraced her condition as an othermother to empower herself within her master’s domain so much so that she is willing to resist actively her condition as an enslaved person.

Interestingly, after this event took place, Prince showed signs of a woman who longed to be independent and self-sufficient. Through her own arrangement, she managed to convince Mr. D— to sell her to Mr. John A. Wood, her last master. She accomplished this important feat after she left Mr. D—’s house, when she “was hired to work at Cedar Hills” (78). It was while she worked at Cedar Hills that she heard of Mr. Wood’s trip to Antigua and took it upon herself to go back to Mr. D— and request that he let her work for Mr. Wood. Although Mr. Wood did not want her at the time, he still decided to take her with him to Antigua. Once in Antigua, Mrs. Wood realized that Prince could be of service to them and she requested that Mr. Wood buy her.

Prince was fifteen years of age when she was sold to Mr. Wood and he took her to Antigua to “attend the chambers and nurse the child, and to go down to the pond and wash the clothes” (Prince 79). Once again, Prince narrates an account in which she is placed in yet another position wherein she is the othermother for her masters’ children. However, although she was abused and harshly mistreated and punished for petty issues or for no reason at all while she

worked for Mr. and Mrs. Wood, this time in her life was one in which she experienced motherhood at its most empowering level. Prince managed to gain further agency despite her enslaved condition and the fact that she had been constantly punished and mistreated by all of her different masters. She continued to gain agency, while working for the Woods, by demonstrating that she was trustworthy and could handle domestic chores along with caring for the children, even when sick.

Readers can understand the power that Prince's status as an othermother afforded her within the Wood's household by studying the time in which the Woods decided to hire another woman to replace her until she recuperated from an illness. It is clear that Mr. and Mrs. Wood did not trust any other of their slaves or servants as much they did Prince. As I mentioned previously, soon after she moved in with them in Antigua, she became severely ill with arthritis and it was only when Prince was too ill to work that Mrs. Wood hired another woman to care for her child. Prince narrates that "It was a long time before I got well enough to work in the house. Mrs. Wood, in the meanwhile, hired a mulatto [named Martha Wilcox] woman to nurse the child" (79). Had Prince not been a trustworthy and efficient othermother, the Woods would have kept Martha Wilcox in their service to tend to their children and likely sold or dismissed Prince who was quite ill. Moreover, Prince's illness would have been the perfect excuse for them to get rid of her and find someone who could replace her. Nevertheless, the Woods did not dismiss Prince. By being efficient and trustworthy, Prince became indispensable for the Woods and this point means that she was a necessary component of their home and could not be easily disregarded. At this point, Prince transformed the role of an othermother from one that was burdensome to one that was "an arena in social life in which women can exert power and control" (hooks 148). Furthermore, working as an othermother and domestic servant for her

masters and their children provided Prince with an opportunity to make herself necessary and also to secure a good reputation for herself, one that characterized her as a trustworthy and responsible woman among individuals in Antiguan and British societies.

It was important for Prince to secure a respectable reputation with the public because, wherever she resided, individuals who knew her could later aid her in her fight for freedom. Mr. Joseph Phillips, from Antigua, was one of the people who ultimately aided Prince when both she and Thomas Pringle were working to obtain her freedom. Mr. Phillips assisted Prince by writing a letter to Pringle in which he corroborated that Prince was indeed much trusted by the Woods because she was very responsible and efficient. Pringle, the editor of Prince's text, purposefully included Mr. Phillips's letter in the "Supplement to the *History of Mary Prince*" to argue for Prince's reputation on account of her being a trustworthy and dependable maternal and familial figure for the Woods and their children. I will focus on this letter, along with other texts from this "Supplement," in the following chapter to explain how the materials found in the "Supplement" support the claim that Prince's freedom hinged upon whether she had been a responsible maternal figure or an irresponsible, reckless maternal figure throughout her life.

3 Unveiling the Maternal Figure in the "Supplement to the *History of Mary Prince*"

In the previous chapter, I scrutinized Prince's narrative and presented how she uncovered the importance of herself as an othermother and maternal figure within her narrative. This chapter extends my discussion of Prince and the maternal figure by focusing on how different representations of Prince as a maternal figure were used in the "Supplement to the *History of Mary Prince*" both to deny her manumission and to argue for her freedom. Some of the representations of Prince's behavior in the nineteenth-century public sphere, I maintain, depicted

her as being ill-behaved in an attempt to discredit her claims for freedom, and possibly to dissuade other slave women from following in her footsteps. For this reason, it was very important for Pringle, who was the editor of her narrative, to take control of how she would be perceived within the public sphere in Great Britain, since the nineteenth century was the era of public debate on slavery.

Prince's readers played a vital role when it came to matters of the abolition of slavery because they were part of the nineteenth-century British public sphere and some of them could also participate in shaping policies as well as aiding her in obtaining her freedom. Hence, the British public could influence the decisions that were made by the justice system regarding the abolition of slavery in a manner that would be beneficial to her particular case and to the other cases of enslaved persons in Great Britain and its colonies. Therefore, the public's opinion on the institution of slavery in the British colonies was very significant for Prince. According to Finlayson's reading of Jürgen Habermas, participation in the public sphere was important in matters such as the abolition of slavery because it allowed for:

the establishment of civic rights guaranteeing the individual freedoms of association and of expression and the emergence of a free press...in which citizens could enter into free public discussions...The public sphere consisted in voluntary associations of private citizens united in a common aim, to make use of their own reason in unconstrained discussion between equals. Soon, a shared culture developed that, among other things, helped the participants to discover and to express their needs and interests and to form a conception of the common good...As the authority and the influence of the public spread, so gradually the public opinion began to function as a check of the legitimacy of the powers of unrepresentative and closed government. By checking whether laws and

policies were in the common good, the public could effectively test their legitimacy.
(Finlayson 10-11)

Through this definition of the public sphere and Habermas's conception of this important space, readers can view how Prince would have been able to impact her readers' views on the abolition of slavery. In fact, if they were moved by Prince's text, her readers could not only speak out for her in the public sphere but also put pressure on political figures to shape policy that would radically alter her life as status as an enslaved person. Habermas's definition of the public sphere ultimately illuminates this study because it explains why Pringle purposefully involved the reading public in Prince's case. Pringle, as editor of Prince's narrative and secretary of the Antislavery Society, knowingly involved the public in Prince's fight against slavery and quest for freedom the moment he allowed her *History* to be published by the Antislavery Society and chose to publish the letters that were written by Prince's last owner, Mr. Wood, in the supplementary part of Prince's book.

The reason for the publication of her *History* by the Antislavery Society was precisely to focus the public's attention on her case and establish a reputation for herself as a responsible and honest mother figure so that she might ultimately be awarded her freedom. Prince and British abolitionists knew that since no other female slave's histories had been published in Great Britain at the time, the act of publishing her *History* could be very influential because the public had never read so extensively about the hardships of slavery through the eyes of a female slave. Thus, Prince's life writing was deliberately designed and edited by Pringle to capture the British public's attention and sympathy and also solicited their participation in extinguishing the institution of slavery in Great Britain and its colonies.

Johanna M. Smith explains in more detail how the late eighteenth-century British public involved themselves in the abolition of slavery, in her essay “Slavery, Abolition, and the Nation in Priscilla Wakefield’s Tour Books for Children”:

By 1790, the *New Moral System of Geography*, a school book for young ladies, was asking “who can reflect on the cruelties” suffered by slaves “without shedding the tear of humanity, and feeling horror at the barbarity” of slave-owners...Such geographies might aid in constructing an abolitionist community that crossed class lines and included women as well as men, children as well as adults. We know, for example, that children signed abolitionist petitions, and more than one abolitionist urged women to declare against the slave trade “publicly and in print.” (177)

Here Smith presents the diversity among late eighteenth-century British abolitionists and how the publication of petitions and other documents, including slave narratives, were used in impacting discussions about abolitionism in the public sphere by this diverse group of peoples.

By publishing Prince’s *History* and making a case for her on account of her reputation as a responsible maternal and familial figure, Thomas Pringle, the secretary of the Antislavery Society, sought to win over a diverse public’s sympathy in order to increase the possibilities of earning Prince’s freedom. However, we must also note that while Pringle understood the power of the public and exploited his options to obtain Prince’s freedom, John A. Wood, Prince’s last owner, a slave owner who refused to grant her manumission, attempted to persuade the public in a different way concerning Prince’s character, particularly using his connections with his influential friends from Antigua, including the Hon. Mr. Byam, Dr. Coull, and Mr. Taylor, secretary of Sir Patrick Ross, governor of Antigua at the time, as well as the power of the law in order to maintain Prince’s status as an enslaved person. Mr. Wood openly admits, in a letter

published by Pringle and included in Prince's text, to exploiting these friendships in Antigua when he writes that Prince's petition to parliament would have been presented "had not my friends from this island, particularly the Hon. Mr. Byam and Dr. Coull, come forward, and disproved what she had asserted" ("Supplement" 101). Thomas Pringle adds that Mr. Wood also counted "Mr. Taylor [,] the Government Secretary" among the friends who aided him in negating Prince's quest for freedom. It is clear that Mr. Wood had friends in high places who could assist him in his endeavors to ensure that Prince remained enslaved ("Supplement" 101).

In the "Supplement to the *History of Mary Prince*," readers find two letters written by Mr. Wood that indicate how he not only exploits his power as a white slave owner, but also takes advantage of his West Indian friendships or connections in order to prevent Prince's case from being taken to Parliament. It is clear that Mr. Wood's intention was to undermine Prince's reputation as a responsible and trustworthy maternal and familial figure in the eyes of those who governed and determined the law. These letters, which will be analyzed in this chapter, form part of the supplementary material to Prince's narrative which many scholars have paid little or no attention to. A thorough analysis of Mr. Wood's letters and other materials found in the supplement to Prince's *History* will reveal that, although virtually none of Prince's contemporary readers reference the supplementary materials in her narrative, the material found in the supplement may be viewed as equally significant as that found in her *History*.

The supplementary material, I argue, allows the reader to learn even more about the importance of the representation of mothers in Prince's narrative. This document also provides specialists in slavery studies and literary studies with another way to understand and to read the representations of mothers in Prince's narrative. These representations of the maternal figure also play a significant role in how apologists, like Mr. Wood, argued for the institution of slavery and

how abolitionists, like Thomas Pringle, argued against the peculiar institution. Hence, attending to these parts of Prince's narrative allows for a deeper analysis of the presence of the maternal figure in her narrative as well as in the letters written by Mr. Wood and other sources that are found in the text. The supplementary materials to Prince's text offer significant comments not only on mothers, mothering, and motherhood but also make clear how her slave narrative was interconnected with the abolition movement in Great Britain. However, it is only through extensive and careful reading of the supplementary material provided after the narrative that the reader will be able to view how Wood and Pringle made their respective claims on Prince's reputation as a maternal figure. In following the order of claims about maternal figures that are presented in the supplementary material, I begin my discussion by presenting how Prince argued that she was a responsible and efficient maternal figure. Next, I present how Mr. Wood, through the letters written by himself that Pringle reprinted and presented in the "Supplement" argued that Prince was an irresponsible maternal and familial figure and then how Pringle counters such arguments by using his own language to construct many arguments against Wood in this section.

One of the examples within the narrative that Prince presents in defense of her dependability is that while she resided in the Wood's home, she tended to the household chores and took care of "the child" until she fell ill (Prince 79). Prince had contracted what can be perceived as a severe form of rheumatism or rheumatoid arthritis and although she was ill she still cared for the Wood's children and their household chores (Prince 79). It was not until this moment that Mrs. Wood decided to hire a "mulatto woman [named Martha Wilcox] to nurse the child" (Ferguson 79). Clearly, Prince had performed her duties well and had proven to be an efficient slave up to this point because help was not sought by the Wood family until she became ill and unable to perform her numerous daily tasks efficiently.

Despite her illness, Prince's text narrates that after some time the Woods moved and she took up her old occupation of nurse/othermother and servant: "When we moved from the middle of the town to the Point, I used to be in the house and do all the work and mind the children, though still very ill with rheumatism. Every week I had to wash two large bundles of clothes, as much as a boy could help me to lift; but I could give no satisfaction. My mistress was always abusing and fretting after me" (Prince 80). This passage presents Prince as an efficient, hardworking, multitasking maternal figure. Undeterred by her illnesses or her mistress's constant abusive treatment against her, Prince continued to comply with her tasks. It is no wonder that Mr. and Mrs. Wood refused to get rid of her. Prince was a very efficient slave who could take on many tasks at the same time and still care for their children properly.

However, there remains another reading regarding why Mr. and Mrs. Wood refused to sell Prince, one that explains why the Woods insisted on degrading Prince's reputation in the nineteenth-century British public sphere. Ferguson, a twentieth-century editor of Prince's *History*, explains that the Wood's "[r]etaining their control of Mary Prince symbolized retaining their identity as the master class" (18). When the Woods sensed Prince's reluctance to continue being a slave and accept her condition "they compelled her to remain their slave in order to protect themselves from a moral judgment about the quality of servitude in their household" (Ferguson 18). Ferguson indicates that Prince's decision to leave her master's home negatively affected her master's reputation in England, because they would be viewed by other slave-owners and others in society as having lost their power and status as part of "the master class." When their efforts to keep her in their home as their slave failed, they became enraged. It was also at this point that Mr. Wood wrote the first note or letter about Prince in a manner that would

convince anyone who thought about employing her that she was not a good servant and maternal figure and therefore could not be trusted.

In order to salvage his family's reputation as Prince's masters in the public eye, Mr. Wood put all his efforts towards defaming her in print. Mr. Wood began his attack on Prince's reputation by writing a note he gave her before she left his house. In the document, Mr. Wood expressed that he was putting Prince out due to "her late conduct" and would allow her to stay only if she agreed to demonstrate "good behaviour" ("Supplement" 96). It is important to point out that this note would have been handed by Prince to anyone she asked for employment or housing. By accusing her of bad behavior, Mr. Wood attempted to make it exceedingly difficult for Prince to find appropriate shelter anywhere in London.

Despite Mr. Wood's attempts to leave Prince stranded in London, in November of 1828, Prince managed to come into contact with "the Antislavery society in Aldermanbury" and seek the assistance of British abolitionists ("Supplement" 95). After investigating her case, the Antislavery Society contacted Dr. Lushington, who was also going "to present, and to give notice at the same time of his intention to bring in a Bill to provide for the emancipation of all slaves brought to England with the owner's consent" and Mr. Sergeant Stephen, who "found that there existed no legal means of compelling Mary's master to grant her manumission...[and] [i]t was, however, resolved to try what could be effected for her by amicable negotiation" ("Supplement" 97-98). "Amicable negotiation," though, was not possible with Mr. Wood since he fervently refused to grant her manumission by any means.

It was at this point that the Antislavery Committee considered presenting Prince's case to Parliament, specifically the House of Commons. Once Mr. Wood was informed of this plan, he immediately sought help from influential friends to support his claims regarding Prince and

endeavored once more to degrade her reputation in order to deny her manumission. Evidence of Mr. Wood's second attempt to harm Prince's reputation can also be found in the "Supplement" when Pringle writes:

Dr. Lushington again had recourse to negotiation with the master; and, partly by personal conference, used every persuasion in his power to induce Mr. Wood to relent and let the bondwoman go free. Seeing the matter thus seriously taken up, Mr. Wood became at length alarmed, - not relishing, it appears, the idea of having the case publicly discussed in the House of Commons; and to avert this result he submitted to temporize...he adroitly endeavoured to cool the ardour of Mary's new friends, in her cause, by representing her as an abandoned and worthless woman, ungrateful towards him, and undeserving of sympathy from others; allegations which he supported by the ready affirmation of some of his West India friends, and by one or two plausible letters procured from Antigua. ("Supplement" 98)

Mr. Wood managed to salvage his reputation by making use of his status and exploiting his powerful friendships to defame Prince and confirm his allegations. As a result, Dr. Lushington retracted from his decision to present Prince's case to Parliament.

However, despite the fact that Mr. Wood claims Prince had engaged in bad conduct and was a worthless woman who did not deserve anyone's sympathy, he still required her to care for his children if she was to work for him. Prince relates that part of her work in the Wood's residence "was to attend the chambers and nurse the child" (20). Nevertheless, he still claims that he would consider keeping her in the house if she were to behave. What can be deducted from Mr. Wood's attitude is that Prince was a good servant and even a dependable mother-like figure to his children. She was dependable enough that even when she was sick she still tended to the

children and their necessities without being ordered to do so. As Prince remarks in the text: “I always washed the child’s clothes without being commanded to do it, and anything else that was wanted in the family; though still I was very sick – very sick indeed” (Prince 88).

Later, according to Prince’s text, Mr. Wood refused to grant Prince her freedom and he even attempted to defame Prince because he thought that if he ruined her reputation no one else would have her in her or his home. He wanted Prince to feel that caring for his family and children was her only option; when she refused to do so by seeking the help of the abolitionist society, he became enraged and fabricated a number of lies against her in order to degrade her reputation within the public sphere and, ultimately, attempt to deny her manumission by any means necessary. Moreover, not satisfied with having already harmed Prince by reducing her chances of finding a family to employ her in their home in England, Mr. Wood attempted to degrade her reputation a third time. This time he presents her, in his letter to Sir Patrick Ross, governor of Antigua at the time, “as an abandoned and worthless woman, ungrateful towards him, and undeserving of sympathy towards others,” instead of the responsible caretaker and maternal figure that she presents herself as in her text (“Supplement” 98). Also, in the letter to Sir Patrick Ross, he writes that: “there are many powerful reasons for inducing me to refuse my sanction to her returning here in the way she seems to wish. It would be to reward the worst species of ingratitude” (“Supplement” 98). One particular reason why Mr. Wood claims to be unable to grant Prince manumission is because he claims that “her moral character is very bad...and she would be a very troublesome character should she come here without any restraint” (“Supplement” 100). According to Mr. Wood, unless Prince is kept enslaved, she would be a menace to society. This claim attempted to convince the nineteenth-century British

readers of this letter, who were also important persons in the British government, why slaves, especially Prince, cannot and should not be granted freedom.

Also, in this letter, Mr. Wood persisted with his attempts to corrode Prince's moral character and reputation as a responsible maternal and familial figure by claiming that she was an adulterous woman and a bad wife:

I induced her to take a husband...by providing a comfortable house in my yard for them, and prohibiting her going out after 10 to 12 o'clock (our bedtime) without special leave. This she considered the greatest, and indeed the only grievance she ever complained of, and all my efforts could not prevent it. In hopes of inducing her to be steady to her husband, who was a free man, I gave him the house to occupy during our absence; but it appears the attachment was too loose to bind her, and he has taken another wife.

("Supplement" 100-01)

Here Wood frames Prince as an ungrateful, irresponsible, and adulterous woman by alluding to his claims regarding Prince's behavior. It is evident that Mr. Wood affirms and reaffirms that Prince is and was a badly behaved and an irresponsible woman by insinuating that she was promiscuous and was not capable of settling down with her husband. Wood likely offers this commentary because he does not wish to let Prince go because it would prove inconvenient for himself. He knew that Prince was a good caretaker and keeping her would have been more profitable than hiring a servant because he would have lost money. Mr. Wood's commentary on Prince living together with her husband in his home highlights his claim that Prince was an irresponsible and loose woman who could not be faithful to her husband. In the next part of the "Supplement," Pringle, the editor of Prince's text, uses these documents and the arguments

contained therein to counter his claims and maintain that Mr. Wood only acted out of personal interest and sought not to benefit Prince, but himself instead.

Curiously, in an attempt to deter Mr. Wood's arguments and provide an explanation for why he allowed Prince and her husband to live together, Pringle, in his arguments against Mr. Wood, hints at the idea of Mr. Wood having allowed Prince to live with her husband on his property so that they would procreate. He introduces the claim that slave holders "refuse to legalize the marriages of their slaves, but induce them to form such temporary connexions as may suit the owner's conveniency, just as they would pair the lower animals" ("Supplement" 104). Ultimately, although Mr. Wood claims that Prince is despicable by referring to her as the "worst species of ingratitude," he still considered keeping her in his household to serve him and his family, especially his children. Pringle is essentially claiming that, although Mr. Wood attempted to portray himself as a humane slave owner by narrating how he allowed Prince to live with her husband on his property, he did so only to benefit himself. While Mr. Wood focused on accusing Prince of being a flawed domestic servant and failed to comment on her ability to care for his children, Pringle, as the nineteenth-century editor of Prince's narrative, ensured that her narrative was transcribed in a manner that would emphasize and expose her maternal and familial character during her stay with the Woods in order to argue for her freedom. Importantly, throughout the narrative, Prince, on various occasions, refers to the many times she tended to her master's children and other household chores. She mentions how she was even taken along to care for the Wood's children when they went on family outings. Prince informs that her "master and mistress went on one occasion into the country...for a change of air, and carried me with them to take charge of the children and to do the work of the house" (82). As this quote reveals, Prince was an important maternal and domestic figure for the Woods because they even took her

with them on their travels so that she would care for their children. If Prince had been an irresponsible and dispensable caregiver, it would not have been difficult for the Woods to replace her and they obviously would not have needed to take her along with them whenever they travelled.

As other parts in Prince's narrative make clear, the fact that the Woods decided to take Prince along with them to tend to their children indicates that a bond of trust existed between her and her masters, one that was strong enough that they would entrust her with the well-being of their children. Mr. Wood made sure to make the argument in print that Prince was not a responsible person in order to corrode her reputation in the nineteenth-century public sphere. However, his actions, as Pringle points out, made his arguments against Prince ineffective because, despite her alleged ill-behavior, he insisted that she tended his children and refused to sell her. Although he denied her manumission and would have had her remain a slave indefinitely on the grounds of her immoral behavior, almost all twentieth- and twenty-first century readers of Prince's *History* believe that she was a woman of principle who bravely spoke out against slavery. Ultimately, Mr. Wood's actions spoke (and continue to speak) louder than his words because, despite having accused Prince of being ill-behaved, he still decided to take her with him to England.

While Mr. Wood attempted to put in doubt Prince's reputation as a responsible maternal and familial figure, Pringle cleverly detected inconsistencies in Wood's thinking and exposed these contradictions in his presentation of Prince as a maternal figure. In acknowledging these contradictions, Pringle countered Wood in terms of how the British public ultimately viewed Prince as a maternal figure in the supplementary material he presented in Prince's text. In order to refute Wood's claims, Pringle relied on the image of the mother to prove that Prince was in

fact a responsible and dependable maternal and familial figure and an othermother. He exposes inconsistencies in Mr. Wood's testimonies that support the claim that Prince was in fact a responsible and valuable maternal and familial figure for him and his family, and not the unfaithful woman that Mr. Wood claimed she was.

He begins arguing for Prince's reputation by alluding to the fact that she fervently wished to return to her husband in Antigua to pursue life together. In fact, Pringle quotes her in the supplement to the narrative: "I would rather go into my grave than go back a slave to Antigua, though I wish to go back to my husband very much – very much – very much! I am much afraid my owners would separate me from my husband'" ("Supplement" 95-96). By introducing this statement, Pringle demonstrates that Prince desired to reestablish her relationship with her husband, but feared to do so because she would have had to return to the bonds of slavery in order to take up her life with her husband. In a sense, Pringle points out the fact that, though Prince wished to go back to her family, Mr. Wood ultimately prevented Prince from having a family of her own by refusing to grant her manumission. In addition, Pringle emphasizes that the reason why Prince wanted to return a free woman to Antigua, and not experience life as a free woman in Great Britain, was because it was the place where "she hoped to spend her later years in domestic tranquility with her husband" ("Supplement" 104). By presenting Prince as a woman who wishes to spend what is left of her life with her husband in Antigua, Pringle ultimately creates a space for readers to sympathize with Prince as a committed wife. He signals that Prince had no interest in starting a new family in England, where she was already free, and preferred to fight for her freedom in Antigua because she wanted to return to her husband, Daniel James. Pringle informs readers that Prince was an honorable and respectable woman who was true to her

husband and only sought her freedom because she wanted to live the rest of her life with her husband, especially since she had already dedicated most of her life to serving others.

Furthermore, in order to continue to argue for Prince's reputation and negate Mr. Wood's claims regarding Prince's behavior and engagement with household obligations, Pringle narrates *his own* observations of Prince's behavior and her performance within his household. He states: "Being fully convinced from a twelve month's observation of her conduct, that she was really a well-disposed and respectable woman; I [Pringle] engaged her, in December 1829, as a domestic servant in my own family" ("Supplement" 99). Here Pringle assures the nineteenth-century British public that Prince's continued display of good behavior had won over his and his wife's trust. He continues, "We have found her perfectly honest and trustworthy in all respects; so that we have no hesitation in leaving everything in the house at her disposal...She had the entire charge of the house during our absence in Scotland for three months last autumn, and conducted herself in that charge with the utmost discretion and fidelity" ("Supplement" 115). In the latter, Pringle presents significant evidence from his own interactions with Prince that clearly frame Prince as a reliable maternal and domestic figure. More importantly, before presenting his most compelling arguments, he affirms that Mr. Wood was "attempting to destroy, by his deliberate criminary letter, the poor woman's fair fame" ("Supplement" 108).

The most compelling argument that Pringle uses within the "Supplement" to maintain that Prince was a responsible and respectable maternal figure is presented in the following language:

How comes it that a person so correct in his family hours and arrangements as Mr. Wood professes to be, and who expresses so edifying a horror of licentiousness, could reconcile

it to his conscious to keep in the bosom of his family so *depraved*, as well as so *troublesome* a character for at least thirteen years, and confide to her for long periods to the charge of his house and the care of his children – for such I shall shew to have been the facts?...Yet, notwithstanding her alleged ill qualities and habits of gross immorality, he has not only constantly refused to part with her; but after thirteen long years, brings her to England as an attendant on his wife and children, with avowed intention of carrying her back along with his maiden daughter, a young lady returning from school! (“Supplement” 105-06; emphases in original)

In the passage above, Pringle shows the reader that Mr. Wood clearly contradicts himself by speaking so despicably of Prince, despite the fact that he decided to take Prince with him to England to continue caring for his children after the altercation. As Pringle strategically argues, Mr. Wood has done Prince a favor because instead of tainting her identities, reputation, and casting a question mark above her role as a maternal figure, he has actually helped solidify her reputation as a responsible and reliable maternal figure by contradicting himself and putting himself—not Prince—in doubt in the eyes of British society.

As a way to support further his argument, Pringle solicited the testimony of Mr. Joseph Phillips, which was provided in a letter written by Phillips. In the aforementioned letter, Phillips writes that he is:

[I am] [q]uite certain that she [Prince] was viewed by her owners as their most respectable and trustworthy female slave. It is within my personal knowledge that she had usually the charge of the house in their absence, was entrusted with keys, &c.; and was always considered by the neighbours and visitors as their confidential household servant,

and as a person in whose integrity they placed unlimited confidence. (“Supplement” 109-10)

Mr. Phillips’s testimony supports Pringle’s mission to rescue Prince’s reputation from Mr. Wood’s accusations. Pringle clearly noticed Mr. Wood’s attempts to corrode Prince’s reputation in print and, as the editor of her text, he saw the immediate need to use the same means—the use of language—to shape her text in a way that would salvage her reputation and prove to the nineteenth-century British reading public that she was a dependable maternal figure. It is for this reason that Pringle decided to edit the narrative in a way that allowed him to construct an argument based on Prince’s reliable maternalism and domestic service. Therefore, Pringle purposefully shapes the supplementary material in Prince’s narrative to present her as a responsible and trustworthy maternal figure, who, despite Mr. Wood’s claims, had served the Wood family with loyalty.

Additionally, within the “Supplement” to the narrative, Pringle provides a copy of “Mary Prince’s Petition Presented to Parliament on June 24, 1829.” The petition points out that Prince had been properly married to Daniel James and that they had “lived together ever since as man and wife; that about ten months ago the Petitioner arrived in London, with her master and mistress, in the capacity of nurse to their child” (“Appendixes” 127). Through the language found in the petition, Pringle attempted to prove to Parliament and her nineteenth-century readers that if the Wood family had chosen Prince to care for their children and household, it was because she could be trusted in this role.

Furthermore, Pringle, by including Prince’s petition in the text, emphasizes the fact that Prince was soliciting her manumission on account of being a responsible maternal figure and caregiver for his children. The reader finds that the petition reads as follows: “the Petitioner

expressed her desire to return to the West Indies, but not as a slave, and has entreated her master to sell her, her freedom on account of her services as a nurse to his child” (“Appendixes” 128). This declaration found in the petition references the importance that Prince’s maternal character had throughout the process of gaining her freedom. While verbalizing her wish to return to Antigua on account of being a worthy maternal figure, the document also displays Prince’s unwillingness to succumb to the bonds of slavery by refusing to return to the West Indies as a slave. Evidently, Prince understood the importance of her reputation as a maternal figure and recognized its influence in matters of obtaining her freedom. However, Prince was not the only person who was aware of the fact that in order to argue for her freedom, those arguments had to be made based on her character as a responsible maternal figure. Thomas Pringle and John Wood also understood the importance of Prince’s reputation and, as we have discovered, their arguments were clearly centered on Prince’s reputation as a maternal figure. Prince’s portrayal of herself as a trustworthy caregiver and maternal figure, Pringle’s assertions of her being a responsible and trustworthy domestic servant while in his service, and Mr. Wood’s constant contradictions justify Prince’s decision to request manumission on the basis of the years she served the Wood family and, most importantly, took care of the children in this family.

Prince’s narrative became her antislavery petition in that she requested not only to be manumitted but also that “the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for evermore” (Prince 94). Ferguson claims that Pringle’s editing of her *History* resulted in her text resembling other successful slave narratives published in the *Antislavery Reporter*, which was one of the “major organs of propaganda” for the Antislavery Society. Through the *Antislavery Reporter*, the Antislavery Society published a vast number of texts as well as slave narratives (Ferguson 4). She states:

The *Reporter's* weekly account of such cases usually included details of the legal dispute, authenticating apparatus by eye witnesses, details of trial testimony, numerous and hideous goings-on and occasional resistance, and some account of abolitionist activity. Mary Prince's narrative and its supplement by Pringle follow this format quite closely, with additional information about childhood customarily found in autobiographical accounts. Her *History*, then, combines aspects of the eighteenth-century British slave narrative, the nineteenth-century U.S. narrative, and the format of recorded court cases of slave abuse. (Ferguson 24)

Ferguson observes that Pringle published Prince's *History* in a format that would become recognizable and thus more appealing to British readers because the text would present the logistics of her case and her personal experiences as well. Pringle decided to take this approach to ensure that readers more fully sympathized with Prince. Although the written version of her narrative was influenced by Pringle's desire to evoke a sense of compassion on behalf of the nineteenth-century British reader towards Prince and her experiences, Prince's slave narrative retains its autobiographical essence which gives her voices agency throughout the narrative.

Prince's slave narrative was written for the benefit of herself and other slaves in Britain and in the British colonies. However, regardless of who transcribed it and who edited the text, her voices had to be heard, understood, and taken into account in order for the narrative to have been composed, published, disseminated, and well received. This point gives Prince a degree of agency in her text and the fact that events were recorded in her actual words serves to preserve her voices within the narrative, making her slave narrative an autobiographical account.¹²

¹² In letter number 29 from *Susana Moodie: Letters of a Lifetime*, the author writes, "I have been writing Mr. Pringle's black Mary's life from her own dictation and for her benefit adhering to her own simple story and language without deviating to the

As this chapter establishes, Prince's slave narrative, especially the "Supplement to the *History of Mary Prince*," consistently compiles various representations of the maternal figure to allow the nineteenth-century British reader to weigh the various arguments of Mr. Wood, Pringle, and Prince and to perceive how this enslaved woman was a reliable and committed maternal figure, one worthy of manumission. Therefore, readers of Prince's narrative must focus on the supplementary material found after her histories just as they would the actual *History* in order to understand the basis on which her freedom depended. Only by reading the supplementary material found *after* her narrative will contemporary readers understand the importance of Prince's role as a maternal figure and understand that both Mr. Wood and Thomas Pringle centered their arguments on her role as a maternal and familial figure, namely because they understood that her freedom depended on how the nineteenth-century British public understood Prince as a maternal figure. Throughout this chapter, I have discussed the importance of Prince's character as a maternal figure within her narrative and how arguments either to grant or deny her freedom were centered on her reputation as a maternal and domestic figure. In the next chapter, I draw on more contemporary discussions on Prince's text and determine how her *History* is still relevant in the twenty-first century. Specifically, I analyze the recent induction of Mary Prince as a National Hero in Bermuda, commentary on this induction ceremony found online, and the logistics of the ceremony that honored Prince. I also present how her induction in Bermuda and an earlier tribute that was paid to her in 2007 in London, England, serve as ways to memorialize Prince, her text, and her contribution to abolitionism in the twenty-first century. Finally, within the next chapter, I comment on the significance of this thesis and how this study

paths of flourish or romance" (57). John Thurston also vouches for the utilization and preservation of Prince's own language within her narrative in *The Work of Words: The Writing of Susanna Strickland Moodie*. Thurston writes that "Susana explicitly eschewed techniques she had used in treating other stories taken from life" (59). According to Thurston, Strickland, unlike her other works, "resisted transforming the text [Prince's narrative,] with 'flourish or romance'" (61).

allows readers to discover Prince as a strong spoken advocate against slavery; this aspect of her character, I maintain, can only be perceived if readers have a sound understanding of the comments on maternity and motherhood that are presented throughout her narrative.

4 Mary Prince: Still Relevant in the Twenty First Century

The goal of this thesis is to provide a new reading of *The History of Mary Prince*, one that analyzes her text from a newly discovered perspective, while taking into account the published readings of different scholars. The previous chapters have discussed: the influence of transatlantic slavery on the representations of mothers and mothering provided by Prince within her narrative, how Prince accepted her role as an othermother and used the power she obtained from this position to catapult herself into the role of abolitionist, and, ultimately, how the supplementary material in Prince's narrative was used by the abolitionist editor Thomas Pringle to present the significant arguments that outlined how her freedom depended on her reputation as a maternal figure. To conclude this study, I will discuss, in this chapter, why a new analysis of Prince's *History*, a life narrative that was published almost two centuries ago, is still important and relevant in the twenty-first century. In order to address this issue, I analyze recent events that have revolved around Prince and her *History* as well as the debates that readers have engaged in, on website discussion boards, referencing Prince's narrative and the legacy of the institution of slavery in various parts in the contemporary Atlantic world.

Though it has been many years since Prince's narrative was published and several years since slavery was abolished in Britain and its colonies (1833), her text still inspires many readers today. Prince's *History* still lives in the memory of many people who believe that her contribution to the abolition of slavery is so significant that necessary measures must be taken

for her story to be publicly acknowledged and passed down to future generations so that these individuals may read the text for themselves and engage with her captivating story. In addition, I also believe that Prince's text provides a significant contribution to scholars working with Maternal Theory by exposing a form a motherhood that has been largely overlooked or misunderstood in the sphere of slave studies: a motherhood that was based on resistance.

Contemporary events reveal that other individuals across the world have located value in Prince's text and her contribution to abolitionism. In fact, officials in Bermuda recently performed a ceremony to induct her as a "National Hero." The induction ceremony that was held to honor Prince may be understood as a form of public memorialization that addresses the lasting influence as well as repercussions of slavery in the Western world and the Caribbean. As a result, on June 16th 2012, at Barr's Bay Park, Bermuda, tribute was paid to celebrate the life of Prince and her important nineteenth-century literary text when she was proclaimed Bermuda's 2012 National Hero. The Bermuda African Diaspora Heritage Trail Foundation "sent over a dozen letters recommending that Prince be designated for the honor to the Naming and Recognition Committee" ("Bermuda Honors Mary Prince"). The induction ceremony featured speeches by host Tina Evans Caines, Premier Paula Cox, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Patrice Minors, and readings and performances by others. At the induction ceremony, Ashfield Devent also read a brief biography on Prince to remind the public of the reasons that influenced Prince's induction. The induction ceremony served to pay tribute to Prince because, in the words of Patrice Minors, "Generations of people of color, in Bermuda and throughout the British West Indies, stand on the shoulders of Mary Prince because of the benefits of freedom that we are able to enjoy, in part, because of her" ("Mary Prince Inducted").

Prince's *History* remains significant in the twenty-first century for at least two reasons. First, her life narrative teaches all people, especially women, mothers, and minorities, that they do not have to succumb to oppressive forces and that, regardless of their social status and/or gender, they can cause change and positively impact the world around them. This point is particularly significant for readers of Prince's *History* because by analyzing and understanding that Prince over powered and outsmarted her oppressor by finding empowerment within her condition of slave and maternal figure, we uncover a version of Prince that was ingenious and perseverant in a time when black female slaves were only thought of as commodities and domestic figures. Hill Collins shares this belief when in the preface to her book she writes: "I now recognize that empowerment for African-American women will never occur in a context characterized by oppression and social injustice" (xi).

Although Hill Collins makes a logical claim when she expresses that she believes it is not possible for empowerment to occur within an oppressive context, I would argue that Prince did indeed find a way to empower herself within the oppressive and unjust context in which she lived, in spite of her masters actively denying rights to her under the institution of slavery and her apparent renouncing of her own right to become a biological mother. Prince, we may argue, reinvented the concept of motherhood for herself. The empowering form of motherhood that she engaged with consisted of not mothering her own children but mothering her master's children and caring for them in a manner that ensured her a respectable reputation. Prince did not view othermothering as solely being an obligation, but an opportunity to establish a reputation for herself that could later aid her in her quest for freedom. By reading Prince's *History* from this different perspective, one that explores motherhood as a form of resistance within the institution of slavery, when it has been mostly seen as being an oppressive condition, contemporary readers

come to understand a form of motherhood that has long been neglected by many scholars. Prince's text demonstrates that slave motherhood did not have to be solely burdensome and that it could also be a means to escape the world of slavery.

The second reason why Prince's *History* is still significant surfaces when we acknowledge that the Naming and Recognition Committee of Bermuda inducted Prince as a National Hero because she broke "the silence by telling her story to the Antislavery Society" (*Mary Prince Inducted*). She broke the silence of female slaves in Great Britain and its colonies who, because of the institution of slavery, were unable to reveal the brutalities of slavery. Indeed, it was her portrayal of the brutal hardships of slavery, along with the representations of mothers and mothering within her narrative, that led her to participate in the abolition of slavery in nineteenth-century Great Britain. Therefore, Prince's story remains important because the text teaches the significance of resistance that depended on the role of the maternal figure.

Additional reasons, however, call for a better appreciation and understanding of Prince's *History*. Though many individuals in contemporary Bermuda think that Prince is a worthy National Hero and understand the importance of her contribution to the abolition of the institution of slavery in the British colonies, there are many contemporary commentators who believe she did little to receive such an acknowledgement. While reading online Bermudian news articles about Prince's induction, we encounter readers' diverse comments and perspectives on the topic of Prince being named a National Hero. While there were many supporters of the decision to induct Prince, there were many more commentators who severely denounced the act and questioned the naming of Prince as a National Hero. Readers who were in favor of the induction made comments such as:

“Mary Prince is an EXCELLENT choice – a true Bermudian Hero”; “What an excellent choice. Nominations coming in from school aged children make it even better”; “I’m not sure why this induction wasn’t the first on the list. Mary Prince’s contribution to the progress of humanity transcends Bermuda’s boundaries. Amazing story...”; “I’m pleased to learn about this exciting lady who’s [sic] life is a testimony of our unfortunate past and a true reminder of how far we have come and based on some of the comments here how far we have yet to go. This is a great choice and I will be honoring her on National Heroes Day.” (“Mary Prince Named”)

The readers who approve of the decision of proclaiming Prince a national hero understand that, regardless of whether her induction was part of a political strategy during an election year or not, the fact still remains that her contribution to the abolition of slavery in Great Britain and its colonies earned her that honor. However, none link the importance of her role as a maternal to her contribution to the abolition of slavery.

On the other hand, those readers who did not approve of the induction made comments such as: “It is sad and pathetic that Bermuda has to look to works of fiction for it’s [sic] heroes”; “I thought that the point of having National hero’s day was to select people that the youth could feel a connection with. I am not taking away from the plight of Mary Prince, but our national hero should be someone in our recent community”; “None of my blended family, black or white, have ever heard of her. Great selection”; “So shes [sic] a hero for publishing a book on slavery? HA HA HA HA!! What did she do for Bermudians to be called a ‘National Hero’” (Johnston-Barnes). Like the commentators who approved of the induction, those who disapproved also show a lack of understanding of the life writer’s role within the abolition of slavery. These readers have either not read Prince or have read it but failed to understand how an enslaved

female can gain and exercise agency despite her condition. Prince's *History* presents a woman who empowered herself by using her condition as a maternal figure to establish a respectable reputation for herself, gained knowledge of her condition, and sought out help in order to fight for her freedom. Although, Prince never actually gained her freedom, she never stopped fighting for it; instead it fueled her desire to persist. Such was Prince's drive that she decided to have her *History* published so that English readers would learn of her experiences as a slave and would ultimately sympathize with the condition of the slave and take action towards abolishing the institution of slavery. Through her *History*, Prince not only cried out for justice for herself but for her fellow slaves as well. Prince's initiative and desire to help herself and others qualify her to be deemed a national hero. Heroes are not only those who save people, win wars, or rescue victims; heroes are also those who partake in struggles to overcome adversity even if the objective is never met or is delayed, heroes are those who find the courage to stand up for themselves and their peers, heroes are those who resort to ingenuity when faced with problems instead of giving up. Therefore, Prince deserved to be named national hero because she spoke up for herself and other slaves, resorted to her role as a maternal figure to request manumission, and because she never gave up on her cause.

These readers do not fully understand what does and does not constitute a hero or how it was possible to exercise agency during slavery. The comments by readers, who approved of her induction, although they admire her contribution to the abolition of slavery, do not reflect a genuine understanding of her role within the abolition of slavery. None acknowledge the road she travelled to actually become part of the abolition of slavery, specifically the fact that it was her role as an othermother that empowered her enough to seek to have her life narrative published.

The first comment reflects unfamiliarity with the genre of Prince's narrative. Prince's narrative may have been transcribed and edited by abolitionists, but this fact does not deny her agency in her narrative or call for her narrative to be classified as a work of fiction. If anything, the fact that she was astute enough to seek the help of British abolitionists to have her narrative published and requested her freedom on account of her services as a maternal figure serves to give her more agency within the narrative, despite these comments that place the literary text as a work of fiction. Furthermore, before labeling Prince's text as a work of fiction, readers must understand that this label refers to a text that was invented by an author, meaning that the text arose out of his or her imagination and cannot be corroborated with factual evidence. It is common knowledge that Prince's *History* was factual because there is evidence to support a number of her claims presented as part of the supplementary material within her narrative. For example, throughout her narrative Prince testifies to having suffered brutal treatment by her masters. In order to corroborate Prince's claims, as part of the "Appendixes" to the narrative a letter, "by Mrs. Pringle to Mr. Townsend, one of the benevolent Secretaries of the 'Birmingham Ladies' Society for Relief of Negro Slaves,'" has been included ("Appendixes" 130). Mrs. Pringle's letter evidences that Prince did, in fact, bare the markings of slavery. The letter reads as follows: "I beg in reply to state, that the whole of the back part of her body is distinctly scarred, and as it were, *chequered*, with the vestiges of severe floggings. Besides this, there are many large scars on other parts of her person, exhibiting an appearance as if the flesh had been deeply cut, or lacerated with *gashes*, by some instrument wielded by most unmerciful hands" ("Appendixes" 130).

In a similar manner, the writer of the second comment within the group opposing Prince's, presented above, also demonstrates a lack of knowledge and understanding of Prince's role

within the abolition of slavery. The second writer does not consider that Prince can be an adequate role model for contemporary youth. Evidently, the writer has not understood the primary reason behind Prince's induction. Although, Prince was considered a worthy National Hero by the Naming and Recognition Committee, it was because of the initiative of several students from Bermuda that Prince was even considered for such recognition (Bell). According to a report provided by *The Royal Gazette* titled "Mary Prince is made a National Hero": "Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry [,] Patrice Minors said that because last year three national heroes had been named, there was not an intention to name a new national hero this year. However, that plan was changed after the Induction Committee received 12 unsolicited letters from members of the public calling for Ms. Prince to be celebrated this year" (Jonhston-Barnes). If Prince were not capable of inspiring the youth of Bermuda, then it would not have been possible for the twelve unsolicited letters that were submitted to the Naming and Recognition Committee petitioning her induction to have been written by students from Bermuda. The fact that students read the narrative in some context and admired this woman and her contributions enough that they would recommend her for such an honor means that Prince is not only still relevant in the twenty-first century, but that her *History* has transcended generational boundaries by inspiring the youth of Bermuda in the twenty-first century.

During the closing moments of the induction ceremony, Major Brenda Critch, from the Salvation Army, was called up to offer the closing prayer. In her prayer, Major Critch verbalized that Prince's story can "be an inspiration to this generation to not settle for the status quo, to not settle for the social injustices and evils of our day, and to realize that we too can be agents of change" (*Mary Prince Inducted*). In this interesting language, Major Critch recognizes the influence that Prince can and has already had on the youth of this generation and not only

acknowledged her contribution in the past but sees her as a figure whose story can continue contributing to society even years after her death. Prince's *History* can still contribute to students of maternal theory, Caribbean literature, minorities, females in general, and those who at some point have had to fight adversity because her text presents her as an outspoken woman who was not afraid to speak of the harsh reality of slavery and never strayed from her objective. As Paula Cox, Premier of Bermuda, remarks, "She is a woman who stood up for principle. She is a woman who stepped out of her comfort zone, and she is a woman who felt we have to become the change that we want. [And,] [s]he did it at considerable risk, cost and peril to herself" (Johnston-Barnes).

The last two writers in the group of online commentators who denounce Prince's induction seem to be naïve and even ignorant of Prince's life and work. Nevertheless, it is also because of individuals like them that the *History of Mary Prince* must continue being read and why female and minority readers, especially those with children, need to be reminded of her contributions to a society that was oppressed and subordinated. According to the last two writers, one of the reasons why Prince should not have been named National Hero is because her *History* is not widely known, or at least they are not very familiar with her life narrative. There seems to be a contradiction here because in order for an individual to be recognized as a National Hero by the majority of the Bermuda general public, she or he must be a person who is widely known in that culture. Prince quickly became known when her narrative was published and she is most certainly widely known, read, and researched by scholars from all parts of the world. According to a review of the Prince's narrative published on the publicly renowned book selling website, Amazon.com, Prince's text: "[H]as found popularity both in the classroom and with the general public. Recently, an adaptation of the memoirs of Mary Prince appeared as one segment of 'A

Skirt Through History', a six-part feature film series produced by the BBC. Mary Prince's story has also been the centerpiece of BBC radio broadcasts" ("The History of Mary Prince").

This review evidences that Prince's narrative is not only significant but that it is used in a wide range of forms. In addition, one of the last writers also reveals her or his lack of knowledge regarding Prince's narrative when she or he claims, in a mocking manner, that Prince was honored for writing a book on slavery. However, this commentator reveals an oversight on his or her part by making these mocking comments. I have already observed in my thesis that Prince did not write a book on slavery. Instead, she narrated her life experiences under the institution of slavery and those experiences ultimately became published as the first female slave narrative in Great Britain. Furthermore, her narrative was one of the crucial texts in abolitionist arguments in Britain and its colonies. Prince did not write a book, she was part of the publication of one of the most influential books during the abolition of slavery. I believe that this point merits her receiving the honor of National Hero of Bermuda for 2012.

4.1 Mary Prince is Honored with a Medal

During the induction ceremony in honor of Prince, Premier Paula Cox presented the medal that was awarded in her honor. The medal was received by Joanne Brangman, acting archivist and chief librarian at Bermuda National Library. Brangman explained that the medal would be kept in the archives and would be available to the general public. Pictures of the medal were displayed on the website of *The Royal Gazette*. The medal itself was of a golden color and had a woman's facial profile embedded along with the inscription: 2012 Mary Prince. After viewing the medal, many people might ask themselves why a medal is awarded to a person who is dead? One commentator on *The Royal Gazette's* website even remarked: "That's a beautiful

medal but what's it for? Is it being awarded to someone or is it available for sale somewhere? Would make a nice \$1 coin" ("Mary"). Despite these unusual comments on the website, we must recognize that the medal presented at Prince's induction is a form of memorialization that symbolizes "the need to restore to public memory the history of their ancestors' enslavement" (Rice and Kardux 246). The purpose of the medal is to cause individuals in Bermuda, some of whom are descendants of slaves, to reflect on the horrors of slavery and remember that there was a Bermudian woman who chose to speak out against the institution and to use her nomination and the medal in contemplating how the institution has impacted Bermudian history and culture. Like a monument, a medal is also a symbol that "should encourage noble thought and valiant deed" (Himid 275). It is meant to honor the deceased and arouse the interest of whoever lays eyes on it. Additionally, Lubaina Himid argues that: "If you are going to honour the dead who have been ignored, suppressed or denied when in peril in the past, you must do it because as a city you want to show that you would do differently now...You will first have to acknowledge that your city would not be the city it is, without the sacrifice of those who were sold by or used by the city in the past" (275). While Himid restricts her claim to the scope of the city, I believe it can be expanded to include cultures and even nations. In this sense, her claim can be used to support Prince's induction by the Bermudian people. By honoring the memory of Prince with a medal that will be kept in the archives for the public to view, the government of Bermuda, as Himid points out, acknowledges that Bermuda would not be what it is today without Prince's extraordinary contribution to the abolition of slavery in Great Britain and its colonies.

In fact, Prince's contribution is so noteworthy that she was also honored five years earlier by the English government.

On October 26, 2007, the year of the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade, a plaque was unveiled at the University of London's Senate House in London, England to commemorate the accomplishments of Mary Prince. Mary Prince lived in a house on the site in 1829. The plaque reads: "Mary Prince, 1788-1833, the first African woman to publish her memoirs of slavery lived in a house on this site in 1829." (Bermuda Biographies)

On this occasion, the English government paid tribute to Prince, a woman who was not a native of England, for her contribution to the abolition of slavery because her actions were undoubtedly deserving of praise and recognition. If England could recognize and honor Mary Prince for such a contribution, regardless of where she was from or whether or not she wrote her story, there is no reason why the government of Bermuda should hesitate to honor her life and her narrative as a determining factor in the liberation of the British colonies from the bonds of slavery.

4.2 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have offered readers a new interpretation of Prince's narrative. I have presented Prince as a clever and astute female slave who utilized her narrative to present herself as a responsible and trustworthy othermother who used covert forms of resistance to escape the institution of slavery. Prince took refuge in her role as an othermother and became empowered by it. It was by projecting herself as a worthy maternal figure that she gained the trust of British abolitionists, had her narrative published, and became an abolitionist within her own struggle for freedom. Despite the fact that Mary Prince never managed to gain manumission due to the Mr. Wood's extensive efforts to deny her that right she managed to leave a lasting

imprint on society today. Mary Prince did not need to gain manumission for her *History* to transcend time barriers and make itself significant till this very day, because it was an active contribution to the abolition of slavery in the British Colonies. *The History of Mary Prince* is also an important text because it taught nineteenth-century British society that a slave was not an object, but a feeling, breathing, thinking person, capable of overcoming adversity. Furthermore, the text continues teaching contemporary generations of readers, including students of Caribbean literature, students of maternal theory, females, minorities, and mothers, that, regardless of their condition within society, there is always a way to stand up and speak out against the injustices of society. Perhaps most importantly, this study pinpoints how readers, both ones who are new to her *History* as well as those who have studied her writing extensively, may appreciate the text as a liberating nineteenth-century life narrative that not only uncovers the harsh realities of slavery in the British West Indies but also introduces new and covert forms of resistance that were used by female maternal figures to escape the institution of slavery. In a time where women were seldom spoke of or even heard, Mary Prince made herself be heard and the composition of this thesis evidences that her voices continue being heard throughout the twenty first century.

Works Cited

- “Appendixes“. By the Editor. *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*. Rev. ed. Ed. Moira Ferguson. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. Print.
- Baumgartner, Barbara. “The Body as Evidence: Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in “The History of Mary Prince”” *Callaloo* 24.1 (Winter 2001): 253-75. Print.
- Bell, Jonathan. “Abolitionist Writer Mary Prince Named 2012 National Hero.” *The Royal Gazette Online*. N.p., 9 June 2012. Web. 9 Sept. 2012.
- “Bermuda Biographies - Mary Prince.” *Bermuda Biographies - Mary Prince*. Bermuda Biographies, n.d. Web. 09 Sept. 2012.
- “Bermuda Honors Mary Prince as a National Hero.” *Wherz It At Today*. N.p., 14 June 2012. Web. 9 Sept. 2012.
- Botkin, Frances R. “Questioning the 'Necessary Order of Things': Maria Edgeworth's 'The Grateful Negro', Plantation Slavery, and the Abolition of the Slave Trade.” Ed. Markman Ellis, Brycchan Carey, and Sara Salih. *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and Its Colonies, 1760-1838*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 194-208. Print.
- Carey, Brycchan. Introduction. *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and Its Colonies, 1760-1838*. By Sara Salih, Markman Ellis, and Brycchan Carey. N: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 1-8. Print.
- Christopher, Emma. *Slave Ship Sailors and Their Captive Cargoes, 1730-1807*. New York: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.
- Deck, Alice. “*The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave. Related by Herself*. By Mary Prince, Moira Ferguson.” Rev. of *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave. Related by Herself*. *African American Review* 30.2 (Summer 1996): 297-99. Print.
- “Documenting the American South.” *Documenting the American South Homepage*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Oct. 2012.
- Duguid, Beverly. “Women's History Network Blog.” *Black History Month: Witness Against*

Slavery. The Story of Mary Prince. N.p., 23 Oct. 2011. Web. 11 Oct. 2012.

Eltis, David, and David Richardson, eds. *Routes to Slavery: Direction, Ethnicity, and Mortality in the Transatlantic Slave Trade*. London: Frank Cass, 1997. Print.

Farlex. "Osnaburg." *The Free Dictionary*. Houghton Mifflin Company, n.d. Web. 28 Sept. 2013.

Ferguson, Moira. Introduction. *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave. Related by Herself*. Revised ed. Ed. Moira Ferguson. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. 1-29. Print.

Finlayson, James Gordon. *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005. Print.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1993. Print.

Hill Collins, Patricia. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York and London: Routledge, 2000. Print.

Himid, Lubaina. "Monument Talk." Ed. Alan Rice and Johanna C. Kardux. *Atlantic Studies* 9.3 (September 2012): 273-77. Print.

hooks, bell. "Revolutionary Parenting." *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*. Ed. Andrea O'Reilly. Toronto, Canada: Demeter P, 2007. 145-56. Print.

Johnston-Barnes, Owain. "Mary Prince Is Made a National Hero." *The Royal Gazette Online*. N.p., 16 June 2012. Web. 9 Sept. 2012.

"Life on Board Slave Ships." *International Slavery Museum*. National Museums Liverpool. Web. 15 Mar. 2011.

Manning, Susan, and Andrew Taylor, eds. *Transatlantic Literary Studies: A Reader*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2007. Print.

McKay, Nellie Y. "The Narrative Self: Race, Politics, and Culture in Black American Women's Autobiography." *Feminisms in the Academy*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1995. N. pag. Web. 12 Oct. 2012.

“Mary Prince (1788-c.1833): The First Woman to Present a Petition to Parliament.” *The Abolition of Slavery Project. The Abolition of Slavery Project*. E2BN – East of England Broadband Network. Web. 10 Sept. 2011.

Mary Prince Inducted as Bermuda National Hero June 16 2012. Bernews: Bermuda's News and Culture Source. Bernews.com, 16 June 2012. Web. 9 Sept. 2012.

“Mary Prince Named 2012 Bermuda National Hero.” *Bernews.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Oct. 2012.

Moodie, Susanna eds., Carl Ballstadt eds., Elizabeth Hopkins eds., and Michael A. Peterman eds. *Susanna Moodie: Letters of a Lifetime*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985. Print.

Morgan, Kenneth. *Slavery and the British Empire: From Africa to America*. Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.

Olney, James. “‘I Was Born’: Slave Narratives, Their Status as Autobiography and as Literature.” *Callaloo* 20 (1984): 46-73. Print.

O'Reilly, Andrea, Ed. *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*. Toronto: Demeter P, 2007. Print.

O'Reilly, Andrea. *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*. Albany: State U of New York P, 2004. Print.

Pringle, Thomas. Preface. *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*. Rev. ed. Ed. Moira Ferguson. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. 55-56. Print.

Pouchet Paquet, Sandra. “The Heartbeat of a West Indian Slave. *The History of Mary Prince*.” *African American Review* 26.1 (Spring 1992): 131-46. Print.

Prince, Mary. *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*. Rev. ed. Ed. Moira Ferguson. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. Print.

Rawley, James A. and Stephen D. Behrendt. *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History*. Rev. ed. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005. Print.

Rice, Alan, and Johanna C. Kardux. “Confronting the Ghostly Legacies of Slavery: The Politics of Black Bodies, Embodied Memories, and Memorial Landscapes.” *Atlantic Studies* 9.3 (September 2012): 245-72. Print.

- Rich, Adrienne. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. New York and London: Norton, 1976. Print.
- Ruddick, Sara. "Maternal Thinking." *Maternal Theory: Essential Readings*. Ed. Andrea O'Reilly. Toronto, Canada: Demeter P, 2007. 96-113. Print.
- Salih, Sarah, Ellis, Markman, and Brycchan Carey. Introduction. *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and Its Colonies, 1760 - 1838*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.
- Salih, Sara. "The History of Mary Prince, the Black Subject, and the Black Canon." Ed. Markman Ellis, Brycchan Carey, and Sarah Salih. *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and Its Colonies, 1760-1838*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 123-38. Print.
- Smith, Johanna M. "Slavery, Abolition, and the Nation in Priscilla Wakefield's Tour Books for Children." *Discourses of Slavery and Abolition: Britain and Its Colonies, 1760-1838*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. 175-93. Print.
- "Supplement to History of Mary Prince." By the Editor. *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave*. Rev. Ed. Ed. Moira Ferguson. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997. 95-125. Print.
- "The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself: Revised Edition [Paperback]." *The History of Mary Prince: A West Indian Slave, Related by Herself: Revised Edition: Moira Ferguson: 9780472084104: Amazon.com: Books*. N.p., 15 Jan. 1998. Web. 11 Oct. 2012.
- Thurston, John Harry. *The Work of Words: The Writing of Susanna Strickland Moodie*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1996. Print.