

Exhuming the Archive Black Slavery and Freedom in the Maritimes and Beyond

Barrington Walker

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[See table of contents](#)

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REVIEW ESSAYS/NOTES CRITIQUE

Exhuming the Archive: Black Slavery and Freedom in the Maritimes and Beyond

THROUGHOUT THE ATLANTIC WORLD, THE SLAVE TRADE was the engine of modernity – the foundation of European colonial enterprises that created the wealth upon which empire and capitalism were able to shape the contours of the modern world. Part and parcel of this emerging Atlantic World, was the Black Atlantic, an incubator and conduit of a “counterculture of modernity” as Paul Gilroy put it in his seminal work *The Black Atlantic*.¹ This pivotal book charted a new analytical framework for thinking about the histories and the creation of black vernacular cultures that created black modernity in the slavery and post-slavery days. As cultural critic Winfried Siemerling and the late David Sealy, philosopher and critical criminologist have written, Canada has traditionally been glaringly absent from conceptual mappings of the Black Atlantic.² The Maritimes was one of the most important theatres of the narrative of black slavery to freedom (or, as we will see below, slavery to slavery). Black history in the Maritimes is a crucial site for shaping our understanding of how black history unfolded in Canada and how the black experience of slavery and freedom shaped modern Canadian history.

Three important books simultaneously open up new, and revisit some older, ways of thinking about the Maritime node in the history of the Black Atlantic World: Harvey Amani Whitfield’s *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes*, Ruth Holmes Whitehead’s *Black Loyalists: Southern Settlers of Nova Scotia’s First Free Black Communities*, and Graham Reynolds’s *Viola Desmond’s Canada: A History of Racial Segregation in the Promised Land*.³ All of these works plumb the depths of the rich and still underutilized black Canadian archive to explore the histories of slavery and freedom in Black Canada and the broader Atlantic World. Taken together, these works highlight the experiences of blacks in the Maritimes while at the same time there are key empirical, analytical, and stylistic differences amongst them that point to the variety of approaches, strengths, and weaknesses that characterize these key works of black Canadian history.

1 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

2 David Sealy, “‘Canadianizing Blackness’: Resisting the Political,” in *Rude: Contemporary Black Canadian Cultural Criticism*, ed. Rinaldo Walcott (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2000), 88-107; Winfried Siemerling, *The Black Atlantic Reconsidered: Black Canadian Writing, Cultural History and the Presence of the Past* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).

3 Harvey Amani Whitfield, *North to Bondage: Loyalist Slavery in the Maritimes* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016); Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *Black Loyalists: Southern Settlers in Nova Scotia’s First Free Black Communities* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2013); Graham Reynolds, *Viola Desmond’s Canada: A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land* (Black Point, NS: Fernwood Publishing, 2016).

At the centre of all three works is the importance of the historical archive. The history of blacks in Canada dates back to the earliest days of non-Indigenous contact. And yet, the black presence on the Canadian landscape has perpetually been constituted as a recent (and frequently post-Second World War) incursion on a pristine white landscape. When the long historical presence of blacks in Canada is acknowledged in the historical record, it is often to draw favourable comparisons to the United States' history of slavery and Jim Crow. In the tradition of the very best works in black Canadian history – some of which were penned as early as the mid-19th century – all of these books address the enduring myth of Canada as a haven from slavery and the pernicious forms of racial discrimination.⁴ They also straddle the middle ground between a reprise of an old project of debunking cherished Canadian myths and earnestly expanding our corpus of knowledge of histories that have been systematically purged from mainstream narratives of Canadian history.

Harvey Amani Whitfield's *North to Bondage* is the first comprehensive study of slavery in the Maritime Provinces. Over the course of six chapters, Whitfield highlights the lives of slaves and slaveholders. Beginning with an introduction that places the work in historical, geographical, and interpretive context, Whitfield makes his case for the importance of understanding Maritime slavery's antecedent in British America, the Loyalist influx into the Maritimes and patterns of enslavement, the working lives of the slaves, the worlds that were made by the slaves and their owners, and, lastly, the end of slavery in the Maritimes. His work also charts a future direction for the study of slavery in Canada.

Whitehead's *Black Loyalists* is similarly rooted in black Maritime history and like much of Whitfield's analysis is focused on the post-Revolutionary Maritime region and Nova Scotia in particular. This is also a timely work because it seems that at this moment the Black Loyalist story has permeated the popular consciousness and has slowly begun to insert itself into mainstream Canadian history. Many Canadians are now aware of the story of the Black Loyalists and their origins as slaves in British Colonial America, who came to the Maritimes at the end of the American Revolution. A select and celebrated group came in response to a proclamation issued by the British that promised freedom to slaves who absconded from their American slave owners and took up arms against them – the realization of the slave owners' worst nightmare. The opportunity for freedom was also seized by many more, when the British offered it for those who left their masters to go behind British lines. And yet while the Black Loyalists made their bid for freedom on an unprecedented scale, it is also true that their more unfortunate counterparts came in chains as the British guaranteed the property right to own slaves that had been previously enjoyed by white Loyalists. The popular awareness of the Black Loyalists' story can be largely attributed to the publication and unprecedented international success of Lawrence Hill's *The Book of Negroes*, a novel that has

4 An early text that debunked the idea of Canada as an unqualified haven is Mary Ann Shadd Cary, *A Plea for Emigration, or Notes of Canada West*, edited and annotated with an introduction by Richard Almonte (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1988). See also Jason Silverman, *Unwelcome Guests: Canada West's Response to American Fugitive Slaves, 1800-1865* (Millwood, NY: Associated Faculty Press, 1985).

garnered both critical and commercial success and even inspiring a CBC mini-series that popularized the story of the Black Loyalists far more than all the previous academic works on this subject combined. *Black Loyalists* is the product of Whitehead's 40-year career as an historian and ethnologist at the Nova Scotia Museum as well as a committed ally of the black community. Indeed, atypically of conventional academic historical work, the author highlights her deep personal connections to the project. This is a book that is both animated by the author's desire to fill in the gaps of the historical record and to correct certain aspects of the accepted wisdom regarding the story of the Black Loyalists. She also seeks to flesh out her own familial and genealogical connections to the material.

A native South Carolinian, Whitehead tackles the archive to excavate key pieces of the Black Loyalist story. This book is organized around several central themes, the most prominent of which is the link between the past and the present. South Carolinian Black Loyalists are the focus of her study because of her personal ties to the area. As she states, "Many contemporary Nova Scotians who are descended from Black Loyalists have ancestors who were enslaved there"; she also adds "A number of my own ancestors there were slave owners who lost people to Nova Scotia" (ix). Thus the tangible living link between the past and the present is what animates this work. Whitehead teases out this link over the course of the three parts of her book. Chapters one through three (Part One) are a study of slavery and black life in the Carolinas and Georgia. Chapters four through six (Part Two) unpack the histories of prewar and wartime South Carolina and Georgia until the war's end. And the final three chapters of the book (Part Three) consist of notably Chapter Seven, which chronicles the critical period where blacks disembarked for Nova Scotia from New York, as well as the final chapter, which is an account of the challenges that blacks faced in early post-Revolutionary Nova Scotia.

Third is Graham Reynolds's *Viola Desmond's Canada*, which tells a connected yet much broader story of black Canadians' struggle for equality in Canada beginning in the slavery era and ending in the postwar period. The book is divided into two parts. Part One consists of three "narrative histories." The first is "A Narrative History of Race in Canadian History from Slavery to the Underground Railroad." The second follows chronologically from the first and narrates a history of Jim Crow in Canada from the turn of the century until the 1960s. A third chapter consists of the reminiscences of Wanda Robson (the sister of Nova Scotian civil rights activist Viola Desmond). In Part Two the author presents a "documentary history" of black Canadian history through the presentation of primary research in the form of archival manuscript sources. Here Reynolds provides documentary evidence of slavery and freedom in New France followed by a discussion of turn-of-the-century West Indian migration to Canada, government anti-black racism, and various forms of organized black resistance. He then moves to an exploration of various cultural phenomena that highlight the pervasive popular cultures of white supremacy and anti-black racism that permeated the dominant culture and infused the popular amusements enjoyed by many white Canadians. These included minstrel shows and such Hollywood films as *Birth of a Nation*, which reflected and galvanized anti-black sentiment throughout the continent. Reynolds ends his book with a first-person reflection through a contextualized interview with black Canadian civil rights activist Pearleen Oliver.

There are two overarching themes that characterize the approach of these authors. The first is the central place of the archive in their historical work. The second is the centrality of the historical agent as the driver of history. What each of these books does exceptionally well is to draw upon the breadth and depth of the black Canadian historical archive. Black Canadian history has matured over the past 25 years. While it has not yet made the sorts of historiographical or institutional inroads as other fields of Canadian history, it is beginning to come into its own. Led by a relatively small but growing group of scholars, such as Richard M. Reid, Karen Flynn, Peter Hudson, Afua Cooper, David Austin, and Charmaine Nelson, histories of blacks in “Canada” are slowly gaining in prominence and visibility.⁵ And yet it is also clear that many scholars in the field believe that the path to visibility – the antidote to the historical invisibility of blackness in Canada – is via what I call the *exhumation* of the black archive as central to their historical practice and methodological interventions. Theirs is a project of disinterring blackness from the frozen ground of Canadian historiography. This process of archival exhumation is demonstrative of more than a desire amongst these authors for the crafting of historical work based on primary source evidence. These works do not employ the archive as merely the foundation of the historical enterprise, nor do they simply unmask their sources from time to time in the form of empirical scaffolding. While it is true that these works certainly do these things, I am gesturing to something more. For these authors the writing of history itself is an extension of archival practice, and archival practice is crucial to the task of writing blacks into the histories of Canada and the Atlantic World.

Of the three works discussed in this review, Reynolds’s is the most demonstrably marked by this tendency towards archivism. Roughly one-half of Reynolds’s book is devoted to unearthing a documentary record of blacks in Canada. In so doing a plethora of primary source materials are brought to light, some of which are relatively well known while others are not. His discussion of Marie Margaret Rose, a 17th-century Île Royale slave who ascended to the position of an innkeeper, is an example of Reynolds successfully highlighting the story of a woman who is not as well known or documented as the more incendiary tale of Marie-Joseph Angélique. Reynolds uses Rose’s “inventory of material possessions” to provide a window on slavery and freedom in New France. As such, the author reproduces the record of the many objects that were in her possession at the time of her death and are currently available at the Fortress Louisbourg Historical site, Cape Breton University, and Archives Canada.⁶ In the subsequent chapter Reynolds reprints the

5 See, for instance, Richard M. Reid, *African Canadians in Blue: Volunteering for the Cause in the Civil War* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2015); Karen Flynn, *Moving Beyond Borders: A History of Black Canadian and Caribbean Women in the Diaspora* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); Peter Hudson and Aaron Kamugisha, “On Black Canadian Thought” *CLR James Journal* 20, no. 1 (2014): 3-20; Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2006); David Austin, *Fear of a Black Nation: Race, Sex and Sexuality in Sixties Montreal* (Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 2013); and Charmaine Nelson, *Slavery, Geography and Empire in Nineteenth-Century Maritime Landscapes of Montreal and Jamaica* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

6 See also Anne Marie Lane Jonah, “Everywoman’s Biography: The Stories of Marie Marguerite Rose and Jeanne at Louisbourg,” *Acadiensis* 45, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2016): 143-62.

correspondence between government officials, who expressed their fears and anxieties around unchecked black immigration from the Caribbean (Reynolds, 121-33).

Whitehead and Whitfield's work similarly draws heavily from this historical practice. Indeed, both feature the *Book of Negroes* as one of the centrepieces of their studies. Not only is the inside cover of Whitehead's book a replica of entries from the original *Book of Negroes*, but, more significantly, she draws upon it quite extensively to compile her profiles of Carolinian Black Loyalists in the third chapter. Whitfield's work, likewise, has included a substantive appendix on "slave profiles," which he compiled from the *Book of Negroes*. This points to the various ways in which that document can be read as a narrative of black freedom in the Atlantic World and as a compendium of black enslavement. Whitfield also has an extensive discussion on the difficulties associated with finding slaves in the sources due to their inherent ambiguity on the question of who, exactly, was a slave (10). The British often used the term "servant" as a gentler term to describe those who were enslaved. As a consequence in the documentary record "we will never know how many of the people who were listed as 'servants' were, in fact, slaves." In places such as Saint John, Shelburne, and Annapolis, suggests Whitfield, one can only embark upon a "speculative consideration" of the exact number of slaves (119).

Whitehead and Reynolds also emphasize the importance of the oral history archive as a crucial window on the black experience in slavery and freedom. In her chapter on black life in 18th-century South Carolina and Georgia, Whitehead defines oral history as "accounts passed down from word of mouth, mother to daughter, father to son" (34). She also considers oral history to be the key to unlocking many of the genealogical secrets and memories of the archive and archival practice. Moreover, Whitehead utilizes her role as an archivist and a practitioner of oral history to drive the narrative of her text while dissolving the usual (albeit misguided) professional and analytical distance from historical actors typically maintained by the historian. This technique is exemplified in the following passage:

The endurance of African culture in the New World was shown to me through a friend's memories. Melissha Richardson was born and grew up in a very small, very rural family enclave on Richardson's Corner Lane, near Huger, South Carolina. I interviewed her in 1997 about her family history. Listening to Melissha describe her childhood, I began to have the strangest feeling that, underneath everything she was telling me about her family life in Huger, I was seeing the ghost of a social structure – an African way of life, still strong, still manifesting itself after at least two hundred years of exile. I have included Melissha Richardson's oral history here, with her blessing, as one of the most vivid descriptions I know of what life might have been like for black people in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century South Carolina (35).

Whitehead's insertion of herself as a curator of a black oral history archive is matched in Reynolds's work. He devotes a chapter of his book to a transcript of an oral interview with the then-73-year-old Wanda Robson, who recounts her "early

memories of race” (69). In his introduction, Reynolds, like Whitehead, inserts himself into the text as a curator of a black oral history archive and highlights his personal relationship to the historical subject:

One of my students was Viola Desmond’s youngest sister, Wanda Robson, who audited my course on the history of race relations in the spring term of 2000. . . . I soon discovered Wanda’s family connection to V and brought this to the attention of the class. Wanda was only 19 years old when her sister was arrested for refusing to give up her seat in the white’s only section of the Roseland theatre, and although she had been well informed about the facts of the case, it was only after she returned to university that she became fully aware of the significance of the incident in the larger historical context of the struggle for racial equality in Canada. As the next four years would prove, university education for Wanda became part of her own personal journey of historical awareness and self-discovery (7).

In all of these works the archive is mined for evidence of two interrelated themes that have become hallmarks of the writing of history “from below”: the concept of agency and its full realization – resistance. Whilst all of these authors discuss the hardships faced by blacks in the eras of slavery and freedom, each makes a concerted effort to mine the archives to place black peoples at the centre of these histories rather than as passive historical objects who have been acted upon.⁷ Whitfield, for example, most explicitly makes the case for agency as one of the main pillars of his analysis: “Maritime slaves . . . retained agency in their own lives. They asserted themselves and their interests by running away, by not working, and by attempting to keep their family together under the most arduous of circumstances. This agency extended to the process of ending slavery in the Maritimes” (6). Reynolds and Whitehead also devote considerable attention to highlighting blacks as central historical actors in histories of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. Whitehead’s portraits of Black Loyalists does this quite well, supplementing the data from the *Book of Negroes* with published biographies of high-profile figures like Boston King. Reynolds also takes care to place blacks at the centre of the story that he wants to tell about the history of racial segregation in Canada. He highlights, for example, the story of the Black Loyalists, the central role blacks played in spiriting enslaved blacks to freedom on the Underground Railroad, and the role that the “actions of a number of dedicated and courageous individuals” had in fighting Jim Crowism in Canada (Reynolds, 22, 28, 59).

All of the authors of these fine books have done a splendid job of adding to our corpus of knowledge of the experiences of blacks in Canada. All, as well, have pointed to just how necessary it is to continue to draw upon and expand the archive to broaden our horizons in terms of the systematic remembering of black pasts in

⁷ See, for example, Robin Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History*, 2nd ed. (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997).

Canada. Yet while there is strength in this approach, there are also some weaknesses – weaknesses that are evident in all, but particularly in two, of these books.

One of the casualties of writing texts that engage with questions of the archive this extensively is the tendency to over-determine the orientation of a work to such a degree that some larger substantive analytical, interpretive, and methodological issues are left off the table. One of the most glaring omissions in all three works is the question of Indigenous peoples, who, in essence, are virtually non-existent. Whitfield only mentions the Mi'kmaq people once in order to highlight that Mathieu Da Costa, one of the earliest-known blacks in Canada, was a Mi'kmaq translator for the French (37). A work that is about Loyalist slavery, admittedly in the post-1783 Maritimes, has not even a cursory discussion of the patterns of slavery that predominated during the earlier period of French colonial occupation – an occupation that was characterized by an extensive presence of Aboriginal slaves. Whitehead's tale of the Black Loyalists, similarly, although it takes place on a huge swath of land from which Indigenous peoples were removed by the British, the French, and the Spanish, makes no mention of them. She also refers to the Black Loyalists as settlers in her subtitle without any critical reflection on her use of the term and what this might mean for our thinking about the black experience during the age of Loyalism. When she shifts the spotlight to Black Loyalist settlements on original Mi'kmaq territory, they are nowhere to be found.

Graham Reynolds more explicitly discusses Indigenous peoples, albeit briefly. First, he points out that *panis* or Aboriginals were used as bonded labour in New France (15). Secondly, in his introductory remarks he engages in a more substantive discussion but only to point out that only recently have Indigenous people “rightly” been the beneficiaries of increased attention and collective efforts from governments and well as historians and other educators. As a consequence, he argues, “today, the history and culture of First Nations of Canada have come to be understood to a much greater extent than in the past and the difficult process of healing and reconciliation has now finally begun.” He laments, however, that “unfortunately, the same cannot be said in regard to other racial-ethnic groups. In sharp contrast to Canada's First Nations, for example, blacks have had largely an invisible presence in Canada” (4). Reynolds is generally correct in his assessment that the field of Indigenous history has made relatively large strides in Canada in terms of its visibility and prominence both inside and outside of academic circles. Nonetheless, the ways in which he frames the relationship between Aboriginality and Blackness is troubling.

One can also critically unpack the subtitle of Reynolds's book, *A History of Blacks and Racial Segregation in the Promised Land* for a sense of why his treatment (or lack thereof) of Aboriginality is so problematic. This subtitle invokes the centrality of land and the constitution of race and space. Segregation refers to how racial arrangements are articulated in psychic, social, and perhaps more crucially territorial spaces. The idea of the “Promised Land” is a biblical reference, and it is the term that blacks enslaved in America used to describe Canada during the years of the Underground Railroad. And thus they likened themselves to Pharaoh's Hebrew slaves, who sought their deliverance out of bondage. Similar to a long list of scholars before him, Reynolds's book is a critique of the idea of Canada as a promised land for blacks – an idea that has been taken up as part of white Canada's favourable self-image. Thus the reality of segregation in Canada – which

he painstakingly recounts in the book – is a rebuke of the idea of Canada as a haven. Nonetheless, even if the promise of Canada for blacks was unfulfilled, who had to be displaced from this land in order for it to fulfill its promise of freedom? In other words, if blacks' dreams of freedom were tied to land, what did those dreams mean for those who were its original inhabitants?

Reynolds inherently reproduces the idea of Canada as a terra nullius upon and through which blacks should have been able to realize their freedom, only to be thwarted by white racism (and I have been guilty of this in much of my own work too). But we must be careful that in our zealotry to excavate the black archive that we do not erase Indigenous peoples. To be sure, blacks were not the architects of the Canadian colonial settler state and I categorically reject any attempt to suggest that blacks were essentially white settler colonists in blackface.⁸ But historians of Black Canada simply cannot continue to assume that we do not have to think about the relationship of black Canadians to a settler colonial state that had its origins in territorial dispossession of Indigenous peoples. What exactly then is the precise relationship that blacks in Canada had with the settler colonial (and racial) Canadian state? How did they benefit from Indigenous territorial dispossession and the implementation of the idea of private property? How were blacks enmeshed in or hurt by the racialization of space under settler colonialism? In other words, was there a relationship between the active legal creation of racialized space under the auspices of the Indian Act of 1876 and its various antecedents and the more passive legal support for racialized space typified by Canadian forms of Jim Crow?

One concrete historical example that Reynolds could have used to flesh out these sorts of questions is the case of the black British Columbian "pioneers" who settled on Salt Spring Island in the mid-19th century. Blacks migrated northward to escape the pervasive racism and social ostracism that they faced in Jim Crow California. And they looked northward to Victoria, British Columbia, with the encouragement and support of Governor James Douglas, who was born in Demerara, British Guiana, and who identified as partially black. Similar to their fugitive slave counterparts on the other coast of North America, they looked northward for a more substantive freedom. Traditional scholarship highlights the pioneers' renewed fight against white racism in British Columbia and attacks by "hostile Indians" – the territorially displaced Haida and Cowichans peoples in the case of those who had settled on Salt Spring Island. In sum, this complicated history provides us with an opportunity to tease out blacks' complex relationship to the settler colonial state.⁹ In my own work I have suggested that blacks occupied a liminal position between colonization and fugivity. This space needs to be explored in the future.

Another issue amongst these works that might have benefitted from more sustained critical reflection is the matter of race. "Race" emerged as a concept in Europe during the Enlightenment, classifying and hierarchizing human beings into essential types based primarily on phenotypic criteria. These hierarchies, in turn,

8 See, for example, Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," *Social Justice* 32, no. 4 (2005), 120-43; Enakshi Dua, "Thinking Through Anti-Racism and Indigeneity in Canada," *Ardent Review* 1, no. 1 (April 2008): 1, 31-5.

9 Crawford Kilian, *Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia* (Vancouver: Douglass & McIntyre, 1978).

were used to justify slavery and colonization, laying the foundation for racial states in various white settler colonies. One of Reynolds's objectives is to provide a "narrative of race" in Canada. Only his chapter on the culture of Jim Crow, however, comes close to attempting to provide the reader with an understanding of the concept of race at the turn of the 20th century, an era when it was increasingly wedded to ideas of immutable biology and becoming more closely legitimized by scientific authority. Reynolds touches upon this, but what the book mostly provides is a discussion of racism or the now rather dated concept of "race relations" rather than the narrative of race promised in his introduction. We do not receive a sense of the various ways in which race has been defined or articulated in various social and state formations or how it might have changed over time. A similar issue arises in the work of Whitehead and Whitfield. Whitehead does not deal with the concept of race in her book. There is ample discussion of discrimination against blacks, but there is little sense of how racial thought might have shaped neither the institution of slavery nor the possibilities of freedom. Moreover, it is evident that the "Black" in "Black Loyalists" is not interrogated as a racial construction but as an a priori category of analysis. Whitfield similarly, in a book about racial slavery, does not discuss the concept of race at length, making only a handful of references to racism.

The erasure of Indigenous peoples and the cursory discussions of race are some of the major shortcomings in these books and they exist alongside a few other more minor issues. One is struck, for instance, by the importance of the claim that Reynolds makes in Chapter 5, where he juxtaposes the paltry number of black West Indians coming into the country with the actual numbers suggested by correspondence pertaining to those blacks that managed to slip through the government's surveillance mechanisms and enter the country. It is an important argument that has not been made before. Similarly, Reynolds's claim that the era of Jim Crow in Canada was marked by what he calls the "Americanization" of race is an intriguing one in light of the clear evidence of Canada's saturation in American-produced racist popular culture during this period. It is an argument that those of us who might be wary about these sorts of attempts to invoke the US to explain various iterations of Canadian white supremacy will not be able to ignore. Nonetheless, what Reynolds fails to provide is an overarching argument to tie together the many disparate threads of his book. Whitehead's central argument is also quite elusive and it is unclear what she hopes this book will accomplish beyond unearthing an archive and make crucial lost genealogical connections. Only Whitfield's work provides a set of core arguments, and, although one would have liked to see him make a stronger case for the uniqueness of Maritime slavery (given its clear similarities to slavery in New England), the argument that he makes is nonetheless quite compelling.

All three of these books make crucial contributions to the growing study of blacks in Canada. While I have raised a few quarrels with these works, there is no doubt that all have mined the archive to provide compelling histories of the black struggle in slavery and freedom and through their important excavations have extended the breadth and depth of the archive. All will remain key studies in our ongoing work to enrich our interpretive histories of blacks in the Atlantic World.