THE REPRESENTATIONS OF SOJOURNER TRUTH IN *THE NARRATIVE OF SOJOURNER TRUTH*

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ABSTRACT

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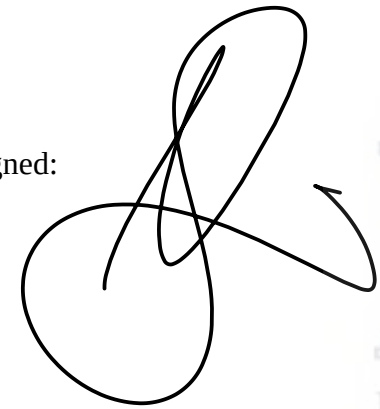
MA Thesis, Department of English, University of the Western Cape

I read representations of Sojourner Truth in her Spiritual Narrative, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* with a focus on the portrayal of her unconventional character, through a close analysis of language, structure, photographs and narrative voice. Truth's editor Olive Gilbert's raises questions about whether the daguerreotype offers a more accurate form of representation than text. I explore the similarities and differences between visual and written portraits in representations of Truth as a unique figure. I question critical readings of Sojourner Truth's dress in photographs as conservative, reading instead for a combination of conservative and subversive elements. I suggest that her interest in aesthetic forms such as dress and décor is symbolic of her yearning for home, her heritage, her agency, and unique taste. Her many references to her family indicate that she was more than just an empowered figure, but also one who still grieved. I read Truth's description of domestic space as representing ambivalently, both her sense of loss, and her attempts to acquire agency. I consider how Truth attempts to recreate a sense of family and belonging through fragments of memory. In my reading of how she questions and extends conventional notions of family and community, I explore how she adapts and includes song, and quotations from the Bible in her sermons, by drawing on elements of African folktale and music. Most critics focus on Truth's strong voice as an activist, there is little attention to the significance of spiritual solitude for her reimagining of community. I suggest that Truth offers alternative ideas of community as fluid rather than as fixed in one place. I explore how her ideas challenge the notion of nation as exclusive. I consider the genre of *The Narrative* by analyzing Olive Gilbert's role as editor and writer. I propose that her role in *The Narrative* is a more complex one than suggested by critics, as it challenges conventional concepts of autobiography creating a conversation between two voices and lives.

DECLARATION:

I declare that *The Representation of Sojourner Truth in the Narrative of Sojourner Truth* is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

Shazia Salie Date: 4 Dec 2019

Signed: 

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Supervisor: Cheryl Ann Michael
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Abbreviations:

OED: Oxford English Dictionary

CONTENTS:

> I have been for years, and it will probably be a fascination that lasts all my life, continually fascinated by the fact that no bestial treatment of human beings ever produce beasts…black people could be enslaved for generation after generation and recorded in statistics along with lists of rice, tar, and turpentine cargo, but they did not turn out to be cargo...those groups civilised the very horror that oppressed it.
>
> Toni Morrison: "Hard, True and Lasting"

"I have talked and sung to you"

Hello Sojourner Truth,
Do you know me by now?
"Children, I have talked and sung to you"
I know you.
Well, I am trying to.
I cannot seem to stop introducing you to my friends
As if you are my family
"Oh, God, make the people hear me"
As if you're a tale we were all told
"Here, here"
I loved watching you run
"No, I did not run away; I walked by daylight"
And then fly on to small risings on the ground
"Why, I felt so tall within"

Shazia Salie

INTRODUCTION

In the poem, "Harriet" about Harriet Jacobs who wrote the slave narrative, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Lucille Clifton addresses Sojourner Truth. By calling Truth, "isabell", her given name, and then playing on the word "sojourning", she marks Truth's desire for freedom as embedded in her since birth – since a time where she was not meant to be herself:

…isabell

if i be you

let me in my

sojourning

not forget

to ask my brothers

ain't i a woman too…

Clifton's choice of writing in the form of a personal address to Truth felt fitting as I found myself reading her *Narrative* through imagined conversations about her interests and feelings. The poem I have written tries to suggest my sense of Truth as someone who enjoyed the dynamics of conversation, and whose own language was poetic. I am delighted by Truth's eccentricities. I wanted to avoid reading Truth within the narrow boundaries of "race", class and gender, drawing from Henry Louis Gates' argument that Black writing should not be limited to a sociological reading. (124). I wished to read her in the company of Christian mystics such as Hildegard von Bingen and Julian of Norwich, a privileged artist, Julia Margaret Cameron, and contemporary singers Jessye Norman and Aretha Franklin for the kinship between their colourful, complex personalities.

My history of the diaspora brought my family to Africa. Reading Truth's memories of her mother, I feel a great deal of sadness for the family taken away from this continent, to slavery. Truth, distanced from a land she did not know, but aware of her ancestral links – could only imagine what it may have been like. When I read the literature of the diaspora, connections are felt through imagination. Toni Morrison's essay, "Hard, True and Lasting" from which I have taken my epigraph, made me think of the courage and resilience of South Africans who resisted apartheid. It became important for me to write about the similarities I found between the

literature of the anti-apartheid movement and the anti-slavery movement of the nineteenth century where writers found in aesthetics forms of relief and resistance.

Olive Gilbert begins her preface to the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (1850) with this striking comment by Sojourner Truth on Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*: "You call him a self-made man; well I am a self-made woman" (3). There is a moment where Margaret Washington in her study *Sojourner Truth's America* (2009) offers a description of Sojourner Truth: "reportedly she was an unforgettable figure with a large fruit basket sitting on her head kept secure by her tall graceful carriage and carefully wrapped turban" which drew me to read for her style and appreciation for aesthetics (287). This delighted me because it was different to what I expected of a spiritual narrative. These are not the aspects that critics generally focused on. Much critical attention was given to questions of gender and equality. William L. Andrews reads spiritual narratives as "…[a]n argument for women's spiritual authority that plainly challenged traditional female roles…" (2). Frances Smith Foster in *Written by Herself: Literary Production by African American Women, 1746-1892,* looks at Jarena Lee, "citing numerous instances of God's using women for His work…" (57). Joycelyn Moody's study of African American women's spiritual narratives reads the representations of selfhood in the lives of women who were fiercely independent: "…their spiritual life as they believed they should live it, that is, on their own in accordance with their comprehension of divine will" (20). Hazel Carby "[considers] the history of the failure of any significant political alliances between black and white women in the nineteenth century", drawing attention to racism within the abolitionist movement (6). Jeffrey Stewart reads white women editors of spiritual narratives as intrusive, shaping the narratives to their own political and moral ends (xxxix – xl).

Rafia Zafar draws attention to Harriet Jacobs' "struggle[s] to ensure that she would tell her own story" (8). Henry Louis Gates' and Charles T. Davis' collection, *The Slave Narrative* discusses readings and debates about the slave narrative as document and as literary text (xi – xxxiv). James Olney, in this collection, explores the political context which he reads as shaping slave narratives as accounts of lives with "a sense not of uniqueness but of overwhelming *sameness"* (148). Gates himself argues that the richness of these texts are not limited to the interpretations offered by the essays in the collection (vi). Most of the essays on the slave and spiritual narratives tend to focus on arguments presented by the narrators about selfhood and equality.
Most of the critical work I have looked at, on Truth, mention her presence, but the focus tends to be mainly on her as a figure of resistance. I am interested in her vulnerabilities and expressions of loss and how this shapes the *Narrative.* Her wit and her unusual sense of style

also attracted my attention. This interest invited me to read how she represented her sense of self through her dress and how she responded to her environment, as well as to people. I feel a sense of connection across the centuries with Truth, who shared my love of colour and I want to explore more of the aspects such as dress, photography and domestic space which have been given little critical attention.

The complexities of her *Narrative* invited me to read this woman closely, carefully and widely. She was born as Isabella von Wagener in Hurley, Ulster County, New York[i]. Truth was not sure in what year she was born but at the beginning of the *Narrative,* she makes it clear that she knows what year she was liberated – which symbolises a kind of rebirth that only happened once free. Truth grew up in slavery as a domestic slave. She lived with her slave parents in a Dutch household (9). Her family was auctioned off and she lost contact with her parents and siblings. She speaks of this loss throughout her *Narrative* and remembers her family, specifically her mother, when speaking of her religious education (12-13). Slaves were to be emancipated in 1827 but she decided on her own freedom and left in 1826 (27). After working for a time as a servant, she renamed herself 'Sojourner Truth' and decided to become an itinerant preacher, a role in which her oral and storytelling abilities were significant (68).

Truth was illiterate – in terms of reading and writing – but she possessed an intelligence that defied her lack of conventional education. She worked with Olive Gilbert, crafting the *Narrative* through conversations. Gilbert was her editor and, I would like to believe, her friend. This, I suggest, is evident in the choices she made to shape the *Narrative* through conversations, inviting readers to be a part of the discussion. They worked collaboratively on this piece and published it in 1850. In my thesis I will refer to the 1884 edition published by Penguin Books which includes material from earlier editions as well as the *Book of Life* and *Memorial Chapter.* Most critics see Gilbert as limiting voice to fit the conventions of the times. I suggest that the *Narrative* contains the voices of two passionate women, who shared interests in common. In this regard, I am interested in how Gilbert's language echoes that of Truth. I trace links to the African diaspora through Truth's reshaping of Biblical stories, which draw on elements of African storytelling, and through the way she presents herself in her choice of vivid, patterned clothing.

In chapter one I explore Gilbert's anxieties about being Truth's editor. Truth maintains authority throughout the *Narrative* and instead of having power over the piece, Gilbert understands the tensions of being editor and makes the choice to present the text as a

conversation between them. The conversation is extended to include readers through Gilbert's use of rhetorical questions and novelistic conventions. I propose that Gilbert and Truth borrow elements of the nineteenth century bildungsroman as a text of "self-development", in how the *Narrative* traces Truth's development from childhood to adulthood (Lowe 25). Their collaboration is represented in their friendship, in Gilbert's respect for Truth and in the fragmented structure of the *Narrative* which reflects Truth's memories. I will explore how she and Truth use language which is similar to that of Romantic poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge in representing the significance of childhood and nature. Their collaboration allows the *Narrative* to be read as different to conventional biography in presenting two voices which support the voice of the life being written about. This is a reading that goes against the grain of previous scholarship.

Sojourner Truth wanted to represent herself across various mediums and had daguerreotypes taken of her, after publishing *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth.* In chapter two I read these daguerreotypes as representations of Truth's interests, agency and individuality. I argue that the daguerreotypes have not been read alongside the *Narrative* and look at the ways in which the photographs reflect her voice in the text. I pay attention to the studio as a space of collaboration between Truth and the photographer, which underlines that she had authority over how she would be portrayed in these portraits. The clothing worn by Truth in these daguerreotypes drew me to read her style as representing her taste. I look at the diasporic links suggested through the fabric she chose to wear and her wearing of turbans and head scarves.

Home for Truth represents freedom and individuality, but it also reminds her of her past as a domestic slave. In chapter three I look at the cellar Truth lived in with her parents and how they reimagined the space. I will look at how this may have inspired her to desire a home of her own. Truth's complex relationship with space is suggested in her role as an itinerant preacher, where she travels and enjoys her moments of solitude. I read her solitude as both her enjoyment of being alone, but also as moments which inspire her to share what she has experienced.

In chapter four, I look at Truth, the preacher and composer. I compare her to Baby Suggs in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved,* to early mystics, Hildegard von Bingen and Julian of Norwich, and to other African American women who wrote spiritual narratives. I pay attention to the Negro Spiritual and read Truth as both a singer and composer. I look at how Truth adapts Bible stories to reflect a lineage of African American folktales. I suggest that her memories of her

mother's storytelling influenced how she reads and retells these stories. In the conclusion, I consider how traces of Truth's voice might be found through her interest in aesthetics. I consider links between her ideas and those of later African American preachers and artists such as Martin-Luther King and Jessye Norman. I reflect on my own sense of connection, across the centuries, with a remarkable woman.

CHAPTER ONE: SHAPING THE *NARRATIVE:* CONVERSATIONS AND COLLABORATION

My fascination with Sojourner Truth has developed my interest in Olive Gilbert, Truth's editor for the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth.* Most critics regard her as intrusive as she adds her commentary throughout the *Narrative.* Critics, such as Jeffrey Stewart, criticize Gilbert for her selective editing which, it is claimed, silences Truth on some aspects of her life to fit the social conventions of the time. These concerns were raised by the feminist scholarship emerging in that time and the rise of black editors who were anxious about the white voice dominating black work. I acknowledge this; however, I argue that in the *Narrative,* this is not the case. I am interested in Gilbert's representation of their collaboration as based on conversations, rather than interviews. In reading the *Narrative* as collaboration and conversation, Truth is not silenced. Instead, this way of reading allows for Truth's unconventional views to be represented. I look at Gilbert's anxieties about writing about Truth and at how her commentary suggests shared interests, with interesting moments where her language echoes Truth's. Instead of dismissing Gilbert's comments, I am interested in how Gilbert herself emerges as an intriguing person who poses thoughtful questions about representation through the comparison she makes between the art of writing and the art of the daguerreotype[ii]. The glimpses of Gilbert's own aesthetic suggest an interest in Romanticism, which is similar to Truth's interest in nature, an aspect that I have not noticed in critical discussions. I explore how the *Narrative* combines elements of biography and autobiography or memoir and may be read as a representation of two lives in a genre that conventionally depicts a single life. I will reflect on Lejeune's theory of the autobiographical pact which requires that the narrator is the "protagonist" of the narrative and suggest how Gilbert and Truth's partnership challenges conventional ideas of how we read life narratives (24).

Sojourner Truth is renowned for her presence. Many critics, such as Nell Irvin Painter, describe Truth as, "a woman of remarkable intelligence despite her illiteracy, [who] had great presence" (*Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* 3). This "presence" is also noted by Hill et.al who claim that, "she captivated her audiences..." and Gilbert expresses Truth's social and political views passionately, yet she is anxious that her writing is not substantial enough to represent someone as remarkable as Truth (258). This idea of Truth as an exciting figure is noted in Olive Gilbert's description of her:

> The impressions made by Isabella on her auditors, when moved by lofty or deep feeling, can never be transmitted to paper…till by some Daguerrian art, we are enabled to transfer the look, the gesture, the tones of voice, in connection with the quaint, yet fit expressions used, and the spirit-stirring animation that, at such a time, pervades all she says. (31)

Little is known about Olive Gilbert as a writer, however, Margaret Washington notes that she was an abolitionist and feminist who, "led in organizing the Female Anti-Slavery Society of Brooklyn Vicinity" (28). Gilbert was later introduced to Truth through a mutual friend: "When she met Sojourner, Olive was advised that she was in the presence of a remarkable woman. Yet Gilbert had no idea 'that we should ever pen these 'simple annals' of this child of nature.'" (31). This emphasises her respect and fascination with Truth and later, I will explore the friendship of these two women. From the above quotation, the phrase "never be transmitted to paper"[iii], suggests Gilbert's anxiety about her writing. Her doubt signifies how much she reached for a fitting depiction of Truth. Her anxieties may have stemmed from her awareness that given her role as editor; readers may view Truth's *Narrative* as unreliable. This is explored by Joycelyn Moody, who in her study of the complexities of African American slave narratives, speaks of the tensions which arose from white editors, who wrote and recreated black narratives.

> Proponents of slavery declared that, since widespread illiteracy among blacks meant that slave narratives were written more often by (northern) whites than by bound or fugitive blacks, these whites and other abolitionists were not in fact representing the words or stories of actual enslaved persons, but instead creating fictions in order to threaten…slaveholding states. (Moody 111)

"The impressions made by Isabella on her auditors, when moved by lofty or deep feeling, can never be transmitted to paper…till by some Daguerrian art" suggests a yearning for an appropriate medium through which to represent Sojourner Truth, and also draws attention to Gilbert's intellectual interest in questions of the artistic representation of another's life. Gilbert appears to create a distinction between photography and text. The word "till", however, suggests both anxiety and possibility, inviting us to consider that for Gilbert, writing may be able to represent a person with the accuracy of photography, but she is anxious about her ability to offer such a depiction. Her use of the word "art", is interesting, suggesting her awareness that something more than a copy is required. This is interesting given Truth's choice to have

photographs taken as another way to represent herself. The daguerreotype may then be read as not merely a copy but rather, like writing, open to interpretation. Therefore, I will look at nineteenth century and contemporary debates about whether photography is an art form or document. Gilbert speaks of the "transmission" and "transfer" of Truth's presence on to paper and I would like to explore these term, which may refer to both copy and change, by bearing in mind the root word, 'trans' meaning 'across' which is suggestive of movement. "Transmission" refers to a "passage through a medium, as of light, heat, sound" and "transfer" means to be "conveyed from one surface to another" (OED). Significantly the word "transfer" creates an ambivalence which suggests a kind of copy; however, it can be viewed also as bringing about change, which is suggested by "passage" which may refer to journey.

The idea of "transfer" gains even more significance when read alongside Salman Rushdie's essay *Imaginary Homelands,* where he speaks of the diaspora, relocation and translation:

> The word 'translation' comes, etymologically, from the Latin for 'bearing across'. Having been borne across the world, we are translated men. It is normally supposed that something always gets lost in translation; I cling, obstinately, to the notion that something can also be gained. (17)

I would like to look at "transfer" alongside Rushdie's idea of "translate", and Truth as a diasporic figure who indeed "lost" land and family. I am intrigued by Rushdie's "notion that something can also be gained" and, in the case of Truth, I suggest that she "gains" through another kind of "translation": the representation of her life in her *Narrative.* Through collaboration, "translation" and "transfer" with Gilbert, Truth reimagines and re-establishes her identity.

Gilbert is doubtful of her ability to convey fittingly, Truth's presence in words; however, I want to consider how metaphor is reached for in these moments as a suitable way in which to describe Truth: "[Truth] captivated her audiences to such an extent that one of her audience participants admitted that in trying to describe her one might "'as well attempt to report the apocalyptic thunders'" (259). Shklovsky is referenced in the *The New ' Princeton Encyclopedia Of Poetry And Poetics,* and makes an interesting point about metaphor as that which, "is not to create meaning but to renew perception by "defamiliarizing" the world: unlikely comparisons retard reading and force us to reconceive objects that ordinary words allow us to pass over in haste (726)". This idea of metaphor helps in my consideration of Truth as an unusual figure who defied stereotypes.

Gilbert notes: "'Ah!' she says, with an emphasis that cannot be written, 'the slaveholders are TERRIBLE for promising…'" foregrounding her doubt about her ability represent Truth's vivid presence. She tries to describe Truth's grief through her use of the uppercase in "TERRIBLE" (27). She speaks of Truth's presence as powerful enough to affect her audience who were "moved by lofty or deep feeling" and how she desired to depict her "spirit-stirring animation". This alliterative phrase signifies Gilbert's attempt to represent Truth's dynamic presence through poetic techniques. The metaphors in "apocalyptic thunders" and "lofty or deep feeling" suggest just how powerful metaphor is as a mode to express feeling, especially when finding the correct word is difficult. Gilbert expresses this in, "with an emphasis that cannot be written" suggesting that sometimes she struggles for language to represent her feelings accurately.

Gilbert's anxieties may have been shared by other writers of her time, who believed photography to be superior in telling the truth. Edgar Allan Poe, significantly showing that other writers of the time were thinking about photography, wrote:

> In truth the daguerreotype plate is infinitely more accurate than any painting by human hands. If we examine a work of ordinary art, by means of a powerful microscope, all traces of resemblance to nature will disappear – but the closest scrutiny of the photographic drawing discloses only a more absolute truth, more perfect identity of aspect with the thing represented. (Quoted in Schiller 88)

The use of "more" intrigues me, underlining the nineteenth century anxiety about accuracy. Moreover, this idea of "more" is similar to how Gilbert believes in the need for a better representation of Truth in her reference to "some Daguerrian art".

Gilbert hopes to find a kind of language to carry the accuracy of the photograph, and Nancy Armstrong argues that writers looked to the image in the nineteenth century:

> This is a book about Victorian fiction and how 'the image' or, more accurately, a differential system thereof—supplanted writing as the grounding of fiction. Visual culture supplied the social classifications that novelists had to confirm, adjust, criticize, or update if they wished to hold the readership's attention. (3)

Therefore, the image became common to both photography and Victorian fiction:

> I will insist that the kind of visual description we associate with literary realism refers not to things, but to visual representations of things, representations that

> action helped to establish as identical to real things and people before readers actually began to look that way to one another and live within such stereotypes. It is the referent common to both Victorian fiction and photography that I mean by the term 'image'. (3)

However, instead of reading it as merely "supplant[ing]" or replacing "writing", I feel that image and writing borrow from each other.

Gilbert's language, in the above quotation about the daguerreotype, is interesting as her tone changes throughout, displaying her anxiety, ambivalence and her excitement towards the end. This reveals how both Gilbert and Truth are drawn to dramatic and powerful language. I would like to look at her writing and more specifically, her use of descriptive language as drawing from the vivid images offered by photography. In her preface to the *Narrative,* Gilbert captivates readers with "[Sojourner Truth's] finely moulded form is yet unbent, and its grand height and graceful, wavy movements remind the observer of her lofty cousins..." (3). "[L]ofty", suggests that Truth could elevate her audience though her sermons. "Unbent" suggests an upright posture associated with feelings of dignity and pride and opposes the act of bending, associated with labour, such as the "raking" Truth did while living with slave-owners, the Dumonts (22). These words, "unbent", "graceful" and "wavy", carry fluidity emphasising her as an "animat[ed]" figure (31).

Gilbert's choice of words is reflective of both writing and photography, emphasising similarities between these forms. In the above quote, she speaks of "tone" and this is suggestive of the tonal gradation Daguerre spoke of when introducing the invention of the daguerreotype. According to the Oxford English Dictionary "tone" in colour is "the prevailing effect of the combination of light and shade and of the general scheme of colouring". The idea of "shade" is interesting as it refers to shadows as well as the distinction between light and dark, suggesting how tone creates contrast and images. Thus, what tone does is allow for a more significant reading of an image through the three-dimensional effect caused by the depth created.

In literature, "tone" is:

> said to pervade and 'color' the whole, like a mood in a human being, and in various ways to contribute to the aesthetic excellence of the work. Some of the other terms naming the same concept are… 'impression,' 'spirit,' 'atmosphere,'

> ‘aura,’ and ‘accent’…Thus, the tone of a speaker’s voice may reveal information about his feelings, wishes… (Preminger 856)

Here, “tone” in language allows for a more intimate reading of the subject. Moreover, the “tones” which Gilbert speaks of play on Truth’s voice as an orator as well as the tones evident in the photograph. However, it is Gilbert’s writing which introduces readers to Truth’s voice. She refers to the tone of Truth’s voice in order to emphasise the various ways in which Truth used her voice, both gently as “she bade them, with the tones of a kind mother” (75) and powerfully, “...in the deepest and most solemn tones of her powerful and sonorous voice” (81). “[S]olemn” carries dignity and “sonorous” suggests a deep and full sound. Both words symbolise depth and this sense of dignity extends from the representation of her voice to her character. In the chapter on photography, I consider “tone” in photographs as that which invites a closer reading of the subject’s “feelings” and desires, in ways similar to how tone works in language.

Her appreciation for Truth’s presence may have increased Gilbert’s anxieties about words and this is suggested in her commentary on Truth’s speech given to address the preachers in Hartford:

> ‘Besides, if the Lord comes and burns – as you say he will – I am not going away; I am going to stay here and stand the fire…! And Jesus will walk with me through the fire,and keep me from harm. Nothing belonging to God can, any more than God himself; such shall have no need to go away to escape the fire! No, I shall remain. Do you tell me God’s children can’t stand fire?’ And her manner and tone spoke louder than words, saying, ‘It is absurd to think so!’ (76)

With, “her manner and tone spoke louder than words”, Gilbert once again, suggests that words alone could not do justice to Truth’s character. One may read “tone” here as suggestive of Truth’s powerful intonation. The exclamation marks highlight just how potent Truth’s voice was. Gilbert often refers to tone: “And [Truth] bade them, with the tones of a kind mother” (75). One gets the idea that Truth spoke both in a way which captured her spectators, but also in a manner which soothed. I believe that by stating that her, “tone spoke louder than words”, it is not that she cannot describe the way in which Truth spoke but, more so, that she attempts to represent her own feelings when hearing Truth. Interestingly, though Gilbert may have felt as if she could share that feeling through text, I read the phrase, “with the tones of a kind mother”, and feel a sense of the comfort Truth bestowed upon the people to whom she spoke.

By reading photography and text as similar, I am reminded that "[t]he word photography comes from the Greek and means 'light writing'" (Doble 1). I believe that the "light" refers to how photographs are created, and that "writing" suggests creativity and the possibility of storytelling. A photograph then becomes that which holds a narrative. When considering the meaning of "photography", one cannot dismiss the idea that photography and text are similar. I would like to look at this idea of communication when considering how text and image can work together. Roland Barthes appears to distinguish photography from text: "… the photograph is pure contingency and can be nothing else (it is always *something* that is represented) – contrary to the text which, by sudden action of a single word, can shift a sentence from description to reflection" (28). However, a simple distinction between text and photography cannot be made and this is evident in his later statement: "…I like certain biographical features which, in a writer's life, delight me as much as certain photographs; I have called these features 'biographemes'; Photography has the same relation to History that the biographeme has to biography" (30). This makes the reading of photography and text complex and suggests that they are similar. When considering the "biographeme" Fabien Arribert-Narce notes: "If we try to characterise biographemes, we can say that they are details, fragments, triggering the fantasy of direct contact with reality (a hallucinatory relish of reality)." (242)

The "biographeme" is similar to Gilbert's "till by some Daguerrian art" as both express an attempt to represented character through an attention to detail, but also acknowledge how something cannot be a complete duplicate. The idea of text and image supporting one another is emphasised by W.J.T. Mitchell who notes that word and image "also reveal the inextricable weaving together of representation and discourse, the imbrication of visual and verbal experience" (83). Gilbert acknowledges the daguerreotype as "art" and desires a kind of writing which will work similarly to photography in conveying Truth's presence. Truth wanted both image and text to represent herself and this signifies the importance of reading her photographs in relation to the language of the *Narrative.*

Georg Lukacs makes an interesting argument that realist representation in the nineteenth century novel emphasizes individualism: "Balzac had emphasized the importance of description as a mode of modern fiction…Grandet's house and Gobseck's apartment must be described accurately and in precise detail in order to represent two contrasting usurers, differing as individuals…" (117). Here, "acura[cy]" depends on the detail, and I suggest that it is the attention to detail and "description" which gives us a sense of Truth's individual voice, in

addition to reported speech. Therefore, the fear of being viewed as one-dimensional motivated Truth's choice to depict herself through various forms such as language, photography, dress and setting. Her individuality and animation emerge strongly through detail. Truth's attempt to represent herself in various ways may have also made Gilbert anxious about how to represent her as she wanted to honour Truth's vision. By meditating on the daguerreotype in the *Narrative*, Gilbert invites readers to think about her text next to that of Truth's daguerreotypes.

Gilbert has been criticized for silencing Truth when she makes the following comment on some of Truth's story: "From this source arose a long series of trials in the life of our heroine, which we must pass over in silence" (20). In a footnote to the Penguin Classics edition of the *Narrative* (1998), Painter notes that this "silence" is due to "Truth's refusal to disclose the particulars of this 'long series of trials'" (248). While she notes that this is Truth's choice, Painter nonetheless criticizes Gilbert for, "prod[ding] Truth for stories of cruel owners" (xiv). This draws attention to the complexities of such a collaborative effort, which calls for a sensitivity to questions of privacy, and for the difficulties of what aspects of a life may be shared. In Gilbert's phrase above, "[w]e" suggests the possibility that Gilbert and Truth agreed that these matters should not be discussed in detail: "There are some hard things that crossed Isabella's life while in slavery, that she has no desire to publish, for various reasons" (55). She does not ignore the hardships Truth endured, but by saying that there are "some hard things" she chooses not to mention, the reader is alerted to the realities of slavery. Truth choosing not to dwell on these memories suggests a trauma she did not want to revisit. I read it as signalling the tension between public and private space, a conundrum experienced by Elizabeth Gaskell as well, when she wrote the biography of Charlotte Brontë (1857): "Examples of Brontë's conversation that Gaskell supplies typically concern intimate matters and suggest feelings, while yet retaining the speaker's dignity" (Spacks 613). This suggests that Gilbert was not trying to "silence" or "prod" Truth, instead she was facing the common dilemma of what was appropriate to speak of in the period, and in the genre of life narratives.

Jeffrey Stewart says, "[Gilbert's] voice, however, is problematical. Her remarks are merely distracting when she expresses the familiar abolitionist moral condemnations of slaveowners…" (xxxix – xl). However, I read her commentary as supportive of Truth's views rather than "distracting". By drawing on "familiar abolitionist moral condemnations", Gilbert is inviting readers to empathise with Truth and to feel a similar kind of disapproval as hers and I will develop this point later in the chapter.

Mandziuk and Pullon Fitch speak of Gilbert and Truth in collaboration, but still question how true to Truth's voice the *Narrative* is:

> Truth's narrative is collaboration, and as such invites speculation about the accuracy of the account. Sidonie Smith (1993) states that: 'collaborative projects raise complex questions about who speaks in the text and whose story is being told, about who maintains control over the narrative and by implication over the purposes to which the story is put'. (124).

Humez argues for Truth's agency in this collaborative project:

> Though Gilbert controlled the pen and felt free to insert editorial comments in her own voice, it appears that she did not feel free to omit positive assertions by Truth - after all, she presumably had to read the final text back to the storyteller for approval before it could go into print…[Truth] was far from naive or passive as she participated in the project. (36)

Humez's point interests me because I also see Truth as far from "passive"; instead I read her as dynamic. I like her mentioning of how Gilbert "controlled the pen", and how Truth was not "naïve" suggesting that she was aware of the powerful role each woman had in the *Narrative.*

Humez's approach towards Gilbert raises interesting questions about life narrative, autobiography and biography:

> This text, despite its use of a narrator's voice to summarize events in a third-person narrative and to insert editorial opinions and judgments within the narrative, has sometimes been called a "dictated autobiography". I would prefer to acknowledge its thoroughly collaborative production process by calling it a "mediated" or "facilitated" autobiography. (30)

Humez's use of "mediated" and "facilitated" highlights that even though Gilbert adds commentary and "mediat[ion]", Truth maintains authority over her story. This consideration of a different kind of life narrative is important in inviting readers to consider the various and unconventional ways in which life narratives can be told and be written, as well as emphasising the importance of the role of editors such as Gilbert. I am reminded of fourteenth century mystic, Julian of Norwich's methods in creating her book: "without even the most elementary of literacy skills…[Julian] dictated her book to a scribe" (Jantzen 15). Interestingly, Julian was

described as: “a simple creature, unlettered” (Julian xix). I look at Julian’s narrative in more detail later in Chapter Three. Just like Julian, Truth was unable to read or write and “dictated her book” and this symbolises both women’s unconventional styles of writing. However, Truth does not only “dictate” her *Narrative;* instead she welcomes a collaborative form. To collaborate with an editor does not then necessarily lessen the value of the text; instead it may signify support, through both participants working together.

Even though Painter argues that Gilbert’s role in the *Narrative* was to market it, she makes a claim in *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*: “The outline of Olive Gilbert’s life is unclear. The joint project provides nearly all the extant information about her, some of which can be glimpsed only between the lines” (104). The reference to a “joint project” aids my argument that this *Narrative* consists of two voices, working together to tell the story of one life. One may then consider why Gilbert introduces herself in these chapters, why she does not merely represent what Truth has said. I would like to offer a different reading of Gilbert from critics who find her intrusive; one where she is not read as an intruder, but rather as a sounding board for Truth. In terms of structure, Gilbert’s commentary on the beginning chapters on Truth’s early life is located at the end of the chapter and we might read this as her carefully putting her commentary at the end of the chapters as a way in which not to sound intrusive. Her commentary supports Truth and offers a strong criticism of slavery. Gilbert draws on her own personal observations of slave families being separated to support Truth’s account of her own experience of slavery:

> Subsequently, Isabella was married to a fellow-slave, named Thomas, who had previously had two wives, one of whom, if not both, had been torn from him and sold far away. And it is more than probable, because the writer of this knows from personal observation. (24)

She gives Truth credit for the authenticity of her retelling, based on her own observations during her travels as an abolitionist. As Moody notes: “many whites persistently challenged the authority of slave narratives in part by rejecting their truthfulness” (Moody 111).

“[C]ollaboration” signifies a partnership and understanding. I believe that Truth and Gilbert were trying to find common ground and opening up a conversation through common interests. Her use of “we” is interesting as it holds both Truth and Gilbert’s voice. Gilbert says, “We have said, Isabella was married to Thomas” and that “we” suggests how Truth and Gilbert decided what to write of through conversation (25). By having two voices that converse with

each other, one is invited to consider how strategic Truth was in choosing Gilbert to write the *Narrative.* In Gilbert she may have seen someone who understands her. This idea suggests that Truth and Gilbert became friends and Washington supports this by saying that, "the Northampton experience and the *Narrative* created an intimacy between them that the years did not alter…Years later, when they were old women, Olive [Gilbert] wrote Sojourner, "believe me to be your true friend and well-wisher, now and forevermore" (189). Being sole owner of her photographs, Truth had creative freedom and agency, which she valued, and I believe that by choosing Gilbert, she was choosing someone who would support this freedom. The fact that they wrote to each other "years later" signifies that they remained friends.

Gilbert's empathy not only extends towards Truth, but to her family as well:

> Who among us, located in pleasant homes, surrounded with every comfort, and so many kind and sympathizing friends, can picture to ourselves the dark and desolate state of poor old James – penniless, weak, lame, and nearly blind, as he was at the moment he found his companion was removed from him, or console him? For she never revived again, and lived only a few hours after being discovered senseless by her poor bereaved James. (14)

Truth's *Narrative* not only symbolise her life, but it is a method of reuniting her family through her recollections. I would like to suggest that Gilbert's commentary not only emphasises her distress as an abolitionist, but also supports Truth by continuing to reimagine her family, highlighting her interest in Truth's life.

Reading the collaboration as a kind of friendship and conversation between the two women drew my attention to the non-linear form of the *Narrative.* Gilbert signals her respect for Truth's voice by representing something of the fragmentary non-linear accounts of Truth's memories of her family. Truth speaks of her life from childhood to adulthood however, this conventional biographical form is interrupted by the way she remembers the family she lost throughout the *Narrative.* Her memories are repeated in fragments as she remembers her mother, later in her life, when she educates herself on religion: "Her mother, as we have already said, talked to her of God". "[A]s we have already said" signifies how Gilbert and Truth acknowledge that this was spoken about, but Gilbert includes this to emphasise how Truth's memories recur. "[W]e" also includes us by assuming that we now understand the role her mother played in her life, and it invites our memory as well. By stirring up our memories of Truth's life, Gilbert makes the *Narrative* then appear as a conversation which includes the

reader. What interests me is how Gilbert uses this role not to underline her authority but to shape the *Narrative* to read like a conversation – a form which gives insight into Truth's voice. Humez suggests why the *Narrative's* structure may confuse readers:

> There are many indications in the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* that the text was produced concurrently with the interview process, with comparatively little editing and no major rewriting. Though the lack of editorial reorganization makes for a less coherent narrative and some confusion for the reader, it is a positive boon for the historian trying to reconstruct the original interview process. (35)

Humez reads Gilbert and Truth's collaboration as an effect of little "editorial reorganization"; however, I read it as an artistic choice made by Gilbert. Gilbert does not tidy up how Truth remembers her family throughout the *Narrative* into a neat linear order of childhood, then adulthood. Instead, she emphasises the conversational shape the *Narrative* takes by making statements such as, "I had forgotten to mention, in its proper place, a very important fact…" (74). In drawing attention to how she has "forgotten" to mention a fact and by acknowledging that it is not "in its proper place", she emphasises that it was an artistic choice to shape the *Narrative* in a non-linear form. This choice captures the fragmented way Truth remembers. The fragmented structure becomes a form of collaboration.

In the first few chapters, Truth dedicates her *Narrative* to telling the story of her family. By introducing them at the beginning, she signifies what and who she holds dear to her, as well as emphasising how she only had her parents at the initial stages of her life. What is significant, though, is that she mentions the auction between narrating the deaths of her parents. The first chapter dedicated to "The Auction" (12) begins, "At length, the never-to-be-forgotten day of the terrible auction arrived" and then continues with this story four chapters later in, "The Commencement of Isabella's Trials in Life" (17). The fact that she mentions the auction, and then continues to mention it after three chapters signifies just how unlikely it is for her to forget it. Therefore, fragmentation is an important method used by Truth both to suggest loss and to imaginatively reunite her family. The narrative is not linear, allowing Truth to recall stories of her family at various points, suggesting her attempt at imagining them into her life. By recalling her family before "commenc[ing]" with the auction, she is heightening the sense of loss, but also possibly deferring the recalling of a traumatic memory suggesting her vulnerability.

Olney notes, "If *bios* is 'the course of a lifetime', and if it is already spent and past, then how is it going to be made present again...Memory recalls those earlier states – but it does so only as a function of present consciousness. We can recall what we were only from the complex perspective of what we are" (237). This is also reflective of the Romantic idea that childhood shapes the adult one becomes. These ideas are implicit in the fragmented structure of the narrative as "memories are shaped by the present moment and by the specific psychic impress of the remembering individual" (Olney 244). The incomplete form of the fragmented memories emphasises Truth's continuous yearning for the lost family.

Gilbert's respectful references to Truth's language us also striking. Humez notes that:

> Gilbert did not use dialect to convey her sense of Truth's otherness in her language. This decision makes a tremendous difference in the dignity of the portrait she drew - perhaps especially for a modern reader. Gilbert's decision may reflect a genuine respect for Truth's eloquence in speaking… (33)

Gilbert mentions "the quaint, yet fit expressions used, and the spirit-stirring animation that, at such a time, pervades all she says". Her use of, "quaint" to describe Truth is interesting as the term may be used patronisingly by those who did not find her use of language respectable. Interestingly, the *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that original meaning referred to someone being clever or wise. The negative connotations of "quaint" are denied by, "yet fit expressions", which suggests that Truth's chose her language carefully to draw in an audience

Some critics are dissatisfied with Gilbert's commentary. Nell Irvin Painter says that Gilbert, "tells the story in third person and inserts her own views" ("Introduction to *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*" xii), which I acknowledge, as Gilbert's voice is obvious in some parts of the *Narrative.* However, what she does with her commentary is to try to reflect Truth's voice and her respect for her. I read her as addressing readers to draw them into a conversation. There are instances where Gilbert uses the pronoun, "I" when she exclaims that she "makes no comments" on the choices made by slave parents, expressing her personal views (11). Gilbert poses rhetorical questions, which invite agreement, reflecting Truth's use of this strategy in her speeches and sermons. Gilbert notes: "With what feelings must slaveholders expect us to listen to their horror of amalgamation in prospect, while they are well aware that we know how calmly and quietly they contemplate of licentiousness their own wicked laws have created…?" (25). "[U]s" suggests that Gilbert assumes that readers share in the feelings towards slaveholders.

In the 1993 Vintage Classics edition of the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth,* edited by Margaret Washington, the title page includes an extract from Victorian poet Martin Farquhar Tupper's preface to *The Complete Poetical Works of Martin Farquhar Tupper* (1850), which is not included in the other editions I have come across. I assume that this quotation is Gilbert's choice, although I have not found any critical references to this extract. I believe that it is quite significant to read the quote in relation to Gilbert's choice to address readers in the *Narrative*:

> *Sweet is the virgin honey, though the wild bee store it in a reed;*
>
> *And bright the jewelled band that circlet an Ethiop's arm;*
>
> *Pure are the grains of gold in the turbid stream of the Ganges;*
>
> *And fair the living flowers that spring from the dull cold sod.*
>
> *Wherefore, thou gentle student, bend thine ear to my speech,*
>
> *For I also am as thou art; our hearts can commune together;*
>
> *To meanest matters will I stoop, for mean is the lot of mortal;*
>
> *I will rise to noblest themes, for the soul hath a heritage of glory.*

I assume that this has been left out of later editions as Gilbert's choice of the quotation may have been viewed as intrusive, distracting from the *Narrative* as representing Truth's voice. However, I would suggest that Gilbert includes this to suggest common feeling with the reader, "[f]or I also am as thou art; our hearts can commune together". By placing it at the beginning of the *Narrative,* she is inviting readers to respond with a fellow feeling to Truth's story, as a courageous transformation from the "meanest matters" of slavery to "a heritage of glory". Other slave narrators such as Harriet Jacobs in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* also include quotations from poetry (Cowper, Byron and Campbell) to argue for a common humanity.

The address to the reader is a convention of nineteenth-century novels such as *Jane Eyre,* "Reader, I married him" which assumes the reader's emotional investment in the story (474). Gilbert's use of novelistic conventions in referring to Truth as "our heroine" counters Truth's marginal status as it gives her prestige. The borrowing of novelistic conventions is also sometimes used in life narrative, as Goodman notes of eighteenth century German writer, Elisa von der Recke's autobiography, where she imagines her life as if she were the heroine of a novel: "It is probable, therefore, that the choice of epistolary form was just that — a conscious choice and if we ask the reason, the most likely is that Recke opted to imitate the epistolary

narrations of women's lives popular just then in fiction" (119). Gilbert's choice to reflect Truth as "our heroine" signals her respect for Truth and distances her from the perception of slaves and ex-slaves as marginalised. With her use of "our" she assumes that, at this point of the text, the reader has grown fond of Truth and has embarked on this journey with them through their conversation. Thereafter, an appeal is made in the *Narrative* for financial support for Truth to help her purchase a home. Reading Truth's *Narrative* through the conventions of fiction, makes us anticipate a hopeful and happy ending. Through the appeal, the reader is then invited to become a part of creating the desired happy ending Truth hoped for. Joycelyn Moody emphasises that the life narrative "fictionalizes reality: the autobiographer mediates 'real' experience through subjectivity, memory, and discourse into ordered verbal articulation; the autobiographical act, the reconstruction of any life necessities the fictionalization of that life" (Moody 15-16). Moody discusses the use of "sentimental conventions" in autobiography: "Despite the tendency in literary scholarship to read sentimentalism as limited to fictional forms, in fact, some autobiographies may be rightly said to appropriate sentimental conventions (*Sentimental Confessions* 15). This is evident in the *Narrative* when Gilbert says: "Think, dear reader, without a blush, if you can, for one moment, of a mother thus willingly…laying her own children…on the altar of slavery…But we must remember that beings capable of such sacrifices are not mothers; they are only 'things,' 'chattels,' 'property'" (25). Gilbert calls on the sympathy of "readers" and appeals to them to feel the anger and sadness endured by these mothers who were separated from their children. By drawing on "sentimental conventions", autobiography links itself to fiction, inviting the reading of the life narrative as a creative genre.

Gilbert's use of descriptive language echoes Truth's language as a form of respect, as well as suggesting their shared interest in Romantic ideas. Moreover, Morrison notes in the essay, "Abrupt Stops and Unexpected Liquidity: The Aesthetics of Romare Bearden": "The sound of a text clearly involves the musical quality of the dialogue and the language chosen to contextualize it" (181). I read Gilbert's echoing of Truth's language as carrying a "musical quality" to the *Narrative*, particularly in her descriptions of Truth's experiences with nature whilst at a camp-meeting in Northampton: "The meeting was in the open fields – the full moon shed its saddened light over all" (79). The "saddened light" is suggestive of both Truth and Gilbert's melancholic view. The use of the pathetic fallacy is interesting as Gilbert's language invites a sympathetic response to Truth, by extending her sadness to Nature itself, drawing the reader's attention to social divisions as unnatural. The shift to the first-person invites empathy for Truth in representing her fears about the wild boys who were loitering at the meeting at

which she was to speak in her own voice: "'I am the only colored person here, and on me, probably, their wicked mischief will fall first, and perhaps fatally'" (79). She then expresses some courage: "'Shall I run away and hide from the Devil? Me, a servant of the living God'", and her choice not to "hide" is emphasized by Gilbert's "open field", underlining how Truth's actions countered her fears (79). The personification of the "moon" is interesting as it is not only symbolic of light but moreover, the "moon" was a popular subject amongst nineteenth century writers and photographers. Daguerre, attempted to photograph the moon but failed to do so only to be succeeded by John Draper:

> During the winter of 1839–1840, [John] Draper took the first known photographs of the moon, and remained involved with astronomical photography thereafter. (Wisniak 216)

Romantic influence may be read in the common desire to capture the moon. Truth may not have read any of the Romantic literature of the time, but it is possible that her mother's storytelling and reference to the God that "lives in the sky" reflects a language very similar to Romanticism (12). Helen Thomas argues that in the "Prelude" William Wordsworth draws from "poetical spiritual autobiography [as it] bears a marked resemblance to the first literary articulations by black slaves" (106). Both Truth and Wordsworth personify the "moon" as Wordsworth says,

> For instantly a light upon the turf
>
> The moon stood naked in the heavens at height
>
> Immense above my head, and on the shore (Thomas 108)

The "moon" for Truth and Wordsworth, symbolises "light". I believe that Gilbert's language is influenced by her own interest in Romanticism and her conversations with Truth who often referred to nature. Her phrase, "open fields" is similar to Wordsworth's, "'To the open fields I told / A prophesy; poetic numbers came'" (Thomas 107). Washington says, "Isabella's birthplace was unmatched in haunting geophysical beauty" and it was this exposure to natural beauty, which may have drawn Truth to language which reflects nature (13). "[O]pen fields" is symbolic of a kind of freedom in contrast to the confined spaces of her early lodgings, and represents her later "open[ness]" to learning new technologies, such as photography and welcoming new audiences and friends on her journey.

There are instances of Truth's interest in nature, shared with the Romantics, within the *Narrative* and the *Book of Life*, where Truth uses metaphor to describe herself as a part of nature: "She says she has, 'budded out wid de trees, but may fall wid de autumn leaves'" (99). I find this description particularly beautiful as it creates a poetic oneness with nature. She draws on the natural environments in which she would deliver sermons, as reflections of herself. Gilbert's use of Romantic language honours Truth's appreciation of nature, symbolizing a shared aesthetic interest.

Truth's own references to nature are reminiscent of Romantic poetry, even if she was not able to read their writings:

> 'An' finally somethin' spoke out in me an' said, 'This is Jesus!' An I spoke out with all my might, an' says I, 'This is Jesus! Glory be to God! An' then the whole world grew bright, an' the trees they waved an' waved in glory, an' every little bit 'o stone on the ground shone like glass'. (107)

Truth's language is similar to that of William Wordsworth in *Tintern Abbey:*[iv]

And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns

For Wordsworth, the "presence" of the "sublime" is reflected in "light" and for Truth, it is her remembrance of "Jesus" that makes her believe that her "world grew bright". This emphasises how the Romantic period can be read as one built on a shared feeling for nature as representing the energy of the good. Gilbert and Truth's concern to represent childhood as a space of innocence disrupted by slavery may also be compared to Romantic ideas of childhood.

Samuel T. Coleridge speaks of childhood in this light in "Frost at Midnight":

"Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side,

whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm"

This suggests children as representations of peace and innocence. He continues by saying:

But *thou*, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze

By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags

Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,

Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores.

Before this line Coleridge declares how he grew up in this city but "saw nought lovely" only to hope for the child to explore and "wander…lakes and sandy shores…", and this reflects what Cunningham says of the Romantic ideas that "qualities of childhood, if they could be preserved into adulthood, [that] might help redeem the adult world" (72). Truth should be read together with the works of Romantic poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge for their feelings towards nature and presumably children.

Therefore, at first reading, I was drawn to the poetic description made by Gilbert of Truth sitting beneath, "the sparkling vault of heaven" (12) – a description of how her mother told stories to her children while sitting outside. The use of metaphor reflects a shared interest in figurative language. Truth's mother's memory may be associated with nature and thus nature becomes a symbol of her family and her solace throughout the *Narrative.*

As I will go on to demonstrate, her interest in nature and her descriptive abilities stem from childhood. Childhood is central to Romantic writers such as William Blake and William Wordsworth; however, their views on it differ:

> According to Blake, the conception of childhood should be conceded within the visionary and symbolic nature of his poetry, so childhood is timeless and has no limits, according to him the child's innocence can be within man even when he grows up. But according to Wordsworth, childhood is a distant memory of a kind of paradise that is lost. (Saleem 289)

I would like to propose that what Truth does with her childhood in her *Narrative,* reflects both these Romantic notions. She seems to reflect Wordsworth's notion that, "childhood is a distant memory of a kind of paradise lost" as she reimagines her lost mother into her *Narrative.* However, Truth's voice also lends itself to Blake's idea that "childhood is timeless", in her responses to nature. Her memories become less "distant" as she reimagines them into her present life. Childhood memory is present throughout the *Narrative:*

> Isabella and Peter, her youngest brother, remained with their parents…After [the death of Charles Ardinburgh], she was often surprised to find her mother in tears; and when, in her simplicity, she inquired, 'Mau-mau, what makes you cry?' she would answer, 'Oh, my child, I am thinking of your brothers and sisters that have been sold away from me.' (11)

Truth and her mother could not forget her siblings. I would like to suggest that as much as the memories may have pained them, they chose not to disregard them. Gilbert's representation works with Truth's choices to hold her family in her memory and this is suggested in the words "surprised" and "simplicity' – terms reflecting childhood innocence. Gilbert's attempts are also evident in her use of reported speech to create a sense of immediacy.

Gilbert also echoes Truth's use of repetition to emphasise Truth's role as a poetic orator:

> The meeting was in the open fields. All who have ever heard her sing this hymn will probably remember it as long as they remember her. The hymn, the tune, the style, are each too closely associated with to be easily separated from herself, and when sung in one of her most animated moods, in the open air, with the utmost strength of her most powerful voice, must have been truly thrilling. (79-80)

The word, "open" is repeated and this draws one's attention to Truth's preference for natural environments in contrast to confined spaces. The word, "animated" appears again and its repetition, as well as its representation of movement, stresses Truth's dynamic and vibrant personality. However, repetition does not only act as a technique for emphasis; I believe that it symbolizes memory and remembering as well. Truth often returns to memories of her mother who would: "talk to them of the only Being that could effectually aid or protect them" at the beginning of the *Narrative* (12). Later in the *Narrative,* she recalls her mother's talks: "In these hours of extremity, she did not forget the instructions of her mother, to go to God in all her trial…" signifying how her mother's conversations and lessons followed her throughout her life (18). This is reflective of the importance of repetition in the *Narrative,* used by Truth to remember, and by Gilbert to acknowledge Truth's memory. Repetition is also symbolic of "hymn" and "tune" and Truth's role as an itinerant preacher who was known for combining her talks with song. It is as if the paragraph, through its use of musical language and repetition, reflects the sounds it speaks of. Truth's audiences were excited by her presence and voice, and I believe that Gilbert acknowledges this in her language choices.

There are moments where Gilbert's commentary is clearly highlighted as hers and distinct from Truth's. However, there are also moments where Gilbert echoes Truth's voice as she reflects Truth's opinions and personality in her writing. This occurs when Gilbert describes Truth's experience of learning about Jesus: "[h]er heart was now full of joy and gladness, as it had been of terror, and at one time of despair. In the light of her great happiness, the world was clad in new beauty, the very air sparked with diamonds, and was redolent of heaven" (46). Gilbert's use of, "sparked with diamonds, and …heaven" reflects her earlier use of "sparkling vault of heaven". This collaboration, I believe, suggests how their two voices may have met. However, it may also suggest that Gilbert was aware of the criticism and her echoes then become a sign of respect towards Truth. In the quote, the reference to "heaven" is similar to the description, "sparkling vault of heaven" and this metaphoric voice becomes familiar.

At times Gilbert's representation of Truth seems to suggest a kind of free indirect style: "It was a lonely spot, and chosen by her for its beauty, its retirement, and because she thought that there, in the noise of those waters, she could speak louder to God, without being overheard by any who might pass that way" (40-41). Dorrit Cohn describes free indirect style as: "…the technique for rendering a character's thought in his own idiom while maintaining the third person reference" (100). I feel Truth's voice is present in this sentence, particularly in "in the noise of those waters…" which sounds so poetic and so akin to how Truth spoke and sang. What we get from this form of narration is a third person view, but also insight into the thoughts of Truth, instilling within us a sense of empathy. This narrative style also becomes significant in the context of the *Narrative* because it suggests a blending of two voices emphasising the conversation between Truth and Gilbert. When considering this merging of voices, I am reminded of Susan Stanford-Friedman's argument about women's life narratives: "In taking the power of words, of representation, into their own hands, women project onto history an identity that is not purely individualistic. Nor is it purely collective. Instead, this new identity merges the shared and unique" (40). Friedman's view raises questions about the conventional view of autobiography reflected in Philippe Lejeune's "Autobiographical Pact":

> [T]he notion of a contract between author and reader in which autobiographies explicitly commit themselves not to some impossible historical exactitude but rather the sincere effort to come to terms with and understand their own lives. The formal mark of this commitment to autobiographical discourse is the identity posited among author, narrator, and protagonist, who share the same name. (cited in Eakin 24)

The autobiographical pact suggests that a life story can only be trusted when the one who writes is the person who experienced the life. However, I believe that in *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, the voices of Truth and Gilbert work collaboratively, which offers a new way to read the autobiographical pact. Instead of one person, or the idea that the "author, narrator, and protagonist…share the same name", Truth welcomed another voice into her *Narrative* rejecting convention, and also emphasising the complexities of the genre. Thus, instead of reading Gilbert's voice as an attempt to overpower Truth and present her own opinions, I consider a marrying of the two voices by Gilbert as a result of spending much time with Truth, but even more so, purposefully, to honour Truth's voice. The pact speaks of a "contract" and a kind of trust and even though I was introduced to two voices, my belief in Truth was not diminished.

Anna P Craig notes the importance of interaction with others in the making of identity and argues that the story of a life is therefore a kind of biography:

> Each person is, therefore, enculturated and socialized to become a participant in Life [We use 'Life' as a term of art to focus our task on the concrete, historical person (and away from abstracted notions such as beings or Being)] and as such, storied by others. This insight leads us to suggest…that our narrative identities are best conceived of as biographies rather than merely stories or autobiographies, because our life-stories are crucially dependent on others: the worlds, languages, people and other living and non-living creatures which make up the contexts of our lives. (17)

The idea that, "our life-stories are crucially dependent on others" invites me to consider just how important Gilbert was in the creation of this *Narrative* and, moreover, that Truth did not mind having her edit it. Truth welcomed trends and communities into her life, and I think that it is important to acknowledge that she was aware that she engaged with "other living and non-living creatures", and still maintained her individuality. I note that Gilbert, "referred more than once to the power of [Truth's] words". This emphasises how Gilbert not only respected Truth as an abolitionist but also as a writer and orator. This respect is also evident in her attempts to frame the *Narrative* as a form of conversation with Truth. On this basis, I would like to propose that the *Narrative* introduces an adaptation of autobiography and biography creating a hybrid version of the genres. Moody speaks of Truth's *Narrative* as a hybrid form: "The publication in 1850 of the autobiography of Sojourner Truth marks the blending of black women's dictated slave narratives with the tradition of black women's spiritual narrative" and goes on to describe

other narratives which adopt the same form (120). However, she does not look at the role the editor has in shaping the genre.

Olive Gilbert's role as editor was not unique to her. It was a role shared by other abolitionist females as well. I want to look at Gilbert in comparison with Lydia Maria Child, editor of Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl.* Unlike Gilbert, Child was a published author and renowned editor. However, they shared a similar vision of the narratives they were editing by not wanting to change the voice of the writer. Jean Yellin notes: "Child wrote that she had 'abridged, and struck out superfluous words sometimes [in *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*], but I don't think I altered fifty words in the whole volume'" (Yellin 141). Gilbert has not been recorded as having made any comments on the *Narrative;* however, her feelings on her editing are clear in her reference to her anxiety about writing about Truth. Child does not speak of Jacobs' presence like Gilbert does of Truth but by not wanting to overpower Jacob's voice she, is suggesting her respect, like Gilbert. As much as these editors may have attempted to distance their voices from the narratives, their views played a role in the shape of the final works. Yellin says that, "Child reconfigured Jacobs' book by advising that its final chapters…be omitted…[F]ollowing her suggestion, Jacobs restored the manuscript to its original shape" (141). This might suggest tensions between the idea of collaboration and the authoritative role of an editor.

Critics seem to focus on the tensions between writer and editor and I do not want to dismiss this; however, I want to pay attention to how the friendship between these figures is quite significant. Harriet Jacobs and Lydia Maria Child shared a friendship, but Jacobs did experience anxieties with Child as the editor. Child's respect for Jacobs is evident in: "Child explained that she was willing to help Jacobs "because she tells her story in a very intelligent, spirited manner" (140). However, the tension is suggested by Jacobs, when she was not able to meet with her editor before publishing her narrative:

> 'I know that Mrs Child Will strive to do the best she can more than I can ever repay but I ought to have been there that we could have consulted together—and compared our views—although I know that hers are superior to mine yet we could have marked her great Ideas and my small ones together.' (142)

Elizabeth Keckley's *Behind the Scenes: Four Years in the White House* (1868), reflects on her early life as a slave and her later career as dressmaker to Abraham Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd Lincoln. Keckley's narrative provoked hostile responses from reviewers focusing on her

representation of her relationship with Mrs Lincoln. As Frances Smith Foster notes in her introduction to Keckley's narrative, there was an assumption that the work of slave narrators was either written for them or mostly shaped by an editor:

> Nineteenth- century reviewers focused upon the *Four Years in the White House*, made Mary Todd Lincoln its subject, and labelled Keckley as an ignorant or vengeful informant who could not, or did not, write the book herself…the popular assumption was that Elizabeth Keckley required more than the normal editorial help that publishers regularly afforded their clients. (lx)

If these assumptions were made about those slaves who wrote their own narratives, one can only imagine how much greater the assumption was that Gilbert was an intrusive editor in the case of Truth who could not read and write.

Gilbert as editor and author is interesting as she works by paying attention to the tensions and ambivalences of this role. She understands that authority comes with authorship; however, instead of using this role intrusively, she uses her authority to make the artistic choice to read the *Narrative* as a conversational piece. Gilbert does refer to herself as "the writer", and I suggest that the non-linear form of the *Narrative*, with its repetitions and echoes of Truth's language, represents Gilbert's attempts to address these tensions (24). What Gilbert and Truth did with the *Narrative* is similar to what Toni Morrison says about writing as a "[c]raft that appears solitary but needs another for its completion" (*The Dancing Mind* 14). She begins the lecture by speaking of the relationship between writer and reader: "The peace I am thinking of is the dance of an open mind when it engages another equally open one" (7). This refers to the writer and reader, yet I am extending it to this form of life narrative which includes the voice of an editor. If Gilbert's "mind" was not as "equally open" to Truth's, the *Narrative* would not read as the conversation I read it to be. Their equal exchange emphasises Gilbert's respect, but it also suggests how these women found each other interesting and how Gilbert as editor is a choice Truth made – to speak about her life with someone she trusts.

Although Gilbert insists that her role as editor is to help Truth narrate her own story, it is interesting that she begins the *Narrative* with the words "The subject of this biography, Sojourner Truth" suggesting that she also sees herself as Truth's biographer. The conventional view of the biographer as having power over the subject is noted by Gilbert, but she attempts to challenge this by working with Truth collaboratively. Richard Holmes offers a different understanding of biography, not as that where the author has power over the life, but instead

as a collaboration: “This leads me to suppose that biography is something else again: ‘a handshake’. A handshake across time, but also across cultures, across beliefs, across disciplines, across genders, and across ways of life. It is a simple act of complex friendship” (17). This idea of the “‘handshake’” is interesting when looking at Truth and Gilbert’s friendship. These women are of the same “time”; however, they do meet “across disciplines…across ways of life” and defy being from opposing classes to form what Holmes suggests is a “complex friendship”. I like the idea that this is the way “biography” works – as a collaboration between the life which is the subject of autobiography, and a “friend”. “‘[H]andshake’” suggests a meeting of two people, an acknowledgement of one another with the hope of getting to know one another. The “biography” allows for this meeting, but the feelings of readers when reading a life, the closeness we begin to feel to that life, are feelings that the biographer must experience as well. I would like to then consider that through Gilbert and Truth’s collaboration, by inviting readers in, we become participants in the “‘handshake across time’”. This inclusion is suggested in: “Think, dear reader…” (25). By addressing the “reader” and by asking us to “think”, we are invited to join the conversation, to consider the events, to be a part of the discussion, and to draw on our own ideas as well.

CHAPTER TWO: PICTURING SOJOURNER TRUTH

When I first saw the photographic portraits of Sojourner Truth, I was intrigued by the story they told. The portraits I came across were in Nell Irvin Painter's, *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol* (1996), whereas the various editions of the *Narrative* itself include a range of portraits as frontispieces and may include other portraits as well. *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* gave me insight into the language and charm of the acclaimed preacher. The portraits offered another side of Truth. In her glance I saw a woman confident in this new technology – a glance so piercing as if she is welcoming spectators to read her. I discovered her interest in dress and was deeply fascinated by the way she played with fabric. I believe that by choosing various ways to represent herself, she is inviting a readership to understand that she had many interests and passions. In this chapter I will look at nineteenth century and contemporary debates about whether photography is a document or an art form. I argue that Truth considered the daguerreotype to have qualities of both the document and an art form. I have chosen to explore two portraits of Truth and will propose that the photographs should be read closely, alongside the *Narrative* for a consideration of why she chose both forms to represent herself. I will refer to them as photograph A, a carte de visite which was a small photograph that could be shared and the other as photograph B. The photographs allowed for Truth to practice her agency and I suggest that she worked collaboratively with the photographer and that her chosen props and dress, represent her heritage and family, and signify her individuality and beliefs. I believe that Truth saw photography as a form which connected her to other people. The sharing underlines just how much Truth sought connection. She was open to the world seeing her, she was ready to be read both in her *Narrative* and portraits, and she was confident in how she chose to represent herself.

A common debate about photography and art is the question of a distinction between the two. *The London Quarterly Review of 1857* speaks of photography as a new technology, which may not be an art form, but still has the ability to share knowledge:

> [Photography] is made for the present age, in which the desire for art resides in a small minority, but the craving, or rather necessity for cheap, prompt, and torrent facts in the public at large. Photography is the purveyor of such knowledge to the world. She is the sworn witness of everything presented to her view. (13)

"[S]worn witness", suggests that photographs are more useful as documentary than art. Some nineteenth century critics viewed it as more akin to art than document. Bates Lowry and Isabel

Barrett Lowry note, “When Francois Arago, French scientist and champion of Daguerre, formally announced the invention of the daguerreotype to the world in 1839, he described the new creation as a ‘canvas’” (14). Considering it as a “‘canvas’”, one is drawn to look at photography not only as that which can be interpreted like art, but that which gives people the freedom to create portrayals of themselves. Daguerre notes of his work: “…[the] sharpness of the image, delicate gradation of the tones, and above all, the perfection of the details” (Quoted in Batchen 143). “[D]elicate gradation of tones” draws attention to the different ways light works in the image and may be read alongside tone as a literary device, which suggests mood. As I go on to argue, Truth saw in the daguerreotype the possibility for conveying feeling and eliciting a reaction from an audience.

This debate continued into the twentieth century where some seemed still to dismiss the idea of photographs as having artistic qualities. Dant and Gilloch state that because of its accuracy, photography should be viewed as a document: “The most obvious way of treating the photograph is as a document of reality, one that accurately captures the physical presence of people, buildings, objects and nature” (5). The “accuracy” reflects how some viewers sought the truth from photographs. The word “document” suggests the sharing of information and even commercialisation – a fact that Truth may have been familiar with as she chose photography as a medium through which to make money. In photograph A, Truth notes at the bottom, “I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance” a clear indication of how she aims to share her portraits by selling her cartes de visite at lectures and sermons, in order to support herself financially. Margaret Washington argues that Truth saw the photographs as a medium which would help represent her: “Indeed, her *Narrative*, photographs, songs, and press accounts represent autobiography, biography, and her impact on the times. Moreover, her compilations represent attempts to have some control over her own representations” (301). Maurice O. Wallace and Shawn Michelle Smith note that what the photograph did was grant ex-slaves like Sojourner Truth an opportunity to express who they were, their beliefs and ambitions, through a visual medium:

> The brisk commercialization of the daguerreotype in 1839, and the carte de visite in 1861, wrought vast changes in the performance of identities and the circulation of racial knowledges. Photography not only revolutionized visual representation but made it available to those previously cut off from its more

> bourgeois expressions in painting and sculpture, and Americans of all stripes were swept up by the democratizing promise of the new technology. (3)

My argument is that her dynamic use of language is reflected in how she styles her portraits. Her sermons kept audiences entranced, moved, changed by her oral abilities and I believe that feeling of movement and vitality is present in how each of her portraits are different, each telling a different story.

Unlike most critics, Painter, Washington and Augusta Rohrbach do not only focus on the *Narrative* but pay attention to the photographs as well. Margaret Washington does not focus on a specific image but rather speaks of Truth's motive behind taking the images and her desire to represent herself in multiple ways. However, to date, I have not come across work which reads the language of the *Narrative* alongside the photographs. I suggest how reading the image alongside the text allows for a more complex reading of Truth. Washington does not consider Painter's argument on Truth's photographs, which is interesting as Painter's work was published in 1996, where as Washington's in 2009. In Painter's biography, she makes the argument that the photographs of Truth represent her as a middle-class and conservative figure, in order to appeal to a certain readership. Washington does not acknowledge this, instead she offers a more complex reading of the photographs drawing attention to Truth's agency. I will look at the similarities and differences in their readings and explore what they have not considered. Washington mentions how Truth opted for different settings and styles for different images, to signify her wanting to be viewed not merely from one perspective:

> As soon as she was able, she had herself photographed in Battle Creek. In one photo, she sits with a photo of a young man (James about to go to war) in her lap. In another, she stands tall and straight, but relaxed, wearing travel clothes, work apron and turban. (300)

"[S]he had herself photographed" implies Truth's agency in the photographic process. The "photo of the young man", who is her grandson, also emphasises how Truth's props were specific to her life narrative. Truth's cartes de visite were sold at lectures and when she preached. Painter draws attention to women's rights activist, Susan B. Anthony who marketed the photographs by drawing on empathy and that the audience would feel pity towards Truth:

> Anthony urged her audience, that Truth…[was] their parent [and asked] would they, in such circumstances, continue to temporize over demands for the irrevocable abolition of slavery? Her resolutions passed immediately and

> unanimously, and the money was forthcoming. Ordinarily, however, the message in Truth's photos was far more individual than propagandistic. (187)

Washington states that Truth knew her "persona was being appropriated" and suggests that she may have chosen these different kinds of representation to counter the limitations of a fixed image, and the loss of control this suggests (391).

The studio is an interesting space to be photographed in and neither Washington nor Painter pays close attention to it. I want to read it as a space shaped by conventions, but also as a space where Truth represented her individuality and desires. Truth's relationship with her setting and background is evident in how both the trends of the time and her personal interests are represented within the captured studio space. I find reader-response theories useful in this regard. For Wolfgang Iser:

> the reader must act as co-creator of the work by supplying that portion of it which is not written but only implied. The "concretization" of a text in any particular instance requires that the reader's imagination come into play. Each reader fills in the unwritten portions of the text, its "gaps" or areas of "indeterminacy," in his own way." (Tompkins xv)

The photograph read alongside the text invites readers to "co-create [the] work by supplying that portion of it which is not written but only implied" and I feel as if Truth, through her daguerreotypes, invites viewers to read her props as "impl[ying]" complex connections.

I argue that a collaboration occurred between Truth and her photographer. Lowry and Lowry describe the studio in which in the first portrait daguerreotypes were taken:

> Essentially these were the same goals put forth for the portrait painter, but the daguerreotypist had to surmount yet another unique barrier. Unlike the brush, the camera was not a flatterer… The daguerreotypists had to seek other ways to satisfy reluctant sitters, such as placing them before painted views of lovely landscapes or using lofty columns and elaborate drapery, as well as personal objects to suggest a sitter's respectable standing in society. (48)

I acknowledge that Truth's setting and props appear to have been influenced by the trends of the time as she sits alongside "objects" assigned by "daguerreotypists", suggesting that they did indeed direct the process. However, some of the props evident in Truth's portraits are "personal objects" symbolic of a life she desired, and representative of her interests. There

seems to have been a universal yearning amongst oppressed people, wanting to portray themselves in a dignified manner. Santu Mofokeng reads the studio space as portraying such desires in *The Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890 – 1950.* There are interesting similarities between Truth's images and that of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century black South Africans in the *Album,* who do not simply wear colonial attire, but draw on it to create new styles. Mofokeng embarked on an interesting task of gathering these portraits, which portrayed "black working – and middle – class families" dressed in formal attire and situated in a space consisting of props (Mofokeng 157). These images portray the aspirations of these families, similarly to how Truth presented her ambitions in her portraits. Mofokeng states:

> Some of them may be fiction, a creation of the artist insofar as the setting, the props, the clothing or pose are concerned. Nonetheless there is no evidence of coercion. When we look at them, we believe them, for they tell us a little about how these people imagined themselves, for they have made them their own. They belong and circulate in the private domain. That is the position they occupied in the realm of the visual, in the nineteenth century. It should be pointed out that from the turn of this century and even earlier there were many Black Africans who spurned, questioned, or challenged the government's racist policies…The images depicted here reflect their sensibilities, aspirations and sense of self. (157)

The use of "coercion" reflects threats and force and these methods were common in the oppressive system of the time. However, these subjects do not appear to be forced into the role suggested in these portraits; instead they seem to be in control of the narrative the photograph tells. Mofokeng's selected images and Truth's daguerreotypes seem to have similar domestic settings. This similarity makes me consider that the photographer may have had a role in making suggestions in order to help the subjects with their portrayal, yet it was up to them to decide on what suggestions would suit them. The studio then became a space where they could rewrite their narrative. Mofokeng's reference to "[F]iction" invites one to consider that it is an "imagined" life being portrayed, however, it also invites spectators to read the portraits more closely. To make oneself a subject in a portrait, to dress and locate oneself in a role, represents creativity and rebellion. I believe that by becoming an active participant in the making of a photograph, these subjects are inviting spectators to see who they aspired to be; to understand them as creative beings with agency – qualities slaves such as Truth were not afforded the freedom to explore.

The “colonial” and “English” dress styles are quite apparent throughout the album and what interests me is how these garments represented “a sense of self” because the subjects photographed “made them their own”. In the attached Photograph C, the woman, Maria Letispa wears a Victorian style outfit, made up of a cotton Victorian high neck blouse, and an A-line black skirt, yet on her head, sits quite eloquently, a turban. The direct gaze with the camera and straight posture allow for her to be read as dignified, respectable and courageous in her glance. Letispa is interesting to me because of how she combines European dress with the African turban. A connection is made between two continents and, more specifically, between the colonial European powers and the African. In this photograph, Letispa is not creating a dichotomy between the two cultures; instead she is suggesting that she has the agency to adopt and adapt clothing styles and moreover that, through this medium, she has the freedom to practice her creativity through her creation of the link between Europe and Africa. When I see this image, I see a woman brimming with freedom and power and representing this through her defiance of conventional Victorian wear, through the inclusion of African dress. This is similar to how Truth, in her photographs A and B, does not entirely depict one kind of dress, but rather her various influences, suggesting how she made her vision and her style her own.

Photograph C: Ouma Maria Letispa, nee van der Merwe with her daughter Minkie. Santu Mofokeng, The Black Photo Album/Look at Me: 1890–1950, 1997.

Through his presentation of these portraits what Mofokeng was doing is reacting against the common reading of African people: "State-sponsored publications of the time, like the tourist brochure *Native Life in South Africa* had seemed intent on representing black people as resistant to change, perpetually locked into old rural and tribal cultures" (Dodd 54). These portraits argue that African families were not "resistant to change" but rather capable of reimagining themselves and presenting their aspirations and sense of identity, through dress. Dodd adds, "Mofokeng wanted to recover a different sense of the past, to show the complex modernity of black family life" (54). What Mofokeng is doing is responding to aspects of the photograph which "impl[y]" ways of reading which resist the idea of the passive native. I would like to extend Mofokeng's reading by pointing to the word "recover" as symbolic of what this dress sense signified. To "recover" is to heal, and to regain what has been lost, and this is important as the prefix "re" suggests a sense of bringing the past into the present. It suggests that what Mofokeng may have intended to do, was to "[co-create]" what was lost through colonial readings; the subject's sense of identity. This reading influences my analysis of Truth's portraits for an aesthetics of self-representation, as a way in which to emphasise her identity and suggest her agency through the act of choosing how to look, what to wear and what influences to draw on.

Nell Irvin Painter analyses Truth's style in both her 1864 portrait, a carte-de-visite - which I will refer to as photograph A and one of an unknown format, taken during the 1860s, which I will refer to as photograph B. She appears to view photography as a form of representation in her statement that Truth is not depicting her "real self" but rather a version of herself (187). Painter argues that Truth was influenced by her peers, however, she does not deny the fact that Truth's portraits were unique to her, even if they were guided and stylized. Painter says, "Truth's images may appear to be unmediated, the essence of her real self, but in fact they were carefully arranged" (187). She reads the photographs as mediated according to the "conventions of celebrity portraiture" (196). However, she does not explore what these "convention[s]" are. I would like to explore how Truth appears conventional yet remains unique. According to Lowry and Lowry, the daguerreotype is not as controlled by the photographer, as paintings are by the painter:

> The controlling hand of the artist, always evident when viewing a drawing or painting, no longer dominates the experience of seeing the visual image produced by the daguerreotype. (xiii)

This point allows for attention to the relationship between photographer and subject, allowing for a more complex reading of the daguerreotypes. However, I do not believe that the photographer has a complete lack of control, instead they may act as directors. I acknowledge the photographer's role and knowledge; and I will read the portraits as Truth representing herself and her aspirations, through a partnership with the photographer in these portraits. Painter suggests that Truth did not solely take these photographs for the money: "Had Truth's carte-de-visite served only to wring money from abolitionists, she might have posed in settings or costumes reminiscent of her enslavement…Truth chose none of these" (186). The photographer may have played a role in styling the portrait to appeal to a market that would buy it, but her role still enhanced the individualistic nature of it.

Sojourner Truth's portraits are reminiscent of moments within her *Narrative.* Her stylisation in the photographs reflect the descriptions in the text which represent fragments of her identity. The domestic props in her portraits represent her desire for a home. The domestic setting in Photograph A is a reminder of the moment in the *Narrative* where Truth works at the Northampton Association and speaks of her yearning for a home: "She has now set her heart upon having a little home of her own, even at this late hour of life, where she may feel a greater freedom than she can in the house of another, and where she can repose a little, after her day of action charities" (83). In the photograph, the domestic setting then may be guided by both the photographer and Truth. Irene Cieraad, discussing seventeenth century paintings, makes the point that, "In the eyes of nineteenth century beholders the life-like portrayal of Dutch domestic scenes reflected the nostalgic domesticity and peaceful family life they longed for" (3). She does not speak of this imagery in photography, but I would like to extend the point to this genre and suggest that the same "long[ing]" is suggested in the domestic setting in both Photograph A and B. I became curious about these seventeenth century paintings spoken of by Cieraad and, through my research, discovered that many of these paintings consisted of mainly women, not only in a domestic space, but portrayed busy with activities or surrounded by family. I found this interesting in comparison with Truth's nineteenth century photographs because even though seated similarly at a table, she stares directly at the camera while sitting still, unlike the busy activities present in the paintings where many of them portray servants at work. Excited by what the direct gaze could mean in a domestic photograph, I came across Johannes Vermeer's *A Lady Writing* (1665) (attached in the appendix as figure D), a painting similar to Truth's photograph A in the direct gaze of Vermeer's sitter. This is unusual when compared to the conventional distant looks in other seventeenth century portraits. Both women

seem to be declaring something. The *Lady* sits writing, and Truth is seated with yarn in her hand. There is a stillness in her posture and her holding of the yarn does not reflect any form of busyness; she sits with it, as if she is enjoying a restful moment. Painter states that, "Truth did knit, but in her photographs, she holds yarn in one hand, so that it conveys a motherly womanliness central to her self-fashioning" (196). Also, the stillness alongside the direct gaze becomes a powerful stance. She desires the comfort of space instead of working as a servant within it.

I believe that there may have been an understanding between Truth and her photographer, as the daguerreotype required lengthy exposure times. Clarke Graham says:

> In portrait photography (and the daguerreotype became a major form for a new kind of domestic portraiture) the subject had to be 'held' still, sometimes with special rests to aid posture. The result was often a stylized series of positions and attitudes in which the act of being photographed superseded the experience of being photographed. Portraits reflected the method not the medium. (15)

Thus, one understands the nineteenth century studio space to be one that consisted of both a patient photographer and subject. The "special rests to aid posture" could be seen in the form of the table and chair in photograph A and B. Sylvia Wolf provides insight into what a nineteenth-century portrait entailed and how the studio was set up:

> In a style adopted from portrait painting, sitters for a carte-de-visite portrait wore their best clothes and were posed turned slightly to the side. Cameras were placed at a distance and lighting was spread evenly to clarify details in the sitters' features and dress. The result was a small and descriptive formal portrait. (32)

Therefore, when reading Truth's choice of attire, one can understand why Painter believed her to be influenced by others as it was common that, in the portraits of the time, sitters wanted to appear respectable. Moreover, Truth fits the convention as she appears seated and "turned slightly to the side". The carte de visite was a popular medium for its small size and ability to be shared and the studio where the cartes were taken were similar to one another. Stephen Burstow speaks of the intimacy created by the carte de visite:

> The importance of this cultivation of 'personal interiority' can be seen in a trope of portrait poses where the sitter is shown reading, doing embroidery, or

> contemplating an artwork or flower arrangement. Although the settings for most carte portraits make reference to the domestic parlour, these portraits of interiority create a heightened sense of intimacy for the viewer as the subject is observed engaging in a private activity, rather than presenting themselves to the camera. (Burstow 8)

Burstow speaks of the conventional "domestic parlour" yet speaks of "'personal interiority'" as the reason behind why these portraits were taken. I find this interesting as Truth's setting combined the domestic aesthetic with a kind of intimacy. However, as much as she draws on convention, Truth introduces a different method in photograph B, by placing her grandson's portrait on her lap. I find it significant that she represents her longing for her family, also acknowledging how much a part of the story they are. Photograph B, with her grandson's image on her lap is not analysed by Painter. I would like to look at it as reminiscent of the scene in the *Narrative* when Truth obtains freedom for her son and, after he chooses to leave, he sends her letters affirming his well-being. After his last letter, the editor adds:

> Since the date of the last letter, Isabella has heard no tidings from her long-absent son, though ardently does her mother's heart long for such tidings, as her thoughts follow him around the world…His letters are inserted [in the *Narrative*] for preservation, in case they prove the last she ever hears from him in this world. (54)

Thus, when reading the *Narrative* and the above statement, one is invited to experience the longing Truth had for the children she lost. By having her grandson's photograph on her lap, Truth may read the image as emphasising her pride in her family. However, once reading the above, alongside photograph B, one begins to understand how important preservation and remembering was to Truth. Preserving the letters as well as getting photographs taken is symbolic of Truth's response to all that she has lost by trying to keep close to her what she can. Interestingly, she is not holding on to the photograph but rather letting it lay freely on her lap. This may be read as signalling an attempt at holding on to her family. Her not holding on to the picture physically may suggest that her family is no longer held bondage. With her arms bent, and her fingers subtly pointing towards the picture, one reads Truth as stating who her family is, but also suggesting how she was never able to hold on to them. Gilbert's says, "Sojourner had known the joys of motherhood – brief joys, for she had been cruelly separated from her babes..." (130). One then considers the significance of the lap and how it is

representative of not only motherhood but also of the "brief joys" and playfulness she was denied. More so, placing someone on one's lap is an act associated with family, specifically parents and grandparents. This may suggest how she remembers and honours her entire lineage, from her parents to her grandchildren and the ones still to come. I have yet to find any other daguerreotypes adopting the similar method of placing another image within the photograph. I would like to suggest that Truth is presenting her own stylisation in doing so. The photograph on her lap invites me to "[co-create]" the stories "[implied]" by the photograph. Griebling et.al discusses photography as a mode of storytelling: "Photography can be extremely effective in encouraging storytelling and the interpretation of photographs and involves what Wright calls both "looking at" and "looking behind" the picture" (17). This inclusion of her family reminds me of Maria Letispa, in photograph C, and how she captured herself with her daughter, Mienkie. However, what is significant and noted by Painter is that Truth could have opted to appear as a representative of an enslaved past. She could have symbolically used props of bondage and a scene reminiscent of her oppressed past and yet she did not. Instead, she included her interests in the domestic space and a desire to have a space of her own.

In photograph E we see Truth's carpet bag which is also represented in her statue in Marshall College, UC San Diego (ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/). I read the carpet bag, held closely to her side, as symbolic of her desire for freedom. Margaret Washington speaks of her bag: "On March 1, 1832, Isabella dictated a record of her religious conversion. She carried this note in her carpetbag throughout her life, and it was preserved in a museum in Lansing, Michigan (69)". I am interested in the design and manufacturing of the carpet bag as made up of discarded peices of material to create one functional item. Edward Blanchard, in his 1847 travel guidebook, speaks of the carpet bag in the most fascinating way:

> If you want anything more than what can be conveniently dropped into your coat pocket, take a carpet bag. There is a popular tradition that a carpet bag will hold anything: we believe it. It is the very encyclopedia of light articles, possessing, like a London Omnibus, the algebraic property of containing within itself an unknown quantity…Into this expansive receptacle cram everything you want to take, from a top-coat to a toothbrush and you have always a portable wardrobe at your disposal, that may at any time be swung from your hand, free from the extortionate grasp of tavern-porters. (11-12)

What intrigues me the most is the simile he creates of the "carpet bag" being like the "encyclopedia" – a book brimming with information. The vastness of knowledge within an "encyclopedia" may also symbolize a sense of being unlimited. I read the bag as metaphor of Truth's need for unlimited freedom as a sojourner. There are different ways of reading the carpet bag. Some may see it as a political expression. Andrew Levy speaks of the carpet bag as a symbol of political corruption in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn:* "[Twain] took out references to carpet-bags, the suitcases that were by 1884 linked to political corruption, when they were near Huck, and added them when they were near the King and the Duke, the two con men who take over the middle section of the book" (137). However, others may see it as quite valuable, as George Eliot refers to her carpet bag as that which she chooses to hold on to as she travels: "I am determined to sell everything I possess except a portmanteau and carpet-bag and the necessary contents and be a foreigner on earth for ever more" (78). Here, the carpet bag becomes a metaphor for home, an object which also allows for freedom of movement. However, her statement that she will "be a foreigner on earth for ever more" is interesting in suggesting a similar kind of fluid community to Truth's idea[v]. A bag made of fragments, then becomes a metaphor for travel and freedom – denying all constraints but holding what is valuable. Interestingly, the word *metaphor* originates from the fifteenth century French word, *Metaphore* which means to transfer (Merriam Webster *merriam-webster.com*). It is also interesting to note that George Puttenham refers to metaphor as a "figure of transport" (262). The carpet bag then becomes a reflection of metaphor itself – as a means of "transport" and transformation. Truth's creation of community is symbolic of disparate people brought together and of her attempts to create a sense of belonging through bringing together different fragments of memory and experience. The remnants which make up the carpet bag may be read as symbolic of slavery and slaves who were displaced.

Self-hood was extremely important to Truth. I would suggest that once she made the choice to be photographed, she was willing to learn of the process as well as ready to direct it in a manner to her liking. For this reason, I argue that that Truth's portraits were a combined effort between her and a photographer who had knowledge of the studio conventions. I believe that they worked together to develop images that she felt would be able to represent her appropriately. Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby suggests that "In all her seated portraits, Truth carefully chose the items she held in her lap" (5). This emphasises how photography allowed for her to express her agency. However, what is significant is that "she had a copyright filed in her name for her cartes de visite in 1864 [photograph A], which was unprecedented for a

portrait sitter: usually copyrights were filed in the name of the photographer. The copyright appeared on the backs of her portraits; at the same time, she added her name and a caption to the front" (Grigsby 3). Rohrbach speaks of this as granting Truth agency and a sense of control: "Truth subverted this system informally by printing her slogan on the front of the cartes de visite, thus calling attention to her ownership" (20). This insistence on her power is echoed in her physical representation in the portrait as she sits, staring at the camera, with her chin slightly tilted up. This is reminiscent of the moment in the *Narrative* where Truth "[walks to the] top of a small rise of the ground, [and] commenced to sing, in her most fervid manner, with all the strength of her most powerful voice..." (79). With the upward glance and idea of "ris[ing]" one considers how to "rise" plays a significant role in representing Truth's determination and once again, one identifies this within the *Narrative:* "'Why, I felt so tall within – I felt as if the power of the nation was with me!" (30). This signifies how Truth's inner strength is reflected through the physical. This may suggest that by raising her chin in her portraits, she is portraying her identity and role as a speaker. Interestingly, in the image, her raised chin is also suggestive of movement rather than the fixity Graham speaks about in my earlier reference.

Dan Schiller argues that the "accurate and complete copies of reality" support photography as a form of realism (87). However, I would like to look at Pam Morris' argument that, "realism is a representational form and representation can never be identical to that which it represents" and argue that photographs are not "complete copies of reality" but rather *re-presentations* (4). Thus, one must remember that in these photographs, Truth is creating a reflection of how she wants to be perceived. Painter emphasises how Truth's portraits act as an aspiration of how she wants to be viewed: "She is mature and intelligent, not reading, but wearing eyeglasses that might have helped with the knitting and certainly, like the book on the table, lent her an educated air" (196). The flowers may represent domesticity, especially since Painter reads the images to convey a "motherly-womanliness central to her self-fashioning. Conforming to the convention of celebrity portraiture, she looks past the camera in weighty seriousness" (196). When speaking of "look[ing] past the camera…", Painter refers to Susan Sontag who describes this as "an ennobling abstract relation to the future" (327). If one then views this kind of pose as representative of the future or a yearning for it, one may then consider how fascinating it is that even though Truth appears to be looking towards a "future" of some kind, she is within that moment, already a participant in the future, by sitting to have her photograph taken.

Painter uses language such as "self-fashioning" alongside "conforming" and this creates a complex reading of Truth's photographs (196). Moreover, when considering Truth's Quaker

influences, she may have adopted their views on the daguerreotype, which they preferred over painting as they believed it required "little intervention on the part of the artist" (Verplank 67). Thus, one may consider Truth's significant role in directing her photographs. The flowers in photograph A appear to be white and this may have religious connotations: "White can be defined as the absolute color of light. It symbolizes truth, purity, innocence, and the sacred or divine. In many cultures, white garments are priestly vestments, associated symbolically with purity and truth" (Hui-Chih Yu 64). What I find interesting is the fact that "Newly baptized Christians wore white robes, and the souls of the just are depicted in white clothing in paintings of the Last Judgment" (64). Truth underwent a kind of "baptimizi[m]", and her "[new]" beginning in the changing of her name from Isabella to Sojourner. White then becomes symbolic of rebirth.

In the 1864 portrait, studio conventions are adopted in the open book which lies before Truth. I would like to draw on Burstow's claim that, " The importance of this cultivation of 'personal interiority' can be seen in a trope of portrait poses where the sitter is shown reading" and suggest that, even though this was a convention, the book is significant in representing Truth's yearning to tell her story and could also refer to the creation of her own *Narrative* which was published in 1850. I think of Truth's unconventional education and intelligence in relation to what Margaret Washington says in the opening pages of *Sojourner Truth's America:* "I reject the term, 'illiterate' when referring to Sojourner Truth; 'illiterate' suggests 'ignorant' as indeed some writers have labelled [Truth] because she could not read and write. I view literacy as but one form of learning, not the only means of knowledge, wisdom, or understanding" (ix). I would like to extend this by considering how the book here might suggest both her claim to other forms of learning, but also an anxiety or sensitivity about her inability to read or write. The photograph then, is open to interpretation beyond the documentary.

In photograph B, taken during the 1860's, Truth appears without any props besides the photograph of her grandson, placed open on her lap. Interestingly, Painter does not analyse this photograph as thoroughly as photograph A, but comments on her clothing as, "fashionable clothing [Truth] learned to wear in Washington…This patterned wardrobe reveals that the Civil War freed Truth" (187). I will later elaborate on Painter's description of Truth's dress; however, I would first like to offer a reading of the photograph in its entirety. The plain background is significant in emphasising Truth's confident stature, the same confidence suggested in the upward gaze given in photograph A. The darker tones behind her white shawl and bonnet invite one to pay attention solely to her, and more specifically, to her direct, stern

glance. Her serious gaze may be read as confrontational and as one which dares her past oppressors to face her, but it may also be read as a gaze which may create intimacy. Throughout her trials, Truth had great confidence and determination in fighting for what was hers, in whichever way she could. This is suggested in the *Narrative* when Truth tries to fight for her son to come back home, after he was illegally sold:

> Esquire Chip next informed his client, that her case must now lie over till the next session of the court, some months in the future. 'The law must take its course,' said he. 'What! Wait another court! Wait months!' said the persevering mother, '…I cannot wait; I must have him now, whilst he is to be had'. (33)

More interestingly, the concept of eye-contact is interesting as, "Blacks [could] be punished for a wide range of social actions…[including] making eye-contact with someone white" (Bark et.al 104). As an abolitionist, Truth may have used photography as a technique through which to send a message that she is challenging past "punish[ments]" or trials.

In her "Ar'n't I a Woman" speech, she insisted on her rights and posed questions which made her oppressors uncomfortable:

> That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles or gives me any best place (and raising herself to her full height and her voice to a pitch like rolling thunder, she asked), and aren't I a woman? (Campbell quoted in Siebler 532)

The phrase "Ar'n't I a Woman?", is repeated to make a point. By playing on her physical appearance as she says, "Look at me! Look at my arm", she is inviting people to look at her, with the word, "look", signifying close observation. This challenging tone evident in the speech and her challenging people to "look" is symbolized in photograph B, through her gaze. Thus, by saying "look", Truth is urging her audience to take note of her, in a similar way in which her direct gaze draws observers to identify and discover who she might be. Therefore, I would like to propose that in her portraits, she is also attempting to deliver similar messages to that which she delivered in her lectures, where she held the audience's attention. The photograph then becomes a form of expression used by Truth similarly to how she must have used music and sermons– to express her feelings and to invoke similar feelings amongst her audience.

I read the dark tones of the background of photograph B as directing attention to Sojourner Truth's gaze. The plain dark background in Truth's photographs, throws the sitter, wearing white, into relief. Teju Coles, interestingly, reads "dark areas" in photographs as metaphors: "The power of this picture is in the loveliness of its dark areas. [Roy DeCaraca's] work was in fact, an exploration of how much could be seen in the shadowed parts of a photograph, or how much could be imagined into those shadows" (145). When looking at Truth I read "dark areas" as a metaphor of "dark[ness]" referring to the years of slavery. Coles says there is a "loveliness" in dark areas which makes me consider Truth practising agency in the photograph through symbols of overcoming the "dark" periods of her life. Her portrait becomes "power[ful]" because we have read the *Narrative,* we know her story and we can see now how she chose to present herself as dignified in her portraits. Coles' argument is reminiscent of Daguerre's point about the daguerreotype with its "gradation of tones" and the artistic qualities of those tones, or rather "shadows" through which one can begin to "imagine", and interpret the life captured. Moreover, Coles use of "shadow" may be linked to Truth's description of her portraits: 'I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance'. One may simply read this as her stating that she is "selling" her portraits to earn a living. However, "shadow" is an important word choice. It may mean a photograph. However, it may also be linked to Malcolm Ruel's discussion of "shadow" in the African context:

> The term for shadow (ekilili in Lurogoli…) refers to both the visible shadow of a person and to 'a quality of living… a person who is healthy and in full possession of his physical strength one says that all his shadows are with him…Like the heart, the possession of the shadow is an essential condition of being alive (as a human being)'. 113

Thus, the "shadow" becomes synonymous with being "alive", with being "human", and with having "strength". By naming portraits "shadows", one may consider them as "possessions" which were extensions of her "heart" as in her interests, and the stories she shares. Truth's "shadows" are also declarations that she has survived and is "alive", that even though previously neglected and enslaved, she is "human".

Teju Coles speaks of the portrait as reflective of the sitter: "A portrait of this kind is a visual soliloquy" (129). His reference to "soliloquy" suggests a kind of intimacy, innate feelings and a reflection of the self. "Soliloquy" is an interesting term as it suggests a speech one gives regardless of who is listening – a speech, ultimately, for oneself and this is reflective of how

Truth enjoyed solitude. When considering the portrait from this point of view, one begins to understand that Truth may not only have taken the portraits to share versions of herself, but that she chose this form for herself, for reflective reasons. The portrait can then be read as a way in which to gain insight into oneself. Thus, the questions that arise are: how does one rediscover oneself through a portrait? How is the process reflective? I suggest that Truth was willing to see herself in a different light – a light offered to her through the developed photograph. There is a moment in *Beloved* which reminds me of this idea when Baby Suggs looks at her hands once she is freed: "But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with clarity… 'These hands belong to me. These *my* hands'" (166). Robbed through slavery of their identity, these women were eager to get to know themselves and to see parts of themselves as evidence of their identity, survival and humanity. The set-up of the studio, and the selection of props makes the process reflective. Therefore, the reading of the photograph as a form of "soliloquy" is interesting, because while this sort of speech is a performance of an internal debate one has with oneself, it is still shared. The "soliloquy" and portrait are both then vulnerable acts of internal conversation which represent a willingness to share personal aspects of oneself.

Truth welcomed the trends of the time, suggested in Painter's observation that she "[Seized] on a new technology" with her interest in photography (199). However, Painter's analysis of the photographs, appears to focus solely on the photographs without acknowledging the *Narrative:*

> In none of these portraits is there anything beyond blackness that would inspire charity...nothing of Stowe's amusing naïf. Truth reveals nothing that would make her into an African or an exotic of any kind at all. Had she not reached out to photography, we would lack images of Sojourner Truth fully and respectably clothed. We would see her only at a washtub in the Northampton Association; as William Wetmore Story's *Libyan Sybyl;* or as the field slave at the frontispiece of her *Narrative.* The photographs insist: I am a woman. (196)

In the above argument, Painter is suggesting that the photographs offer a more complex representation of Truth than what Stowe sees her as. By mentioning the "frontispiece", Painter refers to the inclusion in some editions of the portraits. Each edition of the *Narrative* portrays a different image of Truth, suggesting that one reading of her, cannot be determined by one

image. Painter does not note this, but Rohrbach reads Truth's frontispieces as being complex and changing:

> Truth did not abandon the earlier frontispiece [a close-up portrait of her wearing a white turban] entirely, however. She returned to the engraving and made use of it as the introductory image for the "Book of Life." Now acting as a frontispiece for a book within a book, the image introduces readers to a set of documents that sketch a more complex—if not multivalent—portrait of Sojourner Truth. (26)

I read Rohrbach's exploration as suggesting that Truth played around with her portraits and specifically frontispieces to challenge viewers to see her from multiple perspectives.

The photographs offered me a chance to see how her animated presence is depicted in her eccentric clothing choices. I am reminded of Elizabeth Wilson's foreword in *Adorned in Dreams* (2003): "Fashion resembles photography. Both are liminal forms, on the threshold between art and not-art" (vii). I consider this in my argument that just like photographs, Truth's dress could be read as a form of historical document, which also represents her individuality (vii). Painter notes that Truth's dress style was influenced by the people she surrounded herself with:

> She is dressed in the Quaker-style clothing that feminist and antislavery lecturers wore to distinguish themselves…In later photographs, Truth poses in the fashionable clothing that she learned to wear in Washington, the only indication that association with middle class blacks…might have altered her personal aesthetic. (187)

I agree that Truth was influenced; however, I would like to propose that Truth added her own style to these fashions, by drawing on the multiple influences she was exposed to and combining them in single outfits. In photograph A, Truth is dressed in a dark, modest dress contrasting with the white shawl draped around her shoulders. Her conservative dress is symbolic of the Quaker style she adopted, and Painter makes an interesting point that, "Quaker-style clothing [was worn by] feminist and antislavery lecturers to distinguish themselves from showily dressed actresses" (187). I believe that Truth is not solely influenced by Quaker style but does display hints of their influence in photograph A. I consider Suzanne Keen's statement that, "Victorian novelists used Quakerish garbs as symbolic of rejection of current fashions to dramatize the differences of their heroines and their real and imaginary peers" (213). Truth did

not entirely "[reject] current fashions", but adapted Quaker dress to represent her own unique style. I do not believe her style in the portrait is solely Quaker influenced but rather made up of many styles to symbolise her individuality.

Painter dismisses Harriet Beecher Stowe's description of Truth as wearing a "Madras Handkerchief", as she believes Stowe attempted to create a stereotypical figure out of Truth. In April 1863, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote an article entitled, "Sojourner Truth, the Libyan Sibyl", which was published in Truth's scrapbook of accounts and letters entitled, *Book of Life,* an addition included in recent publications of the *Narrative*:

> Her tall form, as she rose up before me, is still vivid to my mind. She was dressed in some stout, grayish stuff, neat and clean, though dusty from travel. On her head, she wore a bright Madras handkerchief, arranged as a turban, after the manner of her race. (*Book of Life* 103)

In comparing Stowe's description of Truth to the photographs, one notices similarities as well as differences, between the two. One can understand Painter's claim as she fears that Truth may be read in a stereotypical manner, and makes the point that Truth does not wear the plaid Madras scarf in the photographs. Stowe's description appears stereotypical in her references to both Victorian sculptor, Richard Cumberworth's sculpture "of the Negro Woman at the fountain" and William Wetmore Story's, *The Libyan Sibyl,* as she attempts to paint Truth as a stereotypical African (103). As an abolitionist herself, Stowe may have created a stereotypical African figure of Truth to emphasise her disapproval of slavery. However, the Madras fabric does not originate in Africa, but rather in India:

> The Real Madras Handkerchief commonly called Madras owes its name to the southern Indian city of Madras that is located in the province of Madras. During the twelfth century, the city of Madras was well-known for its plain cotton. However, stripes were added to create the first Madras fabric. It was exported to Africa and the Middle-East where it was used as a head-wrap. (Zamor 155).

I would like to suggest that the Madras handkerchief is significant in representing complexities about identity as it is adopted by many cultures. In Truth's case, I believe that her wearing it is symbolic of her heritage as she makes references to her ancestral roots; however, it is interesting that she wears a different headpiece in the photograph. By not wearing the Madras turban in the photographs, Truth may have intentionally decided not to appear as Stowe's

description and to introduce a different side to her, as Rohrbach claims. She may have purposely chosen to present herself as multi-faceted or she may have believed that the bonnet was more 'acceptable', supporting Painter's claim that, "She presents the image of a respectable middle-class matron" (187). Truth may have wanted to attract a "middle-class" readership by adopting these fashions, however, Painter goes on to argue that, "none of these portraits…would inspire charity", supporting my claim that these images were not merely taken to sell (187). I would suggest that what Truth is doing by adopting this style is indeed, as Painter states, displaying her fashion influences. However, Truth is also emphasising that she has the power to adopt and adapt styles.

It is not clear, in photograph A and B, whether Truth is wearing a scarf wrapped around her head, or a simple mob-cap. If it is a mob-cap, this is interesting as this headgear was worn both by servants and middle-class women: "During the French Revolution, the name "Mob Cap" caught on because the poorer women who were involved in the riots wore them, but they had been in style for middle class and even aristocracy since the century began". (Mad about Mob Caps janeausten.co.uk)" The mob-cap is a form of fashion which lent itself both to the middle and poorer classes and creates an ambiguity and possibility to be read in multiple ways, just like Truth. By wearing it, Truth may be representing symbolically her earlier status as a servant, however, she is also representing herself as adopting middle-class fashions. What is significant is that the mob-cap represents Truth as a complex figure who drew both on history and new trends, in her styling of herself. By the time the photograph was taken, the mob-cap was not as popular as it was before: "the mobcap was still worn during the early 19th century, though it was not as popular (or large!) as it had been a generation earlier" (janeausten.co.uk). Considering this, Truth's wearing of it may be symbolic of how she reimagines her past and influences in her *Narrative* and, I would like to suggest, also in her photographs. I want to propose a different reading: that Truth's headgear symbolised her personal taste and choices. By comparing both Stowe's description and Painter's claim, one can only continue to read Truth as a complex figure, who at times wore her brightly coloured turbans, yet chose to wear a different kind of head piece in her photographs. Even though Painter cannot completely dismiss Stowe's reference, her point that Truth was not a stereotypical African figure is underlined in my suggestion that Truth may have constantly experimented with various accessories and headpieces. The multitude of styles adopted by Truth then poses the question of who her intended readership was, and I believe that by drawing on different styles, Truth was hoping for a diverse audience.

It is not evident in the photographs analysed, but Truth was renowned for her turbans and described by many critics to have worn one: "The leaders of the movement trembled on seeing a tall, gaunt black woman, in a grey dress and white turban, surmounted by an uncouth sun-bonnet..." (*Book of Life* 90). Truth's white head pieces carry great symbolism as well. Rohrbach speaks of this as well:

> The white head wrap, for instance, became a characteristic part of her image, so much so that almost every description of her makes mention of it. Through this article of clothing, Sojourner Truth references an African past and therefore, in the American literary context of the day, she calls attention to her connection to slavery. (4)

Placing her turban beneath her bonnet was a common act by Truth as Washington states, "Underneath a bonnet, she wore a colored scarf tied in the back, dark travelling clothes, and heavy shoes" (210). It is interesting that Truth chose the white headgear for these images. One considers the religious significance of the colour. One may also then question whether in this case, she may have worked collaboratively with the photographer, who could have noted that her colours would not show, and by wearing white, the contrasts in her photographs would become more pronounced. I must consider why wear the turban beneath the bonnet? Why would Truth layer her head pieces and hold on to her turbans, even if it was not visible? I would like to suggest that for an African woman, the turban was a symbolic accessory. Griebel in her essay "The African American Woman's Headwrap: Unwinding the Symbols" notes that:

> The simple head rag worn by millions of enslaved women and their descendants has served as a uniform of communal identity; but at its most elaborate, the African American woman's headwrap has functioned as a 'uniform of rebellion' signifying absolute resistance to loss of self-definition." (cornell.edu)

This idea supports my belief that Truth wore the turban for multiple reasons: to reimagine her heritage, to remember her oppression and to signify how she was on a quest to overcome it. I would like to think of the turban as symbolic, and link it to the ancestral education she may have received through her mother's storytelling. The turban is both symbolic of Truth's heritage as well as the modern adopting of it in the fashion trends of the time. It appeared that the turban, in European settings, was met with fascination, apparent in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*[vi]*:*

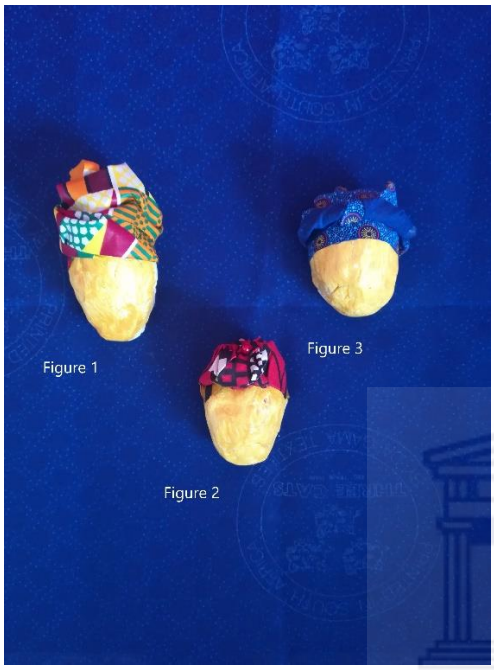
> [Miss Matty] hoped my father was well, she wrote, and could I tell her if turbans were fashionable? Something so exciting was going to happen. She must have a new cap, and perhaps she was too old to care about such things, but she would very much like a turban…I bought her a pretty blue cap instead…[Miss Matty expressed her disappointment] 'It's just like the caps all the ladies in Cranford are wearing. I suppose turbans haven't arrived in Drumble yet?'. (41)

Here, one notices the nineteenth century fascination with turbans in Miss Matty's yearning for one. However, I would like to draw on how the turban represented a kind of individuality as Miss Matty declares that, "all the ladies in Cranford are wearing [caps]", and she clearly wanted to stand out amongst the others. Thus, I would like to consider Truth's turban as an accessory which accentuated her individual style as she became known for wearing one.

Truth's aesthetic interested me because of Washington's description of "the large fruit basket sitting on her head kept secure by her tall graceful carriage and carefully wrapped turban" (287). In the photographs I have analysed, Truth's headpieces appear to be white. I direct the reader to the miniatures I have made, where I have reimagined Truth in colourful turbans made of different African cloth inspired by her African heritage. I have attached an image of the turbans as well as a YouTube link to a video documenting my process of making them. In the image below, figure 1. is wearing a turban made of Kente fabric in honour of her father's Ghanaian descent. Figure 2. wears a head piece made of Angolan fabric in red, yellow, black and white in honour of her mother's heritage and figure 3. wears a turban made of shweshwe, as my own contribution as a South African. What intrigues me about shweshwe, or rather "indigo cloth" is how through its travels "there is little evidence to show where it originated" and even though it became synonymous with South Africa, it carries within its fibre, global influences (13). I would like to believe that Truth as an itinerant preacher would have appreciated such a well-travelled fabric. Ribeiro notes of Angolan fabric that, "[i]t has stated a meaning beyond the functional source of dress and has served as generation, family and society ties and as the key to the construction of individual and group identities" (Ribeiro 2). Truth tried to represent these "ties" through her *Narrative* and her photographs.

Considering Truth being described as wearing a "fruit-basket" on her head, alongside Kente fabric's origins is interesting because, "[t]he term Kente comes from the word 'kenten', which means 'basket' because the first cloths were woven out of raffia and were dubbed 'basket cloths' with patterns resembling those of a 'basket'" (Fening 62). Kente was, "originally preserve[d]

[for] royalty and was worn only at joyous social or ceremonial functions" and even though it is more widely available today, the associations with "royalty" is interesting in relation to Gilbert's calling Truth "our heroine". By reimagining her adorned in this fabric, I am also removing her from the marginalised point of view (64).



To watch the process, follow this link: https://youtu.be/t1pBZiaJPY0

In photograph B, Truth's aesthetic appears more flamboyant than that of the photograph A. She wears a white, high-collared blouse, similar to the Victorian high neck blouse worn by the woman in Mofokeng's *The Black Photo Album,* a linen-like woven jacket, which may be of the same "cambric" Washington mentions Truth to have worn (311). Her attire was also made up of polka dot sleeves, part of a longer dress, peering out beneath the jacket's cuffs and a black apron. Painter suggests that Truth adopts "fashionable" taste, which I agree with, however, I suggest that through the layering of contrasting garments, Truth is uniting her influences through her dress. Clair Hughes speaks of fashion as communication: "Dress is also language…Thomas Hardy is careful to indicate colour and texture rather than style in the dress of his eponymous heroine" (3). I argue that Truth uses this same approach by strategically choosing to wear clothing that would convey a message about her. One may analyse photograph B as Truth appearing eclectic, but this reading becomes greater when considering her personality described in the *Narrative* and, more specifically, Gilbert's claim that she

portrayed, “spirit-stirring animation”. Gilbert does not mention Truth’s choice of dress, however, through her descriptions of her personality as “animated”, one visualises Truth as a colourful figure. As one discovers these various methods through which Truth chose to represent herself, I am fascinated by how in every attempt, she showed her interests. I have come across an interesting extract on the Historic Northampton Society’s Web page, where they speak of silk and how Sojourner Truth, herself, belonged to a society of silk enthusiasts:

> Northampton's silk industry was born in the mulberry tree craze of the 1830’s and died, at the age of 100, in the throes of the Great Depression. Sojourner Truth was one of the many interesting people who belonged to the Association.
> (Northampton Silk Industry historicnorthampton.org)

Her interest in fashion and fabric is only emphasised by her love of silk, and her being a part of the “Association”. That she was part of a community dedicated to admiring one of the finest and most elegant fabrics is suggestive of how varied Truth’s taste was. Truth represents various stories and influences through her clothing as she does in her *Narrative* (212). The most outstanding contrast lies in the woven jacket, worn over a polka dot dress, in photograph B, and I believe that this contrast not only represents Truth’s individuality in playing around with texture, but it also depicts her new-found ability to wear styles that were not initially meant for her. Cheney Brothers, distributors of silk during the nineteenth century wrote of polka dots and its desired market:

> In the early issues of Godey’s Lady Book’, we find Polka Hats, Polka Shoes, Polka Gauze and ‘the next design in fabrics for gentlewomen’, the Polka Dot…Thus, you see, ‘Polka Dot’, is purely an American name…Because the Polka Dot is founded on a principle basically correct…the pleasing design effect of spots imposed at proper intervals upon a background of contrasting color.
> (Cheney Brothers *archive.com*)

Thus, the reference to, “Godey’s Lady Book” is significant as it was a popular magazine during the nineteenth century on the themes of women’s fashion, female styles and domesticity. This supports Painter’s argument that Truth was indeed, “fashionable” and, moreover, that she was influenced by the styles of the time. Teju Coles makes a profound connection between photography and dress: “A woman reclines in a long dress with fine floral patterning on a bed with a checked bedspread. Her head scarf is polka dotted. The bed is placed in from of a wall, which is draped with paisley cloth” (129). What I am interested in is how Coles describes this

image by mentioning each pattern, clashing against the next. He speaks of how this woman is wearing a kaleidoscope of patterns against an even louder background of "checked" and "paisley cloth" and how this adds to "her look [which] is self-possessed rather than seductive" signalling how her choice of dress adds the identity she wants to represent (129). This array of prints and texture reminds me of photograph B, where Truth sits dressed in a striped jacket and polka dotted skirt. Coles' analysis is interesting because of the way he views fabric as representing that vividness which can be read when colour is not present. Coles reads the woman in the picture as "emerging from this swirling field – a profusion of pattern that brings to mind Matisse at his most inventive", and this signals the artistic sensibility of the women who chose to wear these clashing prints (129). By making the link with "Matisse", Coles is inviting us to read the ordinary as forms of the aesthetic and art.

Sylvia Wolf notes how Julia Margaret Cameron, the Victorian photographer, used fabric in the photographs of her housemaid Mary Hillier (see image F below): "Hillier is posed against a black backdrop, her head and hair filling the frame; and she is cloaked in black velvet, a device Cameron often used to obscure details in her sitters' clothing and eliminate any references to class, era, or style" (42). Wolf states that Cameron used the velvet to allow the viewer not to be distracted by the clothing which may represent "class, age, or style". The kind of draping and fabric chosen by Cameron, suggests that she does not want to create stereotypical female figures, however, I would like to add that the type of fabric used represents something more. The richness of the "velvet" can be read for its boldness which speaks louder than the stereotypes of the time. It declares something and suggests a kind of bravery by the woman who is not afraid to play with clothing. Virginia Woolf notes that Cameron adorned herself in "robes of flowing red velvet" (McNeillie 378) and wore "a wonderful grass green shawl" (McNeillie 381). Cameron's enjoyment of bold fabrics reminds me of Truth. I am delighted by the unexpected link between these contemporaries; Cameron a woman photographer, and Truth an ex-slave who chose to style herself in her photographs.

Reading Truth's choice of dress then becomes a way we get to know her and what she wants to communicate. The fabrics become a way I read Truth's interest in colour and texture, but it also made me consider how by wearing clashing prints, she was signifying her strength through wearing unconventional clothing. In photograph B, dressed in an array of prints, Truth represents the figure readers get to know through her, 'Ar'n't I a Woman' speech. Her dress appears to speak as loudly as her voice and reminds me of the statement, "Rolling thunder could not have stilled that crowd, as did those deep, wonderful tones, as she stood there with

outstretched arms and eye of fire" (*Book of Life* 92). I would like to suggest that the reference to, "deep, wonderful tones" could be used to describe the arrangement of textures and tones in the clothing she is wearing in photograph B.

Moreover, she also carries traces of heritage through these multiple fabrics. When making the connection between Coles' analysis of the *Odalisque*[vii]. In Teju Coles essay, "Portrait of a Lady", he looks at Seydou Keita's *Odalisque,* a photograph of an African woman, draped in a floral dress and headscarf, laying on a checked blanket, against a printed background. Coles offers an interesting analysis on the use of vibrancy of printed fabrics and how they come through in black and white. Vibrant fabrics can be represented in black and white, allowing for the image to still be read as colourful. This is a fitting metaphor for Truth who is photographed in monochrome, yet one is still able to read her colourful personality through the fabrics she wore. By identifying similarities between Truth and the *Odalisque*, I felt something which can only be described through Roland Barthes idea of the "punctum" which refers to details or "sensitive points" which become "poignant" to the viewer: "A photograph's punctum is that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)" (27). The detail of the clashing fabrics is "poignant" to me as a marker of the diasporic link between Truth's photograph and the twentieth century photographs of African women in clashing prints. It also "bruises" or remains with me because of the connection I have with wearing prints as my own form of self-expression. When Barthes speaks of "accident", I consider how colour is gestured at through the vibrancy of printed fabric in the black and white images of both Truth and Keita. This feeling or "punctum" is experienced by me because of how the image of photograph B has stayed with me and inspired this chapter.

Photograph A

Unknown photographer. *Recto & Verso: Carte de visite of Sojourner Truth with book and knitting*. Unknown date, Courtesy of the Sojourner Truth photograph collection, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

Photograph B

Unknown photographer. *Portrait of Sojourner Truth seated with framed photograph on lap*. Unknown date, Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library.

Figure D

Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., “Johannes Vermeer/A Lady Writing/c. 1665,” Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century, NGA Online Editions, https://purl.org/nga/collection/artobject/46437 (accessed October 01, 2019).

Photograph E

Sojourner Truth, three-quarter length portrait, standing, wearing spectacles, shawl, and peaked cap, right hand resting on cane. [Detroit] Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/97513239/>.

Image F

Cox, Julian, and Colin Ford. *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Complete Photographs*. Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2003. no. 97, p. 154. https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/268695. Accessed 2 December 2019.

CHAPTER THREE: THE ART OF DOMESTIC LIFE

Sojourner Truth desired a home as a sign of individuality and freedom. However, the domestic living space was an ambivalent environment that may have reminded her of a past life as a domestic slave. In the *Narrative,* Truth speaks about her early memories of her family and fellow slaves having to live in the cellar of the master's house. I read the cellar Truth lived in as a slave for how this space may have influenced her desire for her own home. The idea of home is ambivalent for Truth because she may be haunted by her past, but it also reminds her of her parents. I look at furniture as symbolic of loss and agency and suggest that Truth's interest in aesthetics is a kind of power. This chapter suggests how Truth begins to rethink the conventional idea of home, as a space which allows for freedom. Margaret Washington mentions Truth envisioning a "home of her own", however, she does not discuss in detail how this desire may have come about (49). Truth's first lodgings, which she remembers in the *Narrative,* is a cellar. I am interested in how this cellar shaped her fears and desires about the idea of home:

> A cellar, under this hotel, was assigned to slaves, as their sleeping apartment, - all the slaves he possessed, of both sexes, sleeping (as quite common in a state of slavery) in the same room…She shudders, even now, as she goes back in memory, and revisits this cellar, and sees its inmates, of both sexes and all ages, sleeping on those damp boards… (10)

The location "under" the hotel suggests how degrading the slave lodgings were. Washington makes a similar reading of the slave accommodations as belittling:

> 'The home is like a grave wherein we always dwell', a Dutch writer observed. But the enslaved African Dutch 'kitchen family,' occupying cellars designed for storage or cooking 'but not for living,' had more reason to think of the household as 'like a grave.' It was hardly a 'home' (23)

The "cellar" is a space beneath the house where objects are stored, and one is reminded that slaves were indeed considered to be objects. Gilbert notes that: "[Truth] shudders, even now, as she goes back in memory, and revisits". Her use of the historic present tense suggests that Truth, while retelling her *Narrative* "revisits" this memory as if it were present, emphasising the complex relationship between past and present. I am reminded of Morrison's use of "rememory" in *Beloved*: "I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory" (43). Sethe's

"rememory" speaks of the idea that the past still exists in the present and that one may become trapped in the past again. The use of present tense and Truth still "shudder[ing]" years after the events took place may be similar to "rememory", as representing a reliving. This symbolises the effects of slavery as a haunting presence and makes me question whether her appreciation of beauty is a form of warding off the threat of "rememory". These haunting memories are what made me consider how the idea of home may have scarred her.

Truth, however, finds solace in watching her parents attempt to change this space into something more than bearable. Reading Truth's account of her early accommodations, I felt a sense of despair for the conditions, yet an even greater sense of admiration for her family. I see her family in that space, as the force which helped her survive. The *Narrative's* depiction of Truth's parents' relationship with their space, makes me consider how slaves transformed unhomely spaces into spaces of refuge and comfort:

> While Bomefree and Mau-mau Bett – their dark cellar lighted by a blazing pine-knot, - would sit for hours recalling and recounting every endearing, as well as harrowing circumstance that taxed memory could supply, from the histories of those dear departed ones… (11)

Her reflection on how her parents "recount[ed]" memories in their space may have made Truth's living conditions more bearable because she was witness to their bond. "[T]he dark cellar" creates a haunting image, however, she remembers how it was "lighted by a blazing pine-knot", which provided not just light but also scent. By recalling this, she may have remembered its smell as the scents of one's life strengthen memories. For Wayne Bethard, "The pine-knot scent still flags a pleasant memory now and then", and by recalling this memory Truth may have felt as if she was back in that moment with her parents (53). Truth's parents lighting of the "pine-knot" brings some kind of beauty into the home. Throughout the *Narrative,* Truth remembers her parents, throughout the *Narrative* either outdoors, "under the sparkling vault of heaven", or transforming indoor spaces (12). "Lighted" and "blazing" become symbolic of illumination and brightness and I would like to read this "light" as being, in her eyes, a metaphor of her family. Hubbard and Kitchin define affect "as distinct from emotion and feeling, affect arises as we interact with the world in a multisensory and engaged way" (491). I read the complexity of Truth's "multisensory [engagement]" with this memory as carrying both the damage of this recollection and her appreciation of her parent's attempts to redeem the space. While the memory clearly holds deeply felt emotion, I argue that Truth

offers more than sentimental feeling in drawing attention to the value of her parent's aesthetic. Reading this representation of Truth's memory helped me understand the distinction which Hubbard and Kitchin make between "affect" and "feeling".

Sharon F. Patton makes an interesting point about how slaves created and built their own homes with the limited resources available to them: "Slaves built their own individual houses from materials provided by the plantation or scavenged from the natural settings…Those built between c.1650 and 1700 resembled houses in West and Central Africa" (28). Thus, a creation of a home is important and, moreover, so is the creation of a home "resembl[ing]" what was lost. Diasporic links are apparent in how these houses "resembled [those] in West and Central Africa. Critics speak of the slave lodgings as having the ability to bring people together: "Family was also central to life in the slave quarters, despite the painful plantation realities of family separation and sexual assault" (Earle 48). I want to look at how Truth's parents created, through their relationship, a kind of home. Gaston Bachelard says:

> When we dream of the house we were born in, in the utmost depths of reverie, we participate in this original warmth, in this well-tempered matter of the material paradise. This is the environment in which the protective beings live…Of course, thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated. All our lives we come back to them in our daydreams. (29-30)

I appreciate Bachelard's use of the pun "housed" for the preservation of memories. Thinking of Truth, I believe that her memories are "housed" within her as she carries them with her throughout her *Narrative.* I draw on this in proposing that her earliest space with her parents may have inspired her to want her own home, as this home may enhance her memories of them. Bearing in mind that Truth's house that she was "born in" did not carry the same "warmth" spoken about, I am interested in Bachelard's statement that "this is the environment in which the protective beings live". This supports my idea that Truth acknowledges her home in the early chapters because it is made by her parents: her "protective beings". As Truth progresses throughout the *Narrative,* she speaks of the slave houses she lived in, however, she does not dwell on the details as much as she does when speaking of how her parents lived within theirs.

Bachelard acknowledges these complexities of home: "Every corner in a house, every angle in a room…is a symbol of solitude for the imagination…Also, in many respects a corner that is

"lived in" tends to reject and restrain, even to hide, life. The corner becomes a negation of the Universe" (155-156). Having experienced, then, a very "restrain[ed]" home as a child, Truth, however, saw through her parents that home had the ability to be more. Home is a very complex term, which may represent security and refuge but, in the case of slaves, was never quite that. The slave-lodgings of Truth's childhood may have been home because it was made a kind of home through story and light. It was the only place of restoration she and her family knew, but it could not hold safety and security.

This ambivalent idea of home travelled with her throughout her life and there is evidence that it motivated both her life as an itinerant preacher, and as a woman who desired a home. Moreover, Truth's memories of her mother are linked to slavery: "[Truth's] youth was no deterrent, and she soon joined [her mother] as a laborer. Enslaved girls everywhere began laboring as young as four or five" (23). I suggest that working in that space together, motivated Truth to get her "own" space as an act of homage to her mother. Truth was sold to the Dumont's and Washington reads the representation of the Dumont's kitchen as a space of agency for Truth through what it may have taught her. Washington says it, "provided a thorough household education, while exposure to the sociopolitical interactions planted seeds of inquisitiveness, skepticism, and reasoning" (23). However, she does not look at the ambivalence of the kitchen and my argument is that the kitchen was both a space of familial memory and of harsh memories. In the *Narrative,* Truth recalls an event which took place in the kitchen of the Dumont's, in whose household she was enslaved:

> When Isabella had put the potatoes over to boil Getty told her she would herself tend the fire, while Isabel milked. She had not long been seated by the fire, in performance of her promise, when Kate entered, and requested Gertrude to go out of the room and do something for her…still keeping her place in the corner. While there, Kate came sweeping about fire, caught up a chip, lifted some ashes with it, and dashed them into the kettle. (21)

I am interested in looking at the kitchen as an uncanny place because it was the environment in which Truth worked with her mother, as well as a space in which she was manipulated by fellow slaves. The word "uncanny" as defined by Sigmund Freud is useful in this context:

> The German word *unheimlich* [of which the nearest semantic equivalents in English are 'uncanny' and 'eerie', but which etymologically corresponds to

> ‘unhomely’]…is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar. (124)

The reference to “‘unhomely’” is what I always consider when thinking about the uncanny. The word “homely” suggests security and knowing, yet the prefix “un” signals a disruption of that comfort. This makes me consider how a perceived familiar space becomes “frightening”. Truth may have had some good memories of the kitchen because she shared it with her mother, however, Kate getting her into trouble by throwing “ashes” into the “kettle”, troubles whatever comfort she may have felt. The kitchen becomes an ambivalent space because she is unsure what to recall of it. While she holds on to the memory of her mother, she remembers the kitchen and by remembering the kitchen, she recalls the vindictive situations. It is extremely complex, but it signals how distressing the memories of a space can be, and how one particular kind of space may be symbolic of both the good and the bad. Truth’s mother was a slave in the kitchen and her memories may be of comfort, but also of a loss of agency.

When speaking about the physical structure of middle-class Victorian homes, Judith Flanders reminds readers that servants, like slaves, had living quarters, separated from their employers:

> Gradually the Victorian house divided rooms that were designed for receiving outsiders – the dining room, the drawing room, the morning room – from rooms that were for family members only – bedrooms, the study – and, further, from rooms that were for servants only – the kitchen, the scullery, servants’ bedrooms. (xxv)

A divide between “servant” and the family is clearly made by appointing the help to their own rooms, distanced from the rest of the family. Carter Goffigon argues that instead of limiting females, the white, nineteenth century female used the kitchen to innovate, progress and create agency:

> The link between home maintenance and social status gave women an immense amount of power and responsibility to define their husbands and families by middle class standards. The rise of domestic guides and women’s magazines supported this domestic redirection, further cementing a woman’s place in the domestic sphere. (11)

This is evident in most works, where critics speak of the relationship between white women and the domestic space but they do not consider how the powerful female role may have

influenced the servant working in that space. Goffigon goes on to speak about how this "power" increased in their hiring of employees: "The rise of hired domestic labor took on an entirely different shape in the mid-nineteenth century as middle-class housewives became responsible for hiring, training and managing their servants." (30). I acknowledge that the domestic space allowed for women to practice their power, however, instead of reading this as only attainable by the white woman, I would like to extend Coffigon's statement and read the "servants" he speaks of as also attaining skills in these domestic spaces. One must bear in mind that these skills were forced upon both slaves and servants. However, I want to look at the complexities of the domestic space and how even though it was "maintain[ed]" by white women, their servants had the ability to acquire skills – skills that I believe Truth adapted to her liking and to suit her interests. Being born into a Dutch household, may have influenced Truth's confidence as Washington notes:

> Dutch women in America were often outspoken, independent, and thrifty, had a sense of entitlement, and were efficient in business. Sojourner Truth later demonstrated this confidence by bringing lawsuits, buying and selling property, holding bank accounts, handling financial negotiations of her publications… (19-20)

I agree with Washington that Truth's confidence may have stemmed from the women she grew up around. I am fascinated by the idea that she may have educated herself in how to be "independent…[and] efficient in business", suggesting how she chose what to learn and appropriate from her circumstances. Mary Ellen Snodgrass makes a statement about servants who worked in the domestic space and how they also gained skills which could later be used as, "[f]or many slaves, kitchen gardening and cooking was the entrepreneurial ticket out of bondage" (906). By rethinking the kind of "independence" suggested by Dutch women and portraying it in her own way, this space may have influenced her desire for her own home. Throughout the *Narrative,* the house is something desired. It becomes then a manifestation of what she longed for in the form of freedom and her home. How interesting it would be to know her reactions once she attained her home but for now, all we can do is read the *Narrative* for hints at Truth's feelings.

Washington notes that: "She saved her money and furnished her own living quarters" (84). I would like to read her later desire for "furnish[ings]" in contrast to her thoughts and actions on possessions when she left to travel and preach: "Having made what preparations for leaving

she deemed necessary, - [she] put up a few articles of clothing in a pillow-case, all else being deemed an unnecessary incumbrance…" (68). Truth's interest in a physical home and its possessions was not always present because before she viewed home as representative of freedom, she may have seen travelling as the only form of liberation. By embarking on this journey, and by letting go of possessions, Truth was symbolically taking a stand against her oppressors and the environment which surrounded her while enslaved. Margaret Washington says that the "Nealy's [who she worked for as a domestic slave] abused her" and that the "floggings at the hands of John Nealy scarred Bell for life" (33). Home did not always have positive connotations.

Stuart Hall's idea of "many different ways of 'being at home" is interesting when considering how Truth chooses to travel:

> From the diaspora perspective, identity has many imagined 'homes' (and therefore no one single homeland); it has many different ways of 'being at home' – since it conceives of individuals as capable of drawing on different maps of meaning and locating them in different geographies at one and the same time – but it is not tied to one, particular place. (207)

It is important to note that travelling may have had horrible connotations for Truth as an ex-slave because the notion of moving around may be reminiscent of displacement as a slave and the forced journeys implemented by the Atlantic Slave Trade. However, Truth remakes travel as a form of liberty. Travelling suggested how she was "capable of drawing on different maps of meaning" and I read this as her being "capable" of creating home wherever she went. Truth did not want to be "tied to one, particular place."

This kind of home is suggested in Washington's statement that she wanted a home "where she may feel a greater freedom than she can in a house of another and where she can repose" (83). "Repose" is a pause – rest, but also freedom to leave and begin again. The idea of movement and travel is reflected in the name she chose to give herself: Sojourner. Washington speaks of Truth's name: "Isabella Van Wagenen becoming Sojourner Truth was an inspired naming" (149) and in the *Narrative* she is introduced as, "Sojourner Truth, as she now calls herself, but whose name was originally Isabella" (9). By renaming herself, Truth changed her identity from that bestowed upon her by slave owners and, by choosing a name of such significant meaning, she suggested her freedom and, moreover, as a traveller, how she would continue to seek all forms of it. The name "Sojourner" derives from "sojourn" meaning, "a temporary stay at a

place" or "to remain or reside for a time" (OED). Instead of only viewing her as constantly travelling, the term "sojourner" speaks of "residing" and makes one consider how even on her "sojourns", Truth welcomes the idea of "stay[ing]" at the houses of others. She looked for freedom in all its forms and, just like travelling, her own home was another way of achieving this. The renaming reminds me of Julian of Norwich's renaming of herself. "Julian was probably not her given name, though it was used of her in her own time…The custom was an anchoress to adopt as her name the name of the church to which she was attached" (Jantzen 4). Julian may have done this as she resided in a church attached to Saint Julian and the name then becomes reflective of her beliefs. The name changing is a kind of reflection of both their beliefs but also of a rebirth – which is symbolic for both women who chose a life of spirituality. However, in the case of Truth, changing her name was also a way to release herself from the shackles of slavery, to let go of any oppression that may still deter her.

bell hooks' notion of marginality and creation is valuable in this sense:

> Marginality [is] much more than a site of deprivation … it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance. As such, I was not speaking of a marginality which one wants to lose – to give up or surrender as part of moving to the center – but rather a site one stays in … It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds. (149–50)

Truth uses her travels and escape from slavery as time to "create [and] to imagine alternatives, new worlds" as "a space of resistance" to oppose what movement meant as a slave, and to transform that idea by becoming an itinerant preacher.

Interestingly, Truth does desire furniture. This is indicated in the *Narrative:* "[Sojourner Truth] saved her money and furnished her own living quarters" (84). This contrasts to the "necessary" items she took along with her when she left the city. According to Smith, "Furniture occupies a curiously ambiguous place among human artefacts. Strictly speaking, it is not necessary to human existence; and some cultures, more especially nomadic ones, seem to get on well enough without it" (7). Furniture then becomes an excess, instead of a necessity, however, I believe that it is a representation of the personality and style of the individual. Individuality and independence were significant to Truth and one sees this in how she wanted multiple photographs taken of her, to represent different sides of her, and to sell them so that she could obtain her own income.

Furniture was also a declaration of the freedom she attained. To attain furniture as a slave is to resist dehumanisation or being considered property, by acquiring property. Moreover, Nancy Armstrong speaks of how desire asserts agency. Armstrong speaks about "writing" about desire and the "domestic woman" and how this "contest[s]" the conventional ways in which male counterparts would write about the female in this space. Instead of being considered only from a conventional perspective, a woman gains agency from the moment she has "desire[s]" (15). This makes me consider then, how Truth's "desire" to have a home suggests how she was free to experience this kind of yearning. "Desire" becomes a privilege for Truth who had not been able to act upon this feeling while enslaved.

Truth's wish for a home is a common desire for slaves as is apparent in Harriet Jacob's life narrative, *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861). Early on in the narrative, Jacobs speaks of her grandmother finally attaining her own home: "My grandmother had, as much as possible, been a mother to her orphan grandchildren. By perseverance and unwearied industry, she was now mistress of a snug little home, surrounded with the necessaries of life" (17). Her hard work was acknowledged, and this home was well deserved. What I find interesting is Jacobs' description of the "snug" house as she suggests just how comfortable this "home" was – a comfort not afforded to slaves in slave lodgings. Jacobs is creating a distinction between how slaves lived before and after slavery. Through the idea of "snug" she is suggesting that the space is secure and protected enough for her grandmother to live freely. The things that would not have been considered necessary for slaves are now claimed as "necessaries". Connected with her "home" and to her things, which contrasts with the way in which slavery enforced distances between people and between slaves and their necessities. Jacobs speaks of being in the shed and how her grandmother would "[bring her] bedclothes and warm drinks" to make this unfortunate space comfortable for her (110). This discussion of "necessaries" makes me consider Truth's interest in Quaker style. The Quakers were renowned for their simplicity: "Amongst the new religious practices the Quakers adopted, by the 1670s a distinctive material culture, particularly dress and furniture, striking for its simplicity and termed 'Plain' or 'peculiar', was added to their customs" (Rumball 29). Marguerite Hallowell speaks similarly of the simplicity of Quakers: "The Quakers, whose diligence and thrift made them affluent, did not indulge in worldly pleasures, but liked comfort and good living" (67). I suggest, however, that Truth did not see Quaker style as merely thrift, but rather that plainness became a kind of style. The Quaker style then becomes a kind of aesthetic which for Truth becomes

representative of how she sees beauty in simplicity. This becomes another way in which her freedom of taste and opinion is practiced.

Jacobs' grandmother brings about in me similar feelings to my response to Truth as I consider that they had interests in aesthetics and beauty. I am moved by the moment when Jacobs was hidden and could not join her family for celebrations, and she was given a piece of material to create and reimagine. "Christmas was approaching. Grandmother brought me materials, and I busied myself making some new garments and little playthings for my children" (112). It was a fabric used to bind her to her family during this time – a fabric gifted to her by her grandmother, a woman who, it is suggested, could also find comfort in beautiful things like a piece of "material". The "material" may then also represent tangibility – something small which, could have the potential to be more. In her home, her grandmother, had the freedom to play with the potential it had. As much as Truth and Jacobs' grandmother were similar, their differences are evident in their aesthetic choices. Both women were shaped by slavery, however, Jacobs' grandmother responded to this by collecting beautiful things in her home. This may be compared to Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye:*

> Knowing that there was such a thing as outdoors bred in us a hunger for property, for ownership. The firm possession of a yard, a porch, a grape arbor. Propertied black people spent all their energies, all their love, on their nests. Like frenzied, desperate birds, they overdecorated everything; fussed and fidgeted over their hard-won homes; canned, jellied, and preserved all summer to fill the cupboards and shelves; they painted, picked, and poked at every corner of their houses. And these houses loomed like hothouse sunflowers among the rows of weeds that were the rented houses. Renting blacks cast furtive glances at these owned yards and porches, and made firmer commitments to buy themselves "some nice little old place." In the meantime, they saved, and scratched, and piled away what they could in the rented hovels, looking forward to the day of property. (11)

It is interesting that Morrison writes "overdecorated" as one word as the lack of the dash signals the "desperat[ion]", the abandoning of careful thought through fear. "[O]verdecorated" looks wrong. The word "decorated" is burdened by their "hunger". Reading Morrison's startling sentence, "[l]ike frenzied, desperate birds, they overdecorated everything; fussed and fidgeted over their hard-won homes…" made me feel sad and claustrophobic. "[P]icked, and poked at

every corner of their houses", undoes the beauty of "painted". Their yearning for beauty is distorted by their "desperat[ion]". This is complex because I feel empathy for these people, yet I am deeply disturbed and want some distance from this grasping at "property". Truth's dream of a home as a simple space she can freely live in and also depart from, has a different resonance then to the descendants of slaves in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* who "[look] forward to the day of property". "[O]verdecorated" may suggest how figures such as Jacobs' grandmother used décor as symbols of settling down, of being fixed in a space, and to negate the idea of being moved around as slaves. Zora Neale Hurston also notes the importance of decorating the home: "On the walls of the average Negro one always finds a glut of gaudy calendars, wall pockets…It indicated the desire for beauty…The feeling of such an act is that there can never be enough of beauty…" (34). In the novel, it reads: "Outdoors, we knew, was the real terror of life" (10). This may emphasise how Jacob's grandmother, an ex-slave, feared not having that stability again and the "outdoors" represented the displacement of slavery. However, Truth responded by been interested in simpler designs, evident in her fascination with Quaker styles. Having read Morrison and Jacobs, Truth's response to wanting a simple style becomes even more striking. Truth wanted beautiful things, however, the simple lines and minimalist features allowed for her a kind of freedom which opposed "overdecorat[ion]" and the weight of possessions.

Furnishings become symbolic of personal identity through Truth's specific style. Morrison may support this idea as she creates metaphors in *Beloved* out of interior design (323). Interior decorating is a symbol of identity: "More interesting is the possibility of a domestic interior (and social exterior) acquired for the very purpose, as it were, of self-substantiation, of making representation work for the individual: that is, for the ends of possessive individualism" (Chaudhari 174). Lucy Worsley notes the artistic possibilities of the domestic in her discussion of Jane Austen's domesticity: "…indeed women knew, all about the politics of housework and household management. But no one before Jane had turned them into art" (107). She speaks of how Austen was able to "[turn]" the domestic "into art" and I believe that by applying this notion to the interior space, décor and home become open to interpretation and reflect the interests of the individual.

Edward Lucie -Smith speaks of "Furniture [used] to make a purely personal and subjective statement about the individual who chooses to live with it" (8-10). Truth attempts to portray her personal taste in her home. Jacobs experiences a similar desire for a home: "The dream of my life is not yet realized. I do not sit with my children in a home of my own, I still long for a

hearthstone of my own, however humble. I wish it for my children's sake far more than for my own" (164). I cannot help but replay this line in my head: "home of my own", so powerful and evident in both life narratives.

This chapter was inspired by one sentence in *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* where she speaks of her wonder when offered a bed for the night during her travels. This moment carries so much within it as readers are invited to read what Truth was robbed of, however, it also signifies her personal interest in décor and home. The bed is the object which introduced me to Truth's fascination with beauty, and I have not to date come across any critical work on this. When Truth is offered a bed by a Quaker family, she expresses a sense of excitement and her reaction is what sparked my interest in exploring her appreciation for freedom through her desire for beauty:

> They gave her lodgings for the night; and it is very amusing to hear tell of the 'nice, high, clean, white, beautiful bed' assigned her to sleep in, which contrasted strangely with her former pallets, that she sat down and contemplated it, perfectly absorbed in wonder that such a bed should have been appropriated to one like herself. (32)

Gilbert states that it was, "amusing" when quoting Truth's exclamation about the bed. This "amuse[ment]" may stem from the fact that Truth recalls an ordinary object such as the "bed" in such a detailed manner. I don't find this scene "amus[ing]" in the comical sense, as much as I find it admirable. I admire how Truth maintained her willingness to see beauty– how her senses were not bound by slavery. The word "strangely" suggests a sense of surprise and this emphasises the "contrast" between the "pallets" and the "bed" by signalling that a "bed" was not commonly offered to Truth. Truth, who exclaims that she sat "perfectly absorbed" suggests just how much it meant to her. "Perfectly" reflects poignantly on the make-shift pallet beds she once slept on.

Within the subtle expression of her being "absorbed in wonder" lies her excitement about the "bed". Her joy is expressed through multiple adjectives: "'nice, high, clean, white, beautiful'". "High, clean, white" can be read as powerful contrasts to the life she had led in the "cellar" where she was situated "beneath" the house. The term, "high" opposes this, and contests her rank in society. Truth's fascination with cleanliness is also apparent through her reference to "white" symbolising purity in contrast to the "damp boards" of her "cellar". Beauty for Truth may have been symbolic not only of cleanliness, but of freedom as well, contrasting so vividly

with her accommodations when enslaved. Lara et.al speak of affect as "[t]he deliberate or incidental manipulation of material intensities" (32). Truth's response to the bed evokes the powerful "intensities" which may reside in the "material". As I read Truth's wonder at the "nice, high, clean, beautiful bed" I could not banish the image from my mind. I see myself at six, admiring my sister's white, four poster single bed. It was a bed I considered only fit for a princess; a bed I desired. After she moved out, the bed became mine and it declared my coming of age. To me, the bed has always symbolised a sense of dignity and growth. I assumed that the kind of sheets upon it, the base it rests upon, the headboard standing behind it, all represented the person curled up on it.

There was Truth, admiring a piece of furniture that was deliberately taken away from her. I am drawn to her use of "beautiful" because it emphasises her personal feelings about the bed. When I read Truth standing before a bed, I imagine a woman in awe, a response which is similar to how one would admire a sculpture in a gallery. When I think about what the bed meant to me as a child, I can only imagine the innocence of her joy. The profusion of adjectives strengthens the description and suggests how much the bed meant to her; through the detail she provides. This is different to the effect of Morrison's "overdecorated". Truth's many words are words of quiet appreciation, all the more powerful when one is reminded of the "pallets" of her past. Here was a woman, so greatly acknowledged for her physical demeanour and presence - which she has been noted to have expressed quite loudly - appreciating and quietly "absorb[ing] in wonder" the "[beauty]" of the "bed". One begins to discover a quieter side of her, not noted by many critics, reflecting her enjoyment of solitude. This tells me that this is a spiritual narrative, something different from conventional autobiography. I am invited then to read the bed as symbolic of her past, her loss and her desires. One cannot help but feel angry as, through this reference, she reminds readers of the oppressive system she was enslaved in. I am intrigued by her eye and I am interested in how Truth sees and finds beauty in objects. A woman enslaved, now given the freedom to rest on a bed instead of the floor, but who also has liberty and time to appreciate it. This says something about how beautiful things may allow one to feel a sense of freedom to feel calm and contented.

Critics look at Truth as powerful in her demeanour and speech, however, I am interested in aesthetics and how it brings about power as well. John Fiske speaks of everyday life and how art cannot be distanced from one's day to day life (154):

> Popular creativity is concretely contextual. It exists not as an abstract ability…of artistic creativity; it is a creativity of practice…It is a creativity which both produced objects such as quilts, diaries, or furniture arrangements but which is equally if not more productive in the practices of daily life, in the ways of dwelling, of walking, of making do. (158)

For me, Truth's "creativity" and interest in beautiful things becomes a reflection of how she chose to live her life. By not creating a distance between art and life, one begins to understand the importance of the aesthetic – as it is the aesthetic which reflects one's individuality and ultimately one's strength.

Morrison celebrates the importance of aesthetics and beauty in her essay, "Hard, True and Lasting":

> I have been for years, and it will probably be a fascination that lasts all my life, continually fascinated by the fact that no bestial treatment of human beings ever produce beasts…black people could be enslaved for generation after generation and recorded in statistics along with lists of rice, tar, and turpentine cargo, but they did not turn out to be cargo...those groups civilised the very horror that oppressed it. (223).

Slaves and ex-slaves created beautiful lives and that beauty became symbolic of defying the ugliness they endured.

Elaine Scarry suggests that an appreciation of beauty moves one to share, and that this impulse to share links beauty to fairness: "beautiful things give rise to the notion of distribution, to a lifesaving reciprocity, to fairness not just in the sense of loveliness of aspect but in the sense of a 'symmetry of everyone's relation to one another' (93 – 95). I like Scarry's argument because it links with how I read slave narratives like those Truth and Jacobs who note that beauty is about fairness. Scarry, when speaking of what beauty "moves" us to do implies that "beauty" is not superficial because it has the ability to make life more worthy:

> Homer is not alone in seeing beauty as lifesaving. Augustine described it as 'a plank amid the waves of the sea'. Proust makes a version of this claim over and over again. Beauty quickens. It adrenalizes. It makes the heart beat faster. It makes life more vivid, animated, living, worth living. (17-28)

Here, beauty instils a sense of desire for life within someone. To this I would like to add to this, the importance of the quietness which beauty may also create. Scarry's reference to "Augustine", is interesting. To view Augustine, a Saint, as a believer in beauty as "lifesaving", suggests how Truth's religious knowledge helped in moulding her into someone who appreciates beauty. An appreciation for beauty is reflective of an appreciation of life and "living" which suggests that these feelings she felt towards the "bed" provided a sense of freedom within her as it reassured her with a kind of possibility for what is and also what could be.

Interestingly, Truth's fascination with the "bed" is similar to anti-apartheid activist Hugh Lewin's delight with a bed he is given to sleep on, which contrasts to what he slept on in the prison cell[viii]:

> 'I got 'flu and was ordered to bed – bed at that stage consisting of my two felt mats on the floor of the cell. Just before supper of this first day-off in prison, I got the first shock; a mattress was brought in for me. A mattress! It was lovely on the floor, on a thick coir mattress. The second shock arrived the next morning: sheets. Two soft white clean sheets, making the mattress feel even softer and more comforting. If, the next day, they had added a pillow, I might have felt almost at home'. (73)

As a South African, born a year after our government was declared a democracy, I was educated about apartheid from my first year of school. We grew up reminded of apartheid and its grievances and consequences. I understood the severity of the prison system from what was taught to us and from family stories. Lewin's excitement over the "mattress" startled me because I was not expecting a recollection of prison, to speak about the yearning for beauty and comfort. His delight is both heart-warming and sad. He provides hints about aesthetic pleasure, and physical comfort, as resisting dehumanisation. There is a shared joy in Lewin and Truth's exclamations, and I cannot help but smile as I imagine the sight of Truth's excitement when seeing the "nice, high, clean, beautiful bed" and Lewin's excitement about his offered bed: "A mattress! It was lovely on the floor". Truth's use of adjectives to describe the bed and Lewin's exclamation which follows "mattress" signal to readers moments of delight. Through Lewin's use of "almost" alongside Truth's surprise at receiving a "bed", I am reminded of how their rights were taken from them. "Appropriated" suggests a taking away without permission and "almost" suggests what has been lost. What I find particularly

interesting is how Lewin is familiar with what a home should be as he says, "'I might have felt almost at home'" with "almost" reminding us that he was not free, whereas Truth never had a conventional "home". "Appropriate" also reflects Gilbert's language and her beliefs that it was only "appropriate" to give Truth a bed, signalling the justice Scarry discusses. Lewin and Truth were both imprisoned in different ways. Lewin speaks of "prison" and this is similar to Truth's reference to both the "cellar" as a confined space, and how she views her fellow slaves as "inmates". The idea of captivity and restraint is apparent in both narratives and the "bed" then becomes symbolic of freedom. Unlike Lewin, Truth's "bed" is "high" whereas he has a "mattress", yet both are elevated compared to what they slept on normally. This elevation allows them to recover a sense of pride and dignity. As a South African writer, I am intrigued by the link between South African history and the slave narrative. The similarities between these systems of oppression and their forms of resistance make me want to continue finding these connections. It suggests the magnitude of slavery, racism and marginalisation across the centuries and across the world. This connection is evident in Pumla Gqola's *What is Slavery to Me?:* "For the purposes of this book, slavery, colonialism and apartheid are seen as moments along a continuum, and not as separate, completely distinct, and mutually exclusive periods" (6). Reading of global oppression and different forms of slavery, I continue to be moved, not only by those who fought these systems, but by how people such as Truth and Lewin chose to do more than survive.

"Bed" also appears as a sign of privilege and resistance in Harriet Jacobs slave narrative *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), and Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987). Harriet Jacobs speaks of the bed as a space of security and privacy:

> Mr. Flint wished that I should sleep in the great house instead of the servants' quarters. His wife agreed to the proposition, but said I mustn't bring my bed into the house, because it would scatter feathers on her carpet. I knew when I went there that they would never think of such a thing as furnishing a bed of any kind for me and my little ones. I therefore carried my own bed, and now I was forbidden to use it. (80)

The fact that her "own bed" was "forbidden" suggests just how much of a privilege it was for a slave to lie upon one. It becomes a symbol of dignity for Jacobs' with the word "own" signifying ownership and suggesting how she held on to as much independence as she could. The bed as symbolic of privilege, dignity and resolution is suggested in *Beloved* as well, in the

eyes of little Denver – not a slave, yet still appreciative of her brothers' care in giving her space in their bed: " [her brothers] had been polite to her during the quiet time and gave her the whole top of the bed…" (23). Here, family and longing are symbolised through a bed. The idea of the "bed" as being a signifier of dignity and respect is evident in this case. Receiving a "whole" space to sleep in suggests also how her brothers were offering her a kind of freedom – to sleep how she willed and even more, to dream how she willed.

The "bed" is also symbolic of dreams and imagination, Gilbert refers to: "Isabella and her husband [and] the plan they drew of what they would do and the comforts they thought to have… a little home of their own" (49). I sometimes disregard the fact that Truth had romantic relationships, as she does not make it central to her narrative. However, she does mention having a "husband" and she speaks of the dreams they shared together as they "plan[ned" their desired home. I want to consider then how the "home" shared also symbolises a freedom not granted to slaves. When thinking of the significance of the "comforts they thought to have" I think of the "bed" and I am drawn to Carol Ann Duffy's poem "Anne Hathaway (Item I gyve unto my wife my second best bed)" (1999) [ix]:

The bed we loved in was a spinning world
of forests, castles, torchlight, cliff-tops, seas
where he would dive for pearls…

My living laughing love –
I hold him in the casket of my widow's head
as he held me upon that next best bed.

Truth briefly mentions the life she and her lover desired. When I think of "comforts", I think of the bed and how when wanting their own home, they would have wanted their own "bed". The "bed" then may be a space for sharing, as well as a space which provided the liberty to dream and imagine peacefully. Duffy speaks of both intimacy in the "bed we loved" as well as possibilities of dreaming in "forests, castles…". However, the bed Truth is offered as a guest reminds her of the bed she and her husband never had.

In Richard Kearney's introduction to Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, he speaks of what the home means to Bachelard as a space of "intimacy, secrets, sites of interiority and contemplation…Bachelard shows us ways of dwelling again in the flesh of space, of dreaming

our homes as nests and shells, of reimagining hidden gardens and caverns where we can delve back into a world of natality, newness, beginning" (xviii). This is suggestive of what the bed and the home may have meant to Truth. I believe that these were not only spaces of "intimacy" with another for Truth; "interiority" invites me to consider the bed as a space of solitude. It represents a different kind of closeness and oneness with herself as this was not afforded when sleeping in cellars with other slaves. I would like to argue that having her own bed and home, afforded her the privilege to have the freedom of space where to "[dream]" and "[reimagine]". What I am drawn to is the idea that the home is a space of "beginning[s]" and this is significant not only because Truth was a creative being, but because she sought this "newness [and] beginning]" at a late stage of her life as it was only at this point that she was able to attain it.

CHAPTER FOUR: SERMON AND SONG

Reading Toni Morrison's *Beloved* led me to read Sojourner Truth's *Narrative.* I find interesting connections between Truth and Baby Suggs in *Beloved*, and with early mystics Julian of Norwich and Hildegard von Bingen for the significance of spiritual solitude. Reading fiction and life narratives together enriches my understanding of these inspiring figures. Solitude has not been given much critical attention in *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* and I want to look at how her need for solitude enables creativity but is always haunted by the fear of loss and loneliness. In this chapter I focus on Truth's need for both solitude and community, and how her choice to be an itinerant preacher raises some interesting questions about how one defines community. I suggest Truth uses call and response to create a sense of community and that her audience inspired her just as much as she inspired them. I compare Truth's writing with the Negro Spiritual as Truth shared her revelations and spiritual messages through song. Truth is admired for her voice and I read her as a composer, similarly to how one reads Hildegard Von Bingen. Truth's *Narrative* is interestingly different to those of other African- American women preachers such as Julia Foote, Zilpha Elaw and Jarena Lee, in her adaptation of the Bible stories and her shaping of her *Narrative* through memories of her family. I read for diasporic connections in Truth's retelling of Bible stories, influenced by memories of her mother's storytelling.

Sojourner Truth was quite happy on her own. In the chapter entitled, *Isabella's Religious Experience,* Truth speaks of how she once believed that her prayers would stand a greater chance of being heard if she prayed "under the open canopy of heaven" (40). "[H]eaven" reminds me of Truth's memory of her mother finding solace in thinking of how the children sold away from her slept beneath the "same stars" (12). By adopting her mother's storytelling methods, Truth may have felt as if her mother was with her. This idea works alongside spiritual solitude as she felt "impressed with the idea" that she could talk to God and He would provide "relief", which is similar to her memories of her mother providing comfort. She found a place which "was a small island in a small stream…It was a lonely spot, and chosen by her for its beauty, its retirement…" (41). Even though it may appear "lonely" either to Gilbert, as the editor, or Truth who may have acknowledged this – it was still "chosen by her" suggesting how contented she was with the peace she found in solitary spaces. There is the fear of loneliness, but also solace in "beauty", and "retirement". Critics focus on Sojourner Truth's preaching and political activism rather than a need for solitude and how this enables a new vision of

community. I want to look at solitude as a space for creative reflection which enables a new vision of community, but also ambivalently, as holding the fear of loneliness which inspired the imagining of new fluid forms of community. I want to consider spiritual solitude and how her faith helped her feel less "alone" while traveling independently. Painter states of her time as a slave, "Isabella frequently worked alone…[she] had no access to a community beyond her master's tight control" (13). I believe that her quest to create communities may have been inspired by a response to her loneliness as a slave.

Truth, throughout her *Narrative* speaks of instances of loneliness and abandonment. In the *Narrative* Truth speaks of her father, heartbreakingly, as being alone and neglected on his last days, after the death of his wife:

> A rude cabin, in a lone wood, far from any neighbors, was granted to our freed friends, as the only assistance they were not to expect… Yet, lone, blind and helpless as he was, James for a time lived on…And shortly after [Soan an emancipated slave's] visit, this faithful slave, this deserted wreck of humanity, was found on his miserable pallet, frozen and stiff in death. (17)

Sandra Sims speaks of the "long-lasting" marriage which slaves enjoyed after being "emancipated" and, Bomefree might have considered that once "emancipated" he would enjoy his final years with his wife (163). The impossibility of this may have aggravated his sense of loneliness. Acknowledging her father's death in her *Narrative,* Truth is not only honouring him and introducing readers to the effects of slavery, but she may also be emphasising why her later seeking of community was essential to her: "Afterwards, she gradually became pleased with, and attached to, the place and the people, as well she might; for it must have been no small thing to have found a home in a 'Community composed of some of the choicest spirits of the age…'" (82). By telling readers so early in the *Narrative* in the chapter, "Death of Bomefree" of her father's loneliness, she reveals the fear of abandonment which always haunts her. This is emphasised in the repetitive use of "lone" in the extract and "lonely" in the *Narrative.* The phrase, "[n]o small thing" reflects the relief it was for Truth to have "found a home". This emphasises how finding the "place and the people" was still, even as an itinerant preacher, a desire of hers.

Gaston Bachelard reads solitude as a complex feeling which holds ambivalences: "the spaces in which we have suffered from solitude, enjoyed, desired and compromised solitude, remain indelible within us…" (31). He suggests that solitude holds both a sense of loneliness and the

space to explore oneself. I want to consider this "enjoyed, desired" solitude for Sojourner Truth, who may have in her "solit[ary]" moments considered a new kind of community. Yet, Bachelard also speaks of the "spaces in which we have suffered from solitude" and I am reminded of her life as a slave, robbed of her family. One may then read her as constantly seeking companionship because of this loss. By choosing to be an itinerant preacher, Truth chose a life of movement and relocation –in contrast to the idea of fixed communities, she created inclusive forms of communities whereever she went. I want to look at the solitary moments between the camp-meetings. The conversations she had with God in her retreats in nature reflect both solace and the anxieties of a search for home. After escaping the from Dumont's, she walked up a hill and, "sat down, fed her infant, and again turning her thoughts to God, her only help, she prayed him to direct her to some safe asylum" (28). "Thoughts" is interesting because it draws attention to a creative contemplation and not just the supplication of "prayed". Important here is the mental space and possession of her own thoughts no longer governed by the slave system. The mental freedom attained through her reflection in solitude allowed her the space for her own beliefs to practise her spirituality and to create without limitation.

Truth's seeking God in this time of homelessness and fear reminds me of mystic Julian of Norwich, whose great revelation occured when she fell ill: "it was in the context of that illness that she received the vivid and dramatic visions of the passion of Christ" (Jantzen 53). I read the "illness" as providing a kind of solitude which may have strenghtened these "visions".

> When we examine the testimonies of the mystics of past and present, we are struck by the unanimity of agreement between them all. Their methods may vary, but their ultimate realizations are identical in content. They tell us of a supramental experience, obtained through contemplation, which directly reveals the Truth, the ultimate, the final, Truth of all existence. It is this experience, which is the hallmark of the mystic; it goes by different names, but the experience is the same for all. (Swami Abhayananda 1)

Both women had revelations of Jesus. Truth notes of her experience: "Now he appeared to her delighted mental vision as so mild, so good, and so every way lovely, and he loved her so much! And, how strange that he has always loved her, and she had never known it! And how great a blessing he conferred, in that he should stand between her and God!" (45-46). This

reflects how significant solitude was to mystics and preachers such as Truth for such revelations.

Taking time to reflect on their relationship with God was important to mystics such as Julian of Norwich and Sojourner Truth, however, even though they experienced these revelations alone, it was their sharing of them which suggests how significant community still was. What this reaching out suggests is how the fear of loss always remained with Truth. Solitude may suggest peace and contentment, but may also be haunted by a fear of loneliness. To be alone and to be happy in that space is a freedom one gives oneself. Yet, she always carried within her the desire to share what she has acquired in her solitude.

Truth and Julian of Norwich both use metaphors of maternal care in speaking of their religious experience. Interestingly Julian of Norwich speaks of Jesus as a mother:

> The mother may suffer the child to fall sometimes, and to be hurt in diverse manners for its own profit, but she may never suffer that any manner of peril come to the child, for love. And though our earthly mother may suffer her child to perish, our heavenly Mother, Jesus…(154)[x]

Later in life, Truth used maternal endearments as a preacher. In Hartford and vicinity she spoke to a group of people who believed in the "'Second Advent'":

> In one part of the grounds, she found a knot of people greatly excited: she mounted a stump and called out, 'Hear! Hear!' When the people had gathered around her, as they were in a state to listen to anything new, she addressed them as 'children,' and asked them why they made such a 'To-do; are you not commanded to 'watch and pray?' You are neither watching nor praying.' And she bade them, with the tones of a kind mother, retire to their tents, and there watch and pray, without noise or tumult for the Lord would not come to such a scene of confusion; 'the Lord is still and quiet.' She assured them… (75-76)

The audience "gathered" around her and this makes me consider her as a mother "gather[ing]" her family around her. "[A]ssured" depicts her in a maternal and dependable light. Truth transforms the authoritative figure of the preacher through the language and tones of a kind mother. Gilbert says, "she called out" and this reminds me of early on in the *Narrative* when she speaks of her mother who sat down, "calling her children" to tell them stories (12). "Calling" is also interesting to consider in relation to religion: "Sense of calling is often

described with language steeped in religious tradition. It is variously described as a spiritual process or endeavour or as a summons by God to fulfil a specific purpose or task in life" (Swezey 316). It also suggests Truth's 'calling' to become a preacher and reflects the Black preachers as "Christians [who] have been called out of the world to live lives separate and apart from the present order" (La Rue 26). Truth's 'calling' to preach is apparent in her decision to "leave the city" after realising that her laborious work is unfulfilling. She decides to go to the East as "the Spirit called [her] there" to do Gods work (67-68). "Called" may also be read as Truth's religious beliefs being influenced by her mother's use of language which reflect African religious beliefs. This emphasises the diasporic link between Truth and her African heritage as it is reflective of indigenous African's "[calling]" upon their ancestors. Igor Kopytoff defines ancestors as being "vested with mystical powers and authority" as well as being the "dead members of the lineage" who are "appealed to in times of crisis" (129- 130). Her reimagining of her children is present also in, "[I] have talked and sung to you" with "sung" symbolising the way a mother lulls her child. Her fluid idea of community is represented in how she invites them, but also reassuringly, sends them away to "retire to their tents". This of course, suggests that Truth tried to calm the audience down, however, her acts of bringing in and sending away symbolises the way she felt about community. The audience will "retire" but because of her "tone" and reassurance, they will still feel included in something. Truth may have found and given comfort in creating this kind of community.

This yearning to share is what inspired Truth's search for communities. I want to look at how Truth's sermons, affected those around her, however, I also want to read her reactions and how through call and response, she does not only move the audience, but how they respond, also affects her. Truth's audiences her through their responses offered her a kind of comfort which motivated her position as an itinerant preacher.

When delivering a sermon in one camp meeting, her singing calmed a group of rowdy boys (80). This makes one consider the Negro Spiritual, as a form of music which unites as it was formed by those who "did not all speak the same language" but found community in music (Johnson 13). Truth's welcoming presence, through her songs, refused racial boundaries:

> A party of wild young men, with no motive but that of entertaining themselves by annoying and injuring the feelings of others, had assembled at the meeting…causing much disturbance…Sojourner left the tent alone and unaided, and walking some thirty rods to the top of a small rise on the ground, commenced

> to sing, in her most fervid manner, with all the strength of her most powerful voice, the hymn on the resurrection of Christ…As [Truth] commenced to sing, the young men made a rush towards her, and she was immediately encircled by a dense body of the rioters... 'We ar'n't going to hurt you, old woman; we came to hear you sing,' cried many voices, simultaneously. 'Sing to us old woman'. (79-80)

The extract is significant in suggesting the way in which Truth affected her audiences who pleaded for her to "sing" and "encircled" her, creating a kind of community. Here, I want to look at how Truth used her voice through the Negro Spiritual to unite people, but I also want to look at why creating these communities was essential to her. Perkins characterises the Negro Spiritual as "songs [which] reveal struggles passed (223)". The Negro Spirituals "sprung" from those who were "held under an increasingly harsh system of slavery…[the] source of material, [was] generally the Bible" resulting in the Spirituals strong religious connotations (Johnson 13). Considering this, the Spirituals which hide messages of hope and resistance are similar to Truth's spiritual narrative with her references to God in her story-telling. The idea is emphasised when one considers Jeffrey. C Stewart's claim that, "if we listen to her words with an ear to the 'blues voice' that Houston [Houston A. Baker] has found in African American Literature, then we can still hear her voice…" (35). If Negro Spirituals derive from the hardships endured, then the Blues tone in Truth's voice is one which also contains hints of grief.

Carleton Mabee and Susan Mabee Newhouse argue that Truth wrote her own music and claim 'I Bless the Lord I've Got My Seal' as one of her compositions (227).

She sings this song to the group of "wild young men":

> "'To slay Goliath in the field – to-day and to-day;
>
> The good old way is a righteous way,
>
> I mean to take the kingdom in the good old way'" (81)

Speaking of "Goliath" she makes a Biblical link which symbolises that she may appear vulnerable alongside these "men" yet through her "slay[ing]" of them by standing up to sing she is displaying through song, that she is powerful. She presents herself as David, someone seemingly powerless but able to defeat the powerful. Through Biblical allusion, Truth portrays herself as a great leader and her voice is met by voices which "cr[y]" out to her in response.

Truth understood the significance of Biblical language and it was used as the foundation of her sermons and songs to include people in her efforts to create community.

Gilbert records that Truth's "…dignified manner…and her singular and sometimes uncouth expressions never provoked a laugh… [and that her audience was struck by her] remarkable talent for singing" (78). While "uncouth" is generally read as vulgar, here "dignified" transforms the term into something suggestive of Zora Neale Hurston's argument that "…there has been no genuine presentation of Negro songs to white audiences. The spirituals that have been sung around the world are Negroid to be sure, but so full of musicians' tricks that Negro congregations are highly entertained when they hear their old songs so changed" (42). "[U]ncouth" therefore, reflects something of the expressive quality of the old Negro Spirituals without the later ornament which Hurston dismisses.

The spontaneity of the Negro Spiritual is fitting when considering the dynamic presence of Truth and how she chose to create a *Narrative* which follows a non-linear structure. This spontaneity is represented by Hurston in *Their Eyes Were Watching God:*

> While Davis chanted a traditional prayer-poem with his own variations, Joe mounted the box that had been placed for the purpose and opened the brazen door of the lamp. As the word Amen was said, he touched the lighted match to the wick, and Mrs. Bogle's alto burst out in:
>
> *We'll walk in de light, de beautiful light*
>
> *Come where the dew drops of mercy shine bright*
>
> *Shine all around us by day and by night*
>
> *Jesus, the light of the world.*
>
> They, all of them, all of the people took it up and sung it over and over until it was wrung dry, and no further innovations of tone and tempo were conceivable. (43)

Reading "Mrs. Bogle's alto burst out in…" I imagine what Truth's singing may have sounded like. I feel that this is Hurston's attempt at a more "genuine presentation of Negro songs". Morrison's representation of Baby Suggs' sermon in the clearing in *Beloved* also explores the significance of the Negro Spiritual:

> Saying no more, she stood up then and danced with her twisted hip the rest of what her heart had to say while the others opened their mouths and gave her the music. Long notes held until the four -part harmony was perfect enough for their deeply loved flesh. (104)

In response to how slaves were silenced, and torn apart, Morrison describes their voices coming together as "perfect". It is as if the Negro Spiritual allowed for a "harmony" which symbolised not only unity but a kind of "perfect[ion]" which dismisses how slaves were considered before emancipation. "[P]erfect" may seem out of reach, yet through song and through forming bonds what was once unattainable, may now be found. Her language is celebratory as Baby Suggs, "danced", however, grief is felt when considering how "long notes" symbolises a long line of pain. Yet, alongside that lies a sense of relief as "long notes" can be read as taking in a breath, with the promise, through song, of exhalation and release.

We can only imagine Truth's voice from what spectators have said. However, I believe that we may get a glimpse of her stature and an echo of her voice by listening to contemporary spiritual singers such as Jessye Norman[xi]. Looking at Norman, in her bold dress and voice, I see reflections of Truth. Washington speaks of Truth's physical presence: "Towering in both stature and oral eloquence, Sojourner Truth was an omnipresent…figure…" and this image appears similar to how Norman portrayed herself (1). The description in the *Narrative* of Truth's voice as being "sonorous" helps me imagine that her voice was as full and deep in tone as Norman's (81). Truth's "most powerful voice" emphasises the strength of her voice and I am curious about how she may have sounded. We are left with no recordings of Truth's voice and this is why I imagine her voice through the contemporary singer Jessye Norman.

I also want to explore her singing alongside twelfth-century composer and mystic, Hildegard von Bingen's music. I am interested specifically in Von Bingen because of her work with text and music. In her text, she has been noted to say: "And it came to pass in the eleven hundred and forty-first year of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, Son of God, when I was forty-two years and seven months old, that the heavens were opened and a blinding light of exceptional brilliance flowed through my entire brain" (Flanagan 3). The, "blinding light" is similar to Truth 'seeing' Jesus in her "delighted mental vision". Both women then, experience a specific moment where their understanding of God becomes luminous. However, what is striking to me is how these women used music as expressive tools. Von Bingen's music is haunting – in the sense that it captivates a listener's entire body and stays with you long after it has been played.

Von Bingen's piece, *O ignis Spiritus paracliti,* translated to English as, O Fire of the Spirit and Defender, speaks of God as wise and as an educator:

> "You are the teacher of the truly learned,
> whose joy you grant
> through Wisdom's inspiration." [xii]

This reflects Von Bingen's personal belief that God has guided her. The phrase "truly learned" may suggest a sense of revelation with "teach" reflecting a kind of enlightenment. However, what enchants me about Von Bingen's music is its melodious tune which I would like to look at next to the conventions of the Negro Spiritual as "[preaching] service songs [which] are usually sung to a slow time, and are soft and melodious" (Perkins 223). I find similarities between the melody of both forms of music; however, the greatest similarity lies in its effect on listeners. This kind of musical impact reminds me of Truth's "powerful voice" and the audience who urged her to "sing" and I want to then argue for Truth not only as a writer and preacher but also a composer in her own right.

Truth also used call and response to create connections in her sermons:

> [Call and response is defined as a] style of African American gospel music—a style, of course, that originated in Africa and developed in the United States during slavery. As Craig Werner describes it, 'At its best, the gospel impulse helps people experience themselves *in relation to* rather than *on their own*'. (Ryan 2)

The "'beloved community'" is what strikes me in Craig Werner's definition of what call and response means in music: "The interlocking rhythms, the calls and responses, helped create a sense of the 'beloved community'" (13). There is a moment in the *Narrative* where Truth recalls the reaction of her audience and I can almost see her joy in receiving responses in the way she remembers them:

> 'The other preachers have the sheep, *I* have the goats. And I have a few sheep among my goats, but they are *very* ragged.' This exordium produced great laughter…While she paused, they loudly clamored for 'more,' 'more,' – 'sing,' 'sing more.' She motioned them to be quiet, and called out to them: 'Children, I have talked and sung to you, as you asked me; and now I have a request to make of you: will you grant it?' 'Yes, yes, yes,' resounded from every quarter…(81)

Her enjoyment of call and response is signified in how she addressed them as "'Children'" taking up the role of a maternal figure. Her sermon becomes a conversation as she poses the question, "'will you grant it?'". That there was respect between Truth and her audience is evident and by including her audience into her sermons, through humour, rhetoric and repetition, Truth forms bonds and creates relationships which counter the idea of distance and displacement. Her use of rhetorical questions is shaped by the conventions of call and response and it implies her need for an affirmative response from her audience. This method is linked to African story-telling and Ruth Finnigan notes: "Even in less formalized relationships the actual literary expression can be greatly affected by the presence and reactions of the audience. For one thing, the type of audience involved can affect the presentation of an oral piece" (13).

Maggie Sale's analysis of call and response in *Beloved* suggests the importance of this method "for communal response is part of the contemporary healing process" (44). This emphasises the similarities between Baby Suggs, "the unchurched preacher" and Truth. Truth uses "children" as a term of endearment for her audience. Baby Suggs states, "Let the children come" referring to "children" in the literal sense (Morrison 103). In *Beloved* Baby Suggs, "called the women to her, 'Cry,' she told them. 'For the living and the dead. Just cry'. And without covering their eyes the women let loose" (103). Truth and Baby Suggs are also similar in their physical authority as Baby Suggs, "situat[ing] herself on a huge flat-sided rock… bowed her head and prayed silently" (102), and Truth, " walking some thirty rods to the top of a small rise of ground, commenced to sing" (79). Both women, who elevate themselves to pray, to address and to sing, emphasise their roles as figures with "ministerial authority" (La Rue 11). Yet, even with this authority – the audience responses are significant in having the power to inspire these preaching women.

Truth shared similarities with other African American women preachers, however, she was also significantly different in how she included memories of her family in her *Narrative,* and how she adapted her Biblical stories. Jarena Lee (*The Life and Religious Experience of Jarena Lee, A Coloured Lady, Giving An Account Of Her Call To Preach The Gospel* 1836), Zilpha Elaw, (*Memoirs of The Life, Religious Experience, Ministerial Travels and Labours Of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw, an American Female of Colour; Together with Some Account of The Great Religious Revivals in America* 1846) and Julia Foote (*A Brand Plucked From The Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch By Mrs. Julia A. J. Foote* 1879) quote the Bible for authority but do not adapt Bible stories[xiii]. Truth's feelings about God were similar to those felt by Jarena Lee and Zilpha Elaw who both express their concern with being sinners. Lee says, "At this awful

point, in my early history, the spirit of God moved in power through my conscience, and told me I was a wretched sinner" (27) and Law shares a similar sentiment: "My prayer was daily for the Lord to assure me of the forgiveness of my sins" (56). This is similar to Truth who regrets the way she once spoke to God: "He heart recoils now, with very dread, when she recalls these shocking, almost blasphemous conversations with the great Jehovah" (41). The words, "sinner", "sins" and "blasphemous" suggest a sense of regret and guilt and William L. Andrews speaks of these feelings as being traditional to the Afro-American Spiritual Autobiography tradition: "In many narratives of conversion, a sense of guilt and occasionally paralyzing anxiety troubles the prospective Christian…" (11). These are common threads shared between these women, however, I believe that just as Truth adapted her Bible stories, as mentioned in my earlier chapter, she adapts the conventions of the spiritual narrative through strong references to her family, throughout her *Narrative.* Andrews notes of Lee, Elaw and Foote:

> The pattern that all three women impose on their lives from their youth through their conversion and its aftermath is very traditional among spiritual autobiographers…None of these women is especially interested in describing her youth or her family in detail…For each of these women her life before conversion was of no real significance except insofar as it could be used as a kind of negative moral object lesson for her reader. (11)

Lee and Foote did not have the kind of religious upbringing that Truth remembers which may have led them to not include much that has no relation to God in their narratives. Lee says, "My parents being wholly ignorant of the knowledge of God, had not therefore instructed me in any degree in this matter…" (27) and Foote: "My parents continued to attend to the ordinances of God as instructed, but knew little of the power of Christ to save; for their spiritual guides were as blind as those they led" (167). I have noticed that these women leave their families behind in their narratives by not speaking of them as the text develops, whereas Truth reimagines hers, throughout. Unlike these women, Truth's childhood and specifically her relationship with her mother, comes with memories of being taught about God.

When reading the spiritual narrative, one expects the common themes of religion, survival and spirituality. Just like Truth, Julia Foote expressed the moment in which she decided to preach:

> For months, I had been moved upon to exhort and pray with the people, in my visits from house to house; and in meetings my whole soul seemed drawn out for

> the salvation of souls…Some of my mistaken friends said I was too forward, but a desire to work for the Master, and to promote the glory of his kingdom in the salvation of souls, was food to my poor soul. (200)

Foote's statement that preaching was "food to [her] poor soul" is significant. Interestingly, Foote does not include in her narrative the words and responses of those she was preaching to. "[E]xhort" suggests the instructions of a figure of authority and the "food" here comes from her sense of working for God, not from the responses of the people. Truth includes their responses in the *Narrative*: "but often were the whole audiences melted into tears by her touching stories" and by retelling this she is suggesting how she was equally "touched" by those to whom she preached (77). Foote also directly quotes the Bible suggesting that, unlike Truth, she was able to read. This method may have been to represent her as a reader as Katherine Clay Bassard says that nineteenth century African American women desired literacy, specifically to read the Bible:

> The desire to read permeates slave narratives, and the link between literacy and freedom has been well documented. In *When I Can Read My Title Clear*, Janet D. Cornelius demonstrates the almost inextricable link between literacy and religion; the desire to read was, more often than not, a desire to read not just any book but the Protestant Bible. (35)

Foote includes direct quotations from the Bible: "Dear children, with enlightened Christian parents to teach you how thankful you should be that 'from a child you are able to say that you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ' [2 Tim. 3:15]'", to represent her own authority as a preacher (170). I am moved by this idea that education signifies independence, however, I want to look at Truth, who received a different kind of education and who, even though illiterate, had the ability to preach through adapting Bible stories.

Elaw says: "In my father's house, family devotion was regularly attended to morning and evening; prayer was offered up, and the praises of God were sung" (54). This is similar to Truth's earliest form of religious education through her mother: "she would sometimes repeat, 'Our Father in heaven,' in her Low Dutch, as taught her by her mother…" (41). However, unlike Truth, Elaw does not continue to make references to her family throughout her *Narrative.* "[R]epeat" is significant in suggesting how the prayer has been memorized and this is suggestive of the African American tradition of memorizing the text. It was words which

offered Truth's security. She created communities through her speech – remaking the notion of community. Community, then, is not linked by place but by sermons and songs. Continuing to recite suggests how it may have been a way to remember her mother. Truth does spend a great deal of time in the *Narrative* speaking of her life as a preacher, however, she carries the memory of her childhood throughout it through metaphor and mentioning of her family. In this light, she may be honouring them and keeping alive a sense of her mother's voice.

There is a connection to be made between all of these spiritual autobiographies and St. Augustine's *Confessions* because they follow the conventions of confessing their sins and seeking redemption: "I confess to Thee, my God, whatever my soul will, and acquiesce in the condemnation of my evil ways"(*The Confessions of Saint Augustine* gutenberg.org). "God" was considered by both Truth and St. Augustine as the great Judge. However, she extends Biblical references to the political which follows the tradition of the slave narrative. Moreover, Mary G. Mason notes the distinction between St. Augustine's *Confessions* and the female identity:

> [T]he self…as the stage for battle…[and this] simply does not accord with the deepest realities of women's experience…[as] the female identity seems to acknowledge the real presence and recognition of another consciousness, and the disclosure of female self is linked to the identification of some 'other'. (210)

St Augustine speaks of the "self", but Truth needs the community or "other consciousness" and this makes her *Narrative* different. While like others she draws from the tradition of the confessions by admitting sin, where she is different is her need for community.

Truth's *Narrative* is also different from other spiritual narratives in her adaptation of Bible stories, and I would like to argue that this also signifies an attaining of freedom and authority. Kenneth H. Hill quotes Thomas Hoyt: "The Bible has been both primer, culturally speaking, and a sacred "authoritative" book for black people. Its character as primer relates to the history of slavery in American culture and its practice of restricting slaves from reading and writing" (45). Therefore, interpreting the Bible becomes a reclaiming of restricted freedoms and Truth's adaptation suggests how "reading and writing" as conventional forms of education, were not the only forms of learning. Bassard speaks of the way African American women transformed Bible stories:

> What did nineteenth-century African American women writers do with the Bible? African American women writers were profoundly aware of the hermeneutical and

> theological difficulties created by the Bible defense of slavery in the nineteenth century. Rather than engage in the type of point-by-point debate held by Frederick Douglass, Henry Bibb, and other black male abolitionists, black women in the nineteenth century chose to dismantle the Bible defense through literary representation in genres like poetry, fiction, and even spiritual narrative and written prayers. (48)

Her use of "dismantle" is interesting as it suggests that that the oppressors view of the Bible was disrupted and challenged. Truth not only questions slavery through her references to the Bible, but she also transforms the stories to allow for an inclusive notion of community:

> 'Well, there are two congregations on this ground. It is written that there shall be separation, and the sheep shall be separated from the goats. The other preachers have the sheep. I have the goats. And I have a few sheep among my goats, but they are very ragged.' (80-81).

The reference is to the story in the Bible of Jesus' separation of the sheep from the goats:

> When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 25:32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 25:33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. (King James, Matthew. 25. 31 – 33)

Truth's reference to the "sheep" indicates her knowledge of the Bible, however, she adapts it to suit her situation and brings in humour and wit to draw the attention of her audience. This portrays her intelligence in her ability to apply scripture to certain events. She has the "goats" and a few "sheep" and by mentioning them she is refusing to dismiss those seen as outcasts.

Callahan speaks of the Bible in the experience of African Americans:

> The Bible has been available to African Americans as no other literature. 'Biblical imagery was used because it was at hand,' writes historian of religion Charles Long. 'It was adapted to and invested with the experience of the slave.' In so doing, the slaves took in hand what was at hand and impressed it into the service of forming the collective imagination, the cultural task of any people if they are to survive. (xii)

This use of adaptation and imagination was a source of survival and hope. I am interested in how it inspired "imagination" which prompted storytelling and creation. Truth's wanting to adapt Bible stories is evident in how she asked children to read to her so that she had her own interpretation:

> Children, as soon as they could read distinctly, would re-read the same sentence to her, as often as she wished, and without comment; and in that way she was enabled to see what her own mind could make out of the record…She wished to compare the teachings of the Bible with the witness within her… (74)

This suggests that language carries multiple meanings. Thus, Truth's adaptation and interpretation of Bible stories is reflective of Afro-American literary tradition in how she reads but interprets all the other possibilities the language could possess.

Truth also adopts Bible stories in her, "Ar'n't I a Woman" speech, delivered against claims made by a white man degrading female rights. The speech is read for its feminist qualities as Truth states, "I could work as much and eat as much as a man" (92). Her role as an advocate for women's rights draws together the tradition of political speeches and sermons and also influences later religious and political figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. I acknowledge this, however, I do believe that it is her use of language, in this speech, as well as in her others, that underline that she ought to be read for her intellectual abilities as opposed to the political readings, many critics have offered. Henry Louis Gates argues that: "close reading of any intellectual complexion is that which [he] advocates" but that African American literature is, "too often [read] to employ the text at hand to serve an essentially 'political' function" (124). I have drawn on Gates' request that African American literature should be read as closely as one would read fiction. In doing so, one recognises her use of rhetoric in the "Ar'n't I a Woman" speech in, "I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me – and ar'n't I a woman?" (Campbell quoted in Siebler 532). The rhetorical question is emphasised through the alliterative, "plowed, and planted. The use of "plowed" is also an echo of the Biblical language where "plowing" and "planting" is often used metaphorically:

> And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up. Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth. And

> when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. (*King James Bible,* Matthew. 13. 3-6)

The similarities lie in the metaphor created through, "sower" and "seeds" as Jesus speaks of guiding those who are willing to follow Him in comparison with those who dismiss Him. This is similar to Truth who addresses an audience who chooses to listen, as well as to confront the men who question her abilities. The implied reference to slaves working in the field drawn together with Biblical metaphor brings together different traditions, creates community and enables social and political critique.

To use humour in such an intelligent way portrays wit, however, this method to entertain her audience suggests just how much the response of the audience means to her. Truth's role as an orator challenges the distinction between oral and written narratives. Bassard argues for the way in which slaves "sought to de-authorize the master's unauthorized reading of the Bible as a racialized proslavery text" (37). I acknowledge this, but would like to suggest a different reading as well – that Truth's adaptation and oral retelling of the Bible stories stem from the stories shared with her by her mother: "She taught them to kneel and say the Lord's prayer…Thus, in her humble way, did she endeavour to show them their Heavenly Father, as the only being who could protect them in their perilous condition" (12). Isabel Hofmeyr draws attention to African oral literature as education:

> 'Folktales have served as the mainstream of African education. Folktale images are readily remembered, and the lesson driven home remains attached to narrative cores which are not easily forgotten. The performer of tales fires the child's imagination, and produces an emotional involvement'. (33)

Truth's transformative sermons depend in part on the fusion of biblical narrative with these "folktale images". The "emotional involvement" is also clearly important to her, through her use of humour and call and response. Truth's use of oral form is significant, and Walter Ong says:

> Speech is inseparable from our consciousness and it has fascinated human beings, elicited serious reflection about itself, from the very early stages of consciousness, long before writing came into existence. Proverbs from all over the world are rich with observations about this overwhelmingly human phenomenon of speech in its native oral form, about its powers, its beauties, its dangers. (9)

Written language is an extension of the oral as a primary form of communication. Jeffrey Stewart, who otherwise is critical of Gilbert's role as editor, acknowledges the importance of the oral form in the *Narrative*: "Fortunately, Sojourner's voice does break through the narrative, often in quotes from Sojourner herself. At that point, the writing style becomes that of a dictated autobiography and reflects the episodic character of oral testimony" (xli). Truth's use of oral storytelling techniques is also linked to the African Diaspora. Ruth Finnegan says, while referring to an Akan Dirge that, African oral literature is "an aesthetic experience for poet and audience…[with] facial expressions, vocal expressiveness and movements", similar to Truth's captivating presence (5-6).

Her voice is especially interesting because of its folklore qualities, carrying a long line of traditional storytelling. Thus, I would like to suggest that Truth and later Hurston adapt the beast fable to reflect the experience of slaves and their descendants. The retelling of stories, in a similar way to their ancestors is a way in which to honour heritage as well as the family and friends who have instilled this skill of storytelling in them. I am interested in the tradition of folklore and how it has travelled across locations and time. In his introduction to Hurston's study of African American folklore, *Of Mules and Men*, Franz Boas speaks of this tradition: "A rich tradition of storytelling existed for centuries in West Africa. This tradition, which the slaves brought with them, became the basis for storytelling… One kind of folktale is the animal tale, so called beast fable, in which human characteristics are attributed to animals" (181). Hurston draws on the beast fable and links this to the Bible stories told her as a child: "I thought about the tales I had heard as a child. How even the Bible was made over to suit our vivid imagination…Brer Fox, Brer Deer…were walking the earth like natural men way back in the days when God himself was on the ground" (3). "Natural men" suggests that no distinction is made between beast and man and that the beast, then, becomes representative and symbolic of humanity in the folktales told. The reference to beasts as symbolic of humanity suggests humans as potentially violent. However, it may also be read as a kind of humour through the imagery it creates. As mentioned before, what humour does is keep an audience entertained and reactive, it makes the storytelling interactive and may even provide a kind of reassurance between the audience and the speaker.

This underlines how God and Bible teachings were spoken of to suit the context of the message being shared. When reading Truth's *Narrative,* I felt as if I could hear her. Mikki Flockemann speaks about the significance of the "voice" citing Gates' "discussion of the characteristics of the 'speakerly text' in which there is an attempt to produce the illusion of oral narrative'" (22-

23). The "'[S]peakerly text'" is reflected in the *Narrative* through the examples of Truth's songs and other forms of direct address to her audience. I believe that this way of creating her *Narrative* stems from her growing up with oral traditions and storytelling, and the structure of Truth's text then becomes reflective of her ancestry and mother's teachings.

Truth's repetitive and rhythmic language also resembles that used in the *King James Bible*:

> Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee, And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing, And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. (*King James Bible*, Genesis. 12. 1-3)

Biblical verse as rhythmic is noted in Adam Nicholson's preface in *Power and Glory: Jacobean England and the Making of the King James Bible*: "[*The King James*] Bible has a grandeur of phrasing and the deep slow music of its rhythms…" (xviii). I experience this in Truth who stood upon "a small rise of ground" suggesting her raised position and "grandeur" as well as in when she sings, "'When he rose – when he rose – when he rose'" (79). The repetition reflects the kind of "rhythm" one reads in the Bible. "[G]randeur" signifies glory, however, it also tells of a high ranking as Truth's presence and voice as "grand" again removes her from the marginalized perceptions of slaves. The Biblical influence on Truth's language is evident in her expression of God as her saviour: "Shall I run away and hide from the Devil? Me, a servant of the living God?...I know I am a servant of the living God. I'll go to the rescue, and the Lord shall go with and protect me" (79), which is similar to the *King James Bible*: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalms 23.4). Truth, of course, did not read the Bible, highlighting how this method of speech was passed down from her mother, as well as what she must have heard from those knowledgeable of the Bible. This suggests that she draws on both call and response and Biblical narrative in her use of repetition, blending a diasporic African heritage in her interpretation of the Bible.

The adaptation of Bible stories and the way African Americans read and memorized the Bible suggests how it became an even more powerful text as it was able to be shared more widely:

> The Bible could be heard, memorized, and, in many instances, read by people living under slavery; it could be engaged both individually and in small groups; and, once

> internalized, it was not subject to location but was as transportable as the people themselves. (Kort 264)

This is significant to consider when reading Truth as an itinerant preacher. The Bible, read by African Americans who have, "heard [and] memorized", became less fixed and more able to travel with them. It began to reside within the hearts and minds of people such as Truth and by having the ability to be shared broadly, to be moved from one "location" to another, it helped to create a more fluid notion of community. The Bible was also read as representative of heritage and culture:

> American slaves did not read the Bible through, or even over and against, the traditions they brought with them from West Africa: they read the Bible as a text into which these traditions were woven. The characters and events of the Bible became the functional equivalent of the ancestors and heroes long celebrated in West Africa. (Callahan xii)

By reading the Bible in this way and with "tradition", links with heritage are maintained. I like the idea that "they read the Bible as a text into which these traditions were woven", suggesting that it was read as reflective of themselves and not as a separate text. What this way of reading does is to disrupt sanctions for slavery in the Bible.

According to Raymond Williams, 'community' has had varied meanings over the centuries which ultimately suggest common interest, however, his definition of what it meant during the nineteenth century interests me: "From C19…Community was the word normally chosen for experiments in an alternative kind of group-living" (39). The word "alternative" makes me explore what else community could mean and how Truth's idea of community was different to the convention of it being fixed. When considering how Truth attempted to create communities through her sermons, I am reminded of her expression: "I felt so tall within – I felt as if the power of a nation was with me" (30). She says this in her belief that she will get her son back. This metaphor suggests her belief that "nations" have strength and, more specifically, that people working together increases "power". However, I also want to suggest that "nation" also signifies the sense of community she seeks and creates in her camp meetings. The word "nation" is symbolic as it acts as an extension of her family and consolation for those she lost.

Lowell W. Barrington reads nation as follows:

> First and foremost, a nation is a collective of people…What makes nations unique is that they are collectives united by shared cultural features (myths, values, etc.) and the belief in the right to territorial self-determination. Thus, nations are groups of people linked by unifying traits and the desire to control a territory that is thought of as the group's national homeland. (712-713)

The conventional idea of "nation" is exclusive and linked to "territory". Benedict Anderson suggests that nations are "imagined because members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members…yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). He also refers to conventional notions of nation – a place linking people who imagine same form of connection.

Truth draws from the Biblical account of Moses commanded by God to lead the slaves out of Egypt: "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (King James Bible, Exodus. 19. 5). Referring to the creation of a "nation" of believers, Truth extends the concept of "nation" since her own notion of nation is not exclusive as is in the Bible.

The Negro spiritual, *Go Down Moses*, draws on the story as a metaphor for their own longing for freedom. However, it is important to remember that slaves created communities of people from different parts of Africa and, in this regard, the idea of nation as community is different from the story of Moses:

> So the God said: go down, Moses
> Way down in Egypt land
> Tell all pharaohs to
> Let my people go (Genius *genius.com*)

Truth's idea of nation as not being a place of confinement but rather one where one is free to roam adapts the Negro Spiritual further by not locating her idea of community in any fixed place. I would like to argue that just as Truth creates unconventional kinds of communities, her idea of "nation' challenges the convention as she views nation to be inclusive. Through forming friendships on her journey, she extends the notion of community as not being fixed in one place but carried imaginatively in the heart. This inclusion is significant as African American slaves were excluded from national identity. If one considers the nation to be that which is made of community and common interests, then slaves were not considered to be a part of this. Considering this, I am reminded of the anti-slavery slogan, "Am I not a Man and a Brother" and the later female version, "Am I not a Female and a Sister" as questions which called for

empathy by asking for basic human rights. By carrying community with her, by travelling with the aim to create friendships in different spaces, Truth was extending the possibility of belonging to this new notion of nation, countering the fixed idea of it. This fluid notion of community emphasises an inclusive idea of community and becomes a metaphor for an ideal nation. Adam Nicolson argues that ideas of nationhood in America were inspired by the language of the *King James Bible*:

> Lincoln's Gettysburg address…would have been impossible without the King James Bible. The great speeches of twentieth century America…and the series of speeches made by Martin Luther King in the eighteen months leading up to his death, are descendants in a direct line from the words…of the divines…400 years ago. (238)

Nicholson notes Martin Luther King's expressive use of Biblical language in imagining an ideal nation. I would like to draw attention to Truth's earlier vision of nation as an ideal community.

CONCLUSION

The question of whether Sojourner Truth's voice is diminished or erased by an editor makes me consider Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's question "Can the Subaltern speak":

> 'There is no space from where the subaltern (sexed) subject can speak', 'The subaltern as female cannot be heard or read', iterates a theoretical dictum derived from studying the discourse of Sati, in which the Hindu patriarchal code converged with colonialism's narrativization of Indian culture to efface all traces of woman's voice. (19)

Benita Parry counters this argument and responds with:

> Since the native woman is constructed within multiple social relationships and positioned as the product of different class, caste and cultural specificities, it should be possible to locate traces and testimony of women's voice on those sites where women inscribed themselves as healers, ascetics, singers of sacred songs, artisans and artists, and by this to modify Spivak's model of the silent subaltern. (19)

I am interested in the idea that it "should be possible to locate traces and testimony of women's voice…" and I believe that this statement emphasises the initial aim of my project: to explore a range of representations of Truth and to "locate traces" and connections in the past and present. I believe that Truth's voice is present not only in her song or sermons, but in her dress, in the way she represented herself in her photographs and in the diasporic traces in her clothing and her speech. Margaret Washington sees Truth as " a mystic and a witty, folksy storyteller whose narrations always contained a compelling message", and this made me consider that Truth's voice might be imagined through the voices of early mystic figures such as Hildegard von Bingen and Julian of Norwich (1). I hear echoes of her voice in contemporary singers like Jessye Norman and Aretha Franklin. Norman's presence as she graced stages in flamboyant clothing and silk turbans reminds me of how I imagine Truth. I find connections between Franklin's famous song, "RESPECT" and Truth's "Ar'n't I A Woman" speech, as both underline how these women expressed their beliefs in, and demands for, the strength of women. Aretha Franklin, in her own way, drew on the Negro Spirituals and sermons of a time before hers. I believe that it is important to make these links not only between Truth and the diaspora, but across great periods of time as well to argue for just how multi-faceted Truth was. I can only imagine how pleased she would have been at being read so widely across continents and centuries.

The fascinating Sojourner Truth has been admired for the presence and strength she displayed. In this project I looked at Truth not only as a powerful abolitionist but as a woman who chose to represent herself through language, photography, dress, her choice of setting, communities and her spirituality. In chapter one I read Truth's language alongside that of her editor and friend, Olive Gilbert and suggested the ways in which the *Narrative* can be read as a conversation between them, which includes the reader. I find similarities with Romanticism in her language, in how much she valued her childhood and in her sacred relationship with nature. I believe that for this *Narrative* to read as it does, Gilbert shared these interests with her. Truth introduced to us a different kind of life narrative, and the unconventional telling has helped me understand the importance of more than one voice in life writing as adding to the identity of the subject. A collaboration like that of Gilbert and Truth's does not rob the subject of her individuality.

In the second chapter I read *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth* alongside two daguerreotypes of Truth. I considered how to respond to Truth as someone who was excited by photography. Her interest in the art form inspired me to make a creative contribution to the project and I drew on her wearing of turbans to make miniature versions of them. I wanted to create turbans which reflect Truth's African ancestry and her interest in patterns and fabric. Researching fabrics and the making of the turbans helped me think more about the diasporic connections. I have learnt about the significance of each of these African fabrics and how integral they are in representing heritage and identity. I also learnt the importance of Truth combining fabrics in her dress, as a way in which to suggest individuality, but also to signify all the influences that have helped shape her.

In chapter three I explored my fascination with Truth's desire for a home and more particularly, for a home that does not confine her. From Truth's desire I have learnt that home does not mean to settle – instead home is a space of security, individuality and rest, where you can gather yourself and leave and return to it as you please. For Truth, home does not restrict; instead it allows for freedom of movement. Truth as an itinerant preacher possesses a spirit which declares she has been freed, yet her desire for a home is present throughout the *Narrative* in how she speaks of space and furniture. This inspired my reading of her as someone who found aesthetics and beauty as significant interests which suggest freedom. She responds to slavery through beauty and I draw on Elaine Scarry's, *On Beauty and Being Just* to emphasise how an appreciation for beauty may be linked to concepts of justice. Furthermore, I read the *Narrative* as a conversation, instead of reading the editor as dominant. If the concern is that we lose

Truth's voice, I argue that by reading for the material, photography, clothing and interiors, traces of her voice come across quite strongly. Truth's passions and interests are suggested quite vividly throughout the *Narrative* and this counters critics arguments that her voice has been lost or diminished.

In my final chapter I looked at Truth's relationship with community and as much as I read her as a sociable person, I began to see hints of her enjoyment of solitude in the moments in between camp-meetings. As she travelled alone, Truth became comfortable with herself. These solitary moments also allowed her to communicate with God and strengthen her spirituality. However, her need to share her thoughts with community and to express what she had found in solitude signifies that the fear of loneliness always resided within her. I believe that it was this which motivated Truth to continue making friendships and forming communities.

In Martin Luther King Jnr's Nobel Peace Prize speech, he exclaimed:

> Sooner or later all the people of the world will have to discover a way to live together in peace, and thereby transform this pending cosmic elegy into a creative psalm of brotherhood. If this is to be achieved, man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.

He preaches the importance of "creativ[ity]" as that which can "transform", and I cannot help but think of Truth's sermons. As an activist, her quest was to make a change and through her self-portrayals she was changing conventions, she was changing perceptions and she was changing the way we read slave narratives. King quotes Keats, "beauty is truth and truth beauty" and I have not read a moment where Truth was not trying to make her life beautiful. To Sojourner Truth, beauty was desired. It was a symbol of how she wanted to live her life, but also of what she had lost. It is deeply moving to read of her parents attempting to bring nature and beauty within their confined cellar and how having just a glimpse of that as a child inspired Truth to make sure she was surrounded by forms of beauty throughout her life. For her, "truth" was "beauty" in how aesthetics and style represented individuality. To appreciate beauty, to find solace and inspiration, and to be drawn towards it symbolises an emotional freedom.

Word Count: 45546

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NOTES

[i] Nell Irvin Painter notes that Truth's surname is "Van Wagenen (not Van Wagener, as in Olive Gilbert's text)" (Introduction. *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* ix)
[ii] I am indebted to my supervisor Cheryl- Ann Michael for drawing my attention to this point
[iii] Editors of the *Narrative* have not traced the source of this quotation and in my own searches, I have not been able to trace the origins of the quotation.
[iv] I am indebted to my supervisor Cheryl- Ann Michael for drawing my attention to this point
[v] I am indebted to my supervisor Cheryl-Ann Michael for the reference to George Eliot
[vi] I am indebted to my supervisor Cheryl-Ann Michael for drawing my attention to this point
[vii] See www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/686487 The Metropolitan Museum does not allow permission to copy the image
[viii] I am indebted to my supervisor Cheryl-Ann Michael for drawing my attention to this point
[ix] Cheryl Ann Michael drew my attention to Carol Ann Duffy's *Item I gyve unto my wife my second best bed* and the significance of the bed.
[x] I have only a brief comparison between Truth and early Christian mystics such as Julian of Norwich and Hildegard von Bingen since the scope of this essay does not allow for a more detailed analysis but this does invite further study.
[xi] Jessye Norman was an American opera singer who was considered to be a dramatic soprano. She sang spirituals amongst other classical music.
[xii] (O ignis Spiritus paracliti English translation *lyricstranslate.com*)
[xiii] I have included only a brief comparison with other spiritual narratives as I wish to keep the focus on aspects of Truth and her *Narrative* that has not been widely discussed.