

SLAVERY, AUTHORSHIP AND LITERARY CULTURE

COMPARATIVE LITERARY HISTORY OF MODERN SLAVERY, VOL. 3

Call for papers

This volume, the last in a three-volume series devoted to the comparative literary history of modern slavery, explores slavery, past and present, from the perspective of authorship, textuality and literary cultures. The editors invite abstracts for essays on all aspects of this question.

Slavery is often portrayed as shrouded in silence due to the simple fact that the number of texts and accounts written by enslaved people is very limited, especially when compared to the vast amount of documentation produced by the colonial powers. As recent scholarship has shown, however, enslaved people were not silent — silence is rather an effect created by the privileging of some forms of writing and as a result certain voices and viewpoints over others.

This volume aims to investigate writing about slavery in all its forms, from the written traces left by enslaved people to the archives of slaveholders and from the discourses of abolition to postcolonial narrative. While we acknowledge the problem of invisibility as a fundamental condition for the study of slavery, we also wish to highlight the ways in which discourses about slavery have found their way into print and other media as well as the ways in which these texts have circulated and been read. The volume will consider how enslaved people expressed themselves in writing, considering, among other genres, letters, legal and financial documents, as well as published texts of all kinds. We encourage contributions that explore how the formerly enslaved took up authorship as free colored people or, after emancipation, in newspapers, journals or in other contexts and venues. We will consider the literary cultures that took shape in colonies and countries in which texts on slavery were produced and disseminated. Finally, we wish to explore postcolonial writing about slavery as well as accounts of slavery in today's world. An important question for the volume will be how and to what extent authorship corresponds to agency and political subjectivity.

For vol. 3 we invite articles that address any of the many the ways in which literature relating to slavery has been written, disseminated, read and discussed. This includes,

for example, the existence of libraries and literary and scientific circles in colonial settings, the ways in which colonial literature was read and discussed in Europe, international debates about abolition, the uses of literature in colonial schools and missions, and more broadly the use of text as documentation. Articles might also consider processes of translation between languages and cultures, e.g. from an African to a plantation context, when texts pass from one colonial system to another, or when accounts circulate between European audiences and readers in other parts of the world. We also invite articles that address the afterlives of colonial slavery in contemporary literatures worldwide and the recreation of lost authorship as authors engage with the memory of slavery and attempt to recover lost voices.

The volume will have a broad historical and geographical scope. We encourage submissions on modern slavery from the 16th century to the present. While the focus will be on the Atlantic world, we are also interested in the related systems of African, Mediterranean and Indian Ocean slavery. Comparative angles are especially welcome. Areas of particular interest include but are not limited to:

- Questions of agency and political subjectivity in relation to authorship. How do we situate slave narratives and their impact both at the time of their publication and since? Where do we locate the voices of enslaved and formerly enslaved in different genres and forms of textual expression?
- Literary cultures in the colonial world, e.g. the existence of libraries, bookstores, printing presses, scientific societies and the relationship between literature and literary institutions and the practices of slavery in the colonies and Europe.
- The relationship between literary, performative, and visual forms of expression relating to slavery in the colonies and in Europe.
- Gender in colonial literary culture, in relation to questions of subjectivity, and in later historical and literary reflections on the gender structures of slavery and post-slavery societies.
- The relationship between slavery and colonialism and the development of African print culture and the traces and translation of oral slavery stories in printed texts.
- The role of abolitionist movements in the disseminations of early texts on slavery and the establishment of African-American and African-European literary traditions.
- The relationship between economy, capitalism and literature in the colonial Atlantic and its importance for the circulation, translation and commerce of texts across the Atlantic and between colonial spheres.

- How to recognize processes of silencing. Which strategies of reading traces and absences must be employed in order to highlight and perhaps counteract silencing?
- Post- and decolonial responses to slavery in 20th-century art, film and literature especially in relationship to questions of voice and agency.

Please send a 300 words abstract to the volume editors Mads Anders Baggesgaard (madsbaggesgaard@cc.au.dk) and Helen Atawube Yitah (hyitah@ug.edu.gh) no later than April 1, 2024.

If selected for further process, the final deadline for the article will be October 1, 2024. After that deadline there will be a peer review process. The volume will be published in the fall of 2025.

This volume is the third and last in *Comparative Literary Histories of Slavery*, main eds. Mads Anders Baggesgaard, Madeleine Dobie and Karen-Margrethe Simonsen in the series of literary histories made by CHLEL (Coordinating Committee for Literatures in European Languages) under the ICLA (International Comparative Literature Association) Publishing House: John Benjamins Publishing. Please read the description of the book below.

Kind regards from the editors

Mads Anders Baggesgaard (Comparative Literature, Aarhus University)

Helen Atawube Yitah (Department of English, University of Ghana)

COMPARATIVE LITERARY HISTORY OF MODERN SLAVERY – PROJECT OUTLINE

Main editors: Mads Anders Baggesgaard, Madeleine Dobie, Karen-Margrethe Simonsen

A literary history sponsored by the The Coordinating Committee for the Comparative History of Literatures in European Languages Series (CHLEL) under the International Comparative Literature Association (ICLA). Published by John Benjamins Publishing

In this work, we invite researchers from literary studies and other disciplines to reflect on the relationship between modern forms of slavery and literature, in the broadest sense of the word. We aim to draw a comprehensive map of these relationships as they have unfolded from the beginning of colonial slavery in the 1400's with an emphasis on the transatlantic slave trade, but with an open view towards related and intertwined histories of slavery and slave trade in other parts of the world from the beginning of this period to today.

The literary history *combines an historical approach with a topic-oriented approach*. This means that while it will aim to make an historical development visible, it will not aim for historical coverage but rather aim at discussion of historical periodization through comparative modes. The scholarly study of slavery raises a number of different problems of representation, authentication and circulation which challenges our very understanding of the concept of literature and basic concepts we use to study it, such as genre, narrative or fiction. A literary history of slavery thus has to be open to very different genres and even incomplete, fragmentary textual documents of various kind.

Volume structure

The work therefore falls into to three volumes with different topical approaches, but all investigating shared comparative and historical questions related to the relationship between literature and slavery in modern times.

Volume I - "Slavery, Literature and the Emotions"

This volume examines sentimental responses to slavery across national, historical and linguistic contexts. It also widens the angle of enquiry to encompass other emotions. How has literature, broadly defined, approached the relation between slavery and fear, anger or even happiness and humor? One of the premises of this study is that feelings are never transparent. They are immersed in cultural normativity and politics.

In this volume, we ask what kinds of work emotions perform in texts about slavery. Since emotions are attuned to social realities, how do they change and adapt to different political and historical contexts? What genres, tropes, and images evoke emotions in relation to slavery in different literary historical periods? And how is emotionality related to personal life stories, family structures and issues such as gender and race?

Volume II – “Slavery, Memory and Literature”

Over the last 3 decades, slavery and its social and cultural legacies has been an important subject of commemoration, scholarship and artistic exploration as well as a site of public debate. In this volume, we engage this question from the vantage point of literature, understood in the broadest sense as textual, visual or cinematic depictions of slavery across genres ranging from memoirs, diaries and travel literature to novels, documentaries and feature films. We ask how, at different moments, ‘literature’ has contributed to the transmission (or the repression) of the memory of slavery.

We invite reflection on questions such as: what is the relation between history and memory in literary representations of slavery; who narrates on behalf of whom and to what ends; what are the central metaphors, storylines and topoi of literary representations of slavery? What kind of identities and political realities are created or enabled by texts, what are the performative effects of literary language, and how do we understand different textual and oral representations of slavery within literary, cultural and political histories?

Volume III – “Slavery, Authorship and Literary Culture”

Slavery has been described as enveloped in silence due to the simple fact that the number of literary texts written by enslaved people is very limited, especially when compared to the vast amounts of text and documentation produced by the colonial powers. This volume addresses this problem as a fundamental condition for the study of slavery, but also looks to the material that actually exist: How did enslaved people express themselves in other genres, through letters, in legal and financial documents? How did the formerly enslaved take up authorship as free colored or after emancipation in newspapers, journals or in other forms of text and expression? And how and to what extent are these questions of authorship tied to the problems of agency and political subjectivity?

This volume thus addresses the way in which literature was read and discussed throughout the colonial system. This includes the existence of libraries in plantations and colonies, the way colonial literature was read and discussed in Europe, e.g. in relation to the abolition debates, the use of literature in schools and missions, and more broadly to the use of text as documentation in questions of trade, insurance and debt as processes of translation, de-

and rematerialisation and the negotiation of subjectivity that takes place through these interactions. But it also relates to processes of translation from an African to a plantation context, when texts pass from one colonial system to another and when accounts circulate between European audiences. Finally this section discusses the afterlives of the translational processes in creole literatures and transatlantic diasporas.

Historical span and historicity

The volume covers slavery in the modern period ranging from the 15th century to slavery in the contemporary world. Within this period it is possible to outline a series of interactions between literary forms and the historical and economic realities of slavery within early and mature capitalism that are not immediately comparable to earlier forms. Earlier forms of slavery will thus be included only insofar as texts from the modern period refer back to them. The description of the relationship between literature and slavery in the modern period will, hopefully, on the other end open up interesting perspectives for the discussion of contemporary forms of slavery, highlighting the historical basis for this tragic contemporary reality.

Since the literary history is topic-oriented, a natural question arises regarding chronology. It is important to us that we do not lose chronology entirely, because the problem of slavery is very much dependent on historical contextualization and specific historical, politically motivated restrictions on conditions of discourse. Central to the project is thus a reflection of historiographical methodology both in introductions and individual articles including attention to the following issues and differences between:

- The *longue durée* vs. microhistories
- The relationship between social/economic/political and literary history
- Western and non-western perspectives on historical development
- History and counterhistory.

Geographical Scope and Comparative Method

As can be seen from the project description and from chronological outline above we aim to include not only transatlantic slavery but also slavery in Africa, Mediterranean slavery and East-Indian slavery as they relate to the establishment of a new, global colonial order. This is done with the intention of enhancing the globally comparative scope of the volumes. Though we do not wish to question the specific cruelty of race-based slavery, we do wish to allow for nuanced comparison between the cultural record of Atlantic slavery and

the forms of representation associated with other forms of slavery. The volumes will include discussion of the varied economic, political, gendered, ideological and cultural forces at work (often in combination with each other) in different modes of slavery.

The book's comparative perspective, as previously mentioned, also entails comparisons between the practice and conceptualization of slavery in different historical periods. For example, the understanding of race has varied considerably over time, evolving from an initial grounding in culture and phenotype to later biological/hereditary theories and contemporary negotiations between constructivist and essentialist models.

A third comparative axis concerns the relationship between texts written by the various parties involved in the institution of slavery, i.e. the enslaved, slaveholders, abolitionists and other observers. A final comparative interest concerns the relation between different colonial regimes and between larger and smaller colonial powers, e.g. the behemoth Spanish empire and slavery in the Nordic colonies.

Size and Format

Three volumes of approx. 20 articles of 6.000-8.000 words. The overall length will be 1,500-2,000 pages. Style Sheet Chicago Style (Author-date):

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html