



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

NARRATIVE SECTION OF A SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION

The attached document contains the grant narrative and selected portions of a previously funded grant application. It is not intended to serve as a model, but to give you a sense of how a successful application may be crafted. Every successful application is different, and each applicant is urged to prepare a proposal that reflects its unique project and aspirations. Prospective applicants should consult application guidelines at <https://www.neh.gov/grants/research/fellowships> for instructions.

Note: The attachment only contains the grant narrative and selected portions, not the entire funded application. In addition, certain portions may have been redacted to protect the privacy interests of an individual and/or to protect confidential commercial and financial information and/or to protect copyrighted materials.

Project Title: Mary Anne Rawson's *The Bow in the Cloud* (1834): A Digital Edition and a Network Analysis of Anti-slavery Literature

Institution: University of London

Project Director: Christopher Ohge

Grant Program: Fellowships

Significance and contribution

How can digital editing recover under-examined anti-slavery literary archives and introduce new paths for critical interpretation and historical scholarship? I am proposing to address this challenge by producing a digital scholarly edition of *The Bow in the Cloud* (hereafter *BC*), an 1834 anti-slavery anthology edited by Mary Anne Rawson, an activist from Sheffield, England. This project uses editorial and network analysis principles to make accessible the genesis and historical significance of this anthology and its neglected manuscript archive, and to investigate the social networks and underlying themes of transatlantic anti-slavery print culture and rhetoric between 1826 and 1834, when Rawson was preparing the anthology.

The project focuses on an under-studied period of transatlantic abolitionism (c. 1826 to 1834), namely before the full abolition of slavery in Great Britain in 1833 and when American abolitionists began their massive print campaign. This period has been neglected because it has been assumed that the energy of British abolitionism had dwindled, while the US campaign was gaining momentum. As a result, scholars have tended to focus on American abolitionist literature, even though their tactics owe much to British abolitionists in the 1820s–30s. Rawson’s editorial vision to create “a structure of moral and literary architecture” (as she put it in her Preface) laid the groundwork for gradualist arguments distinguishing between “freedom” and “liberty” (and higher law) in US abolitionist literature after the mid-1830s. Rawson’s archives show why a scholarly edition of *BC* is necessary. For instance, Rawson’s unpublished note to her Preface (see Figure 4 in the appendices) justifies her role as an editor: “She has no apology to offer—nay—so far from feeling one needful and pleading for indulgence, she is enabled to take far higher ground.” Rawson dropped this note and any reference to her gender in the published version.

My approach combines textual editing, social network analysis, and the sociology of anti-slavery gift book publishing to reveal a “people’s history” of the making of *BC*. Rawson was a middle-class activist whose editorial influence over *BC* has not been thoroughly studied: she solicited, collected, and revised the submissions, wrote the preface, organized the contents, and worked closely with the publisher. *BC* was published as a gift book anthology by a major London firm (Jackson & Walford) in 1834. Advertised as a “commemoration” of the British Empire’s gradual withdrawal from the slave trade after the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act, the 400-page anthology consists of 90 original poems and prose pieces by a mixture of well-known and non-professional writers in Great Britain who need to be better integrated with historiographies of anti-slavery. It is one of the most comprehensive collections of male and female British anti-slavery activists of the period. Rawson’s manuscript collection reveals an ambivalent, multi-layered “commemoration,” as Britain continued to benefit from its loose associations with the trade elsewhere, and countries like the United States and Brazil continued to have a robust slave trade (Drescher 2009; Huzzey 2012).

Digital publication is essential to the project because it would be impracticable to create a print edition of such complicated manuscript material and their attendant reading texts. The project’s pioneering use of textual “paths” and network analysis tools leverage computational tools that facilitate critical analysis. This digital publication employs an integrative and interdependent approach by featuring new modes of presentation, enriching library catalogs and digital image collections with IIIF (<https://iiif.io/>) technology, and building an edition with network analysis tools. The edition lays the groundwork for a detailed, dynamic, and flexible engagement with the making of a significant anti-slavery publishing event.

Organization, concepts, and methods

The project advances the study of Anglo-American anti-slavery print culture and provides a case study for a new kind of scholarly edition of a multi-author political anthology. The digital edition employs fluid text editing (Bryant 2002) and genetic pathways into reading and interpreting the decisions and revisions in the texts (Van Hulle 2022). Fluid text methodology combines elements of critical editing (in providing an annotated reading text) and genetic criticism (in analyzing the creative processes that led to the anthology’s publication). Fluid text theory has an interpretive principle that editing should provide

“revision narratives.” The *BC* edition uses “textual paths” as one form of revision narrative, but each reading text will also include textual notes that explain how the published version was changed. This approach unfolds the multi-dimensional archive, which includes correspondence between Rawson and other anti-slavery activists; responses to Rawson’s requests, including poem or prose submissions and visual material; and Rawson’s revisions and fair copies of the submissions, in preparation for publication.

The project uses [Scalar](#), the open-source semantic web authoring and publishing tool, to reconstruct *BC* from its archive and build network analyses. Scalar assembles media from multiple sources and juxtaposes them with narrative and metadata (hence its suitability to editorial “revision narratives”). A Scalar project is organized with “paths” that arrange pages through “relationships,” or a linear sequence of content that can intersect and nest (like chapters in a book). Each reading text, media item, note, and tag is a page with a distinct database ID that can be exported as linked open data (RDF XML). All of the edition’s interpretive and historical notes, “tags,” and “paths” become standalone Scalar “pages” that generate network visualizations. This computational relationship-building makes it possible to discern Rawson’s rationale for connecting with her target audience, and how her choice of material mediated anti-slavery rhetoric. The edition uses social network analysis methods (Hanneman and Riddle 2005) to compare Rawson’s editorial choices to other attempts to “anthologize” anti-slavery writing in the gift book economy and radical religious press (Wood 2009; Fritz and Fee 2013; Pelaez 2018). The visualizations of textual connections also leverage recent work combining network analysis with book history to address questions about the nature of social relations in print culture (Ahnert et al 2020; Davison 2019).

This digital edition serves as a bridge between a neglected anti-slavery archive and recent scholarship on the social and cultural histories of English anti-slavery (e.g., by Moira Ferguson, Clare Midgley, David Turley, and Allison Twells) and transatlantic anti-slavery (e.g., by R. J. M. Blackett, David Brown, Richard Huzzey, Caleb McDaniel, Hannah Murray, and Clive Webb). While scholars have noted Rawson’s rhetorical stances toward imperialism, domesticity, and multiple evangelical factions in the anti-slavery movement (Midgley 1992; Twells 2009; Ferguson 2014), none has examined the richness of *BC*’s unpublished manuscript material (totaling over 600 items) or Rawson’s editorial decisions. For instance, while Ferguson examines Rawson’s decision to refrain from publishing [a poem about Toussaint L’Ouverture’s Haitian rebellion](#) (see Figure 5), she prints only the first stanza and does not mention further unpublished submissions. The digital edition gives readers access to these unpublished poems for the first time—via both digitized originals and annotated full texts. The archive includes letters from writers who declined to contribute—William Wordsworth, Robert Southey, and Thomas Moore among them—as well as an unpublished letter from John Clare expressing his antipathy toward slavery.

Alongside Elizabeth Heyrick, Hannah More, and Harriet Martineau, Rawson played a significant role in the formal and organizational publicity strategies in radical politics (Walvin 1977; Clapp and Jeffrey 2011). The *BC* archive tells a new story of women’s *editing* and *organizing* within print networks. It also shows how digital archives can broaden our understanding of women’s writing in a transatlantic context (Wernimont and Flanders 2010; Hartley 2018). Shortly after *BC* was published, similar anti-slavery verse and gift books appeared in the US: Lydia Maria Child’s *The Oasis* (1834), Maria Weston Chapman’s *The Liberty Bell* (1839), and Julia Griffiths’ *Autographs for Freedom* (1854), to name a few (Fritz and Fee 2013; Pelaez 2018). Foregrounding and unfolding the editorial contributions of *BC* itself reveals for the first time the seminal contributions of this work to American anthologies: British writers such as Bernard Barton, John Bowring, James Montgomery, and Lord Morpeth appeared in both. This connection suggests a hitherto unexamined cross-pollination with Rawson’s transatlantic publishing networks, raising questions as to how nonconformist sects represented in *BC* (e.g., James Montgomery’s Moravianism) might have steered the anti-slavery debate and provided heuristics for the Unitarian-Transcendentalist “Higher Law” rhetoric in the US (Wirzbicki 2021).

While the state of the research is advanced, the digital edition is still in early stages of development. The project began in earnest in 2018, when I received start-up funding to study and digitize the Rawson archives. Since the archive needed to be catalogued on the item level, this fellowship was spent cataloguing and preparing the collection for digitization into IIIF. TEI XML transcription began in 2019 (the published anthology has been minimally transcribed, but the manuscripts still need to be transcribed). Presently the digital edition test site includes an edited [poem](#) and its associated manuscripts, as well as prototypes of a [network graph](#) and [annotated map](#). The attached workplan goes into more detail about remaining tasks, but it is important to stress that all manuscript transcriptions will be entered into the IIIF manifests and will thus be available directly through library catalogs as well. The edition has four components: 1) the published anthology, 2) selected unpublished pieces, 3) map of places mentioned, and 4) network graph. Within the published anthology are critical reading texts of all published pieces, which are annotated with explanatory notes and revision narratives, as well as paths to any manuscript versions of the text and original cover letters. Selected unpublished pieces include diplomatic transcriptions of controversial poems that were submitted but not published, and a selection of unpublished letters. The map of places mentioned shows an annotated and geo-coded Google Map of all places in the edition. The network graph dynamically visualizes all connections of nodes in the edition (which can be as various as manuscript items and thematic tags of texts). Both maps link to individual texts. The editor's introduction covers the anthology's history and significance as well as editorial principles.

Competencies, skills, and access

My interest in anti-slavery literature started in graduate school when I took a course in “American Literature and Slavery” with Prof. Maurice S. Lee. This led to research on what became two peer-reviewed essays on Melville's Civil War poetry (2019) and a manuscript analysis of Mark Twain's only known piece of fiction about abolitionism (2020; see my résumé). Having worked on canonical figures like Melville and Twain for many years, I also wanted to investigate neglected voices in the archives, so I was excited to find the Rawson archive in 2018. In 2019 I wrote an online article on the *BC* project that was expanded into a chapter of my 2021 book, *Publishing Scholarly Editions: Archives, Computing, and Experience*. Since 2010 I have been developing expertise in digital editing with my work on the Melville Electronic Library. I have worked on other digital editions (including the Mark Twain Project Online), and now offer advanced Digital Humanities training. I have advanced knowledge of XML technologies (TEI, XPath, and XSLT) and text analysis methods. Based on this expertise I was invited to contribute a chapter to the *Routledge International Handbook of Research Methods in Digital Humanities* (2020). This fellowship would allow me to gain more competence in network analysis methods.

Final product and dissemination

The primary result of the project will be a digital edition (the prototype of which is at <https://christopherohge.com/education/bow-in-the-cloud/index> but it will have a new domain name when it is finished). It also has a GitHub repository at <https://github.com/cmohge1/bow-in-the-cloud-edition>. The project will receive several forms of peer review: the edition will be presented at several conferences in 2023 and early 2024, and at the end of the fellowship it will be submitted to (b) (4). The article for (b) (4) will be subject to double-blind peer review; it will also serve to promote the digital edition. The project data will be freely accessible with a CC BY-NC 4.0 license and archived with a DOI on Zenodo. I will add the edition to the Catalogue of Digital Editions (<https://dig-ed-cat.acdh.oeaw.ac.at/>) and work with Scalar developers to feature the edition on their web site. The sustainability plan includes a low-maintenance publishing platform (which costs \$65 per annum for Reclaim Hosting server space and domain name), the support of Manchester's library and infrastructure, and multiple means for accessing [FAIR](#) data in perpetuity. The backbone of the project—the IIIF manifests of images and metadata of the manuscript collection—is hosted by the University of Manchester Libraries, which has developed a [statement of accessibility and sustainability](#) for long-term digital preservation. IIIF is the best technology for sustainability because it does not require additional server space or technology stacks outside of the originating repository.

The project has been underway since 2018 and is progressing well: the Scalar publishing instance has been set up, the whole manuscript archive has been catalogued and digitized and released with IIIF technology (with full metadata records), a selection of prototype texts has been lightly edited to show the potentials of the edition, and prototypes of a network graph and annotated map have been produced using a selection of IIIF manifests of archival manuscripts.

The fellowship will support the core editorial work that has been difficult to undertake without a significant break from normal duties. As detailed below, this editorial work comprises four general phases: 1) importing and semantic tagging of all IIIF media files (around archival 600 items); 2) TEI XML transcriptions of the published anthology, with contextual annotations; 3) TEI XML transcriptions of manuscripts recorded in the IIIF manifests and backed up on GitHub; 4) a soft launch of the edition with an extensive editorial and historical introduction that will also serve as the basis for a peer reviewed article submission to (b) (4). Given that all the digitization work has been completed, most of the work will be conducted in my home base in London, but I may take brief research trips to archives in Boston, Manchester (UK), Nottingham (UK), and Sheffield (UK). Most of these archives have digitized collections that will be consulted if in-person visits are unfeasible.

Phase	Date	Work Package
1	January–February 2023	Finalize IIIF image manifest imports and media tagging in Scalar
2a	January–February 2023	Complete TEI XML transcriptions of published anthology
2b	March–June 2023	Begin contextual annotations of published pieces
2c	July–September 2023	Revision and fact checking of contextual annotations
3a	April–June 2023	TEI XML transcriptions of manuscripts in IIIF manifests; present work at Society for Textual Scholarship conference (May)
3b	July–September 2023	Proofreading of TEI XML transcriptions
3c	September–October 2023	Finalize Scalar “paths” between document versions
4a	September–November 2023	Revise editorial introduction to the digital edition and write up article for (b) (4)
4b	December 2023	Prepare and submit article to (b) (4)
4c	December 2023	Soft launch of digital edition
4d	January 2024	Presentation of the project at MLA Convention

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Figure 1: [Home Page](#) of the edition with Table of Contents and the first textual “path” (“Begin with ‘Editor’s Introduction’”).

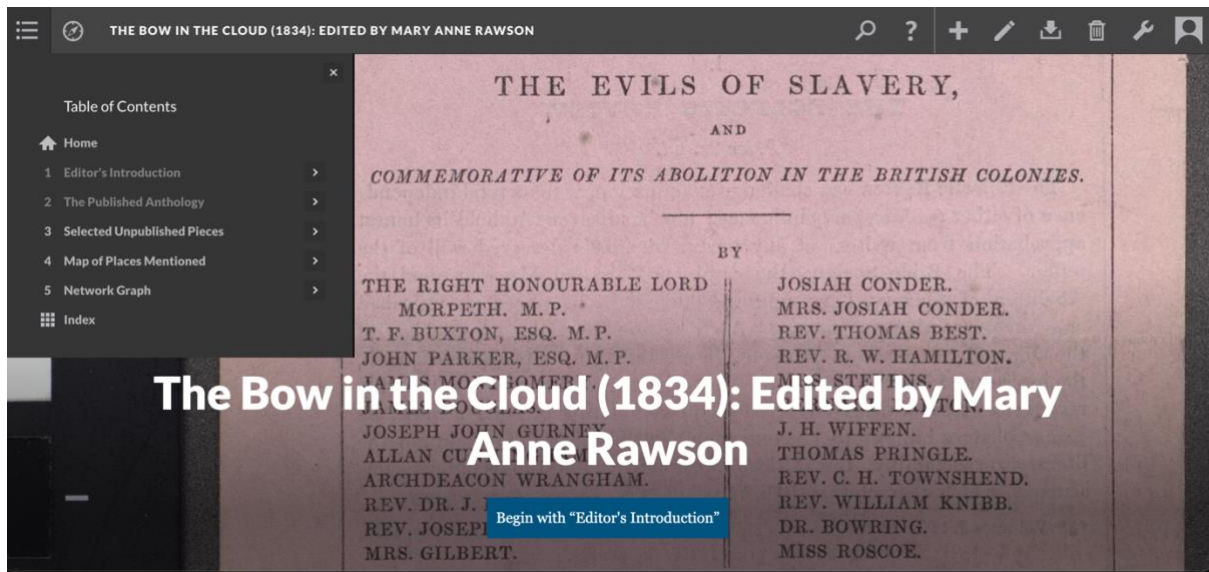


Figure 2: Annotated reading text of the poem “[The Starting-Post; or, Clarkson at Wades-Mill.](#)”

THE PUBLISHED ANTHOLOGY (2/8)

The Starting-Post; or, Clarkson at Wades-Mill, by Bernard Barton

"Coming in sight of Wades-Mill, in Hertfordshire, I sat down disconsolate on the turf by the roadside, and held my horse. Here a thought came into my mind, that if the contents of the Essay were true, it was time some person should see these calamities to their end. Agitated in this manner, I reached home. This was in the summer of 1785."

[Clarkson's History of Abolition, Vol. I. p. 210](#)

Clarkson's The History of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade

Note on The History of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade

Thomas Clarkson's *The History of the Abolition of the African Slave-Trade* is a two-volume history of the first wave of efforts to abolish the slave trade in Great Britain. Full texts can be accessed at the [Liberty Fund text archive](#).

[Go to note](#)

One props his thoughtful head.