

**RESTORING THE HISTORY OF THE SUBALTERN: A CORPUS-  
INFORMED STUDY OF 'THE HISTORY OF MARY PRINCE, A  
WEST INDIAN SLAVE'**

**by**

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is twofold: first, to propose a technique of linguistic analysis which uses corpus methods to examine the voice of the subaltern subject; and second, to offer the type of analysis being suggested using the narrative of Mary Prince, a female West Indian slave from the early nineteenth-century, as a case study.

Slavery, by definition, is a coercive act of control; however for colonialism (the ideology within which slavery operated) to become a dominant world-view it would have been consistently reinforced through what Gramsci describes as consensual, or hegemonic means of social control, whereby marginalised and suppressed peoples are encouraged to accept the ideas and values of the dominant classes (Ransome, 1992). Gramsci recognised language as being one such form of hegemonic control, arguing that the discursive processes used by those in power transcend society, influencing the way in which subordinated peoples perceive and act in the world (see Forgas, 1988 and Forgas and Smith, 1985). Hegemonic control through language works in subtle, pervasive and unremarked ways, often going unnoticed by those being suppressed; the controlling mechanisms are so embedded in everyday language that they are consistently reinforced.

On a theoretical level, the concept of language as a form of hegemonic control certainly appears to be feasible. If language ‘provides the terms by which reality may be constituted [and if] it provides the names by which the world may be “known”’ (Ashcroft et al., 1995: 261) it follows that the language used by the dominant classes will become the way in which reality is understood by the subordinated classes, affecting not only the way the latter speak, but also their conception of the world (Forgas, 1988: 324 citing

Gramsci). The problem is however more of an applied nature: how to analyse language as operating in this way. One method is to look at the way in which language is used by subordinated peoples to talk about their experiences. For Scott, as will be discussed later in this thesis, it is not possible to separate language and experience - language constructs identities, it 'position[s] subjects and produce[s] their experiences' (1992: 25). The language used to talk about experience, therefore, can not only reveal something about how the suppressed (or subaltern) subject construes events and perceives the world, but it can also reveal something about the discursive processes which helped to construct those experiences in the first place.

Experience, then, as argued by Scott, should not be viewed as authoritative evidence 'because [it is] seen or felt' (1992: 26), but instead should be viewed as something that is discursively constructed and, therefore, in need of critical analysis and explanation. What Scott does not appear to set out, however, is an objective and empirical method of linguistic or literary analysis which would allow for experience to be investigated in the way that she is proposing. Here, I would like to suggest that Halliday's account of Systemic Functional Linguistics (see Halliday, 2004) and Hoey's theory of lexical priming (see Hoey, 2005) might provide exactly the critical method of examining experience that Scott is calling for. These two linguistic theories, although coming from quite different perspectives (what is central to Systemic Functional Linguistics is the concept of choice - the lexicogrammatical possibilities that 'allow [a] speaker to represent the world in a particular way' (Hunston, 2006: 65); whereas what is central to Hoey's theory is the idea that individuals are primed to use language in a certain way, therefore raising questions regarding the very notion of choice (see Hoey, 2006)), offer the

possibility for a fuller understanding as to how language might operate as a form of hegemonic control.

This thesis is divided into two main parts. Chapters 2 and 3 discuss the theoretical framework in which I intend to analyse the narrative of Prince. In Chapter 2, I suggest how the linguistic theories outlined above might be used to explicate key concepts in postcolonial studies relating to the voice of the subaltern subject and in Chapter 3 I discuss the benefits of using corpus methods to carry out the type of analysis that I am proposing. Chapter 4 focuses on the narrative itself. My aim, in this chapter, is to investigate (using corpus methods) what the narrative of Prince can tell us about a) how she construed her experiences and b) the ideological and social systems which, through discourse, helped to construct those experiences and operated to suppress her.

Before continuing, I would like to add a brief note about the benefits of using computer assisted methods for literary analysis. As previously discussed, in attempting to restore histories from the perspective of the subaltern Scott calls for a critical method with which to examine and explain the language used to talk about experience. The linguistic theories suggested above certainly offer a framework which would enable this type of analysis however, as with any linguistic or literary investigation, the analyst must first select which features of the text to study. It is this element of subjectivity that is problematic for Scott as the experiences, beliefs, and world-view of the analyst will in some way influence the way in which a text is studied. In using corpus methods, however, the analyst is 'restricted to features [of the text] which the software can find' (Stubbs, 2005: 6). I am not proposing that it is possible to completely remove the subjectivity that Scott is concerned with (and I am not convinced that would be a good

thing to do anyway - after all it is because texts are interpreted in different ways and from different perspectives that there is such a diverse range of scholarly research in the fields of literature and linguistics); however in using corpus methods to study the language of the subaltern it is the data (rather than the analyst) that leads the investigation. I did not approach 'The History of Mary Prince' with a preconceived set of hypotheses; instead the data alerted me to a numerical discrepancy which directed the rest of my study. This thesis, then, is partly about a specific text, but it also raises more general questions regarding the role of corpus linguistics in the study of literature.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES – RESTORING THE HISTORY OF THE SUBALTERN SUBJECT

### 2.1 Introduction

The work of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) has been employed by postcolonial historians and literary critics to analyse colonialism. Gramsci's concept of hegemony (a term used to describe the way in which the dominant classes gain and maintain power over the subordinated (or subaltern) classes through a combination of coercion and consent), in particular, has been applied in theories of colonial discourses to explore the role language plays in 'getting colonised people to *accept* their lower ranking in the colonial order of things' (McLeod, 2000: 18 my emphasis).

One of the ways in which colonialism operates is by 'persuading people to internalise its logic' and to accept 'colonial sets of values' - a process described in postcolonial studies as 'colonising the mind' (ibid.). Language is a fundamental part of this process as it is language that provides the terms with which the world may be perceived and understood. The colonised subject (represented as an inferior 'other' in imperialist discourse) perceives the world (and their position in it) in colonial terms. In using the language of Empire the colonised subject effectively perpetuates the values and assumptions which they are suppressed by.

The divisive relationship between the colonised nations and Western colonial powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was the focus of Said's (1978) study - 'Orientalism'. Drawing from the philosophy of Gramsci, Said examined how '[c]olonial

power was buttressed by the production of knowledge about colonised cultures which endlessly produced a degenerate image of the Orient for those in the West' (McLeod, 2000: 22). Said's study explores colonialism from the angle of the colonisers. Later studies, however, use Gramscian theory to investigate colonial relations from the perspective of the colonised (or subaltern) subject. It is the perspective of the subaltern that I am interested in, in this thesis.

A key issue for scholars working in this area of postcolonial studies is the question of whether it is possible to recover the voice of the subaltern subject. Texts written by the colonised pose several theoretical problems:

1. To what extent is the subaltern subject influenced by the discursive and cultural processes by which they are suppressed?
2. To what extent is it possible for the subaltern subject to resist colonial ideology (especially when they are writing in the language of their oppressors)?
3. Recognising points one and two above, is it ever possible to recover the true voice of the subaltern subject?

The aim of this chapter is to address some of these theoretical issues and to propose two distinct methods of linguistic analysis (Halliday's (2004) account of systemic functional grammar and Hoey's (2006) theory of lexical priming) which could be applied in postcolonial studies to examine the experiences of the subaltern, whilst at the same time providing insight into how hegemony operates through language.

## 2.2 Gramsci, Hegemony and The Subaltern Subject

Gramsci, writing from a Marxist perspective, uses the term ‘subaltern classes’ to describe those groups ‘subordinated by hegemony and excluded from any meaningful role in a regime of power’ (Holden, 2002).

For Gramsci, in order for a particular social group to gain (and maintain) power they must establish ‘a form of social and political “control” which combines physical force or *coercion* with intellectual, moral and cultural persuasion or *consent*’ (Ransome, 1992: 135). Gramsci writes: ‘the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as “domination” and as “intellectual and moral *leadership*”’ (Hoare and Smith, 1971: 45). Coercive social control, or ‘domination’, typically operates through the State (the legal and political constitutions which enforce discipline within a society). Consensual social control, which, as Gramsci argues, manifests itself as ‘intellectual and moral *leadership*’, derives from those institutions and practices associated with civil society (the Church, education, and political parties – provided those parties are not attached to the government). It should be stressed that ‘State’ and ‘civil society’ do not always operate exclusively, and coercive and consensual forms of social control can be found in both spheres. Ransome gives the example of how coercive authority can operate within the religious practices of civil society: ‘[i]n religious practice...coercive authority operates along a spiritual dimension and is not therefore ‘physically’ violent. To a dissenting individual, however, the threat of excommunication or social exclusion may *in effect* be just as debilitating as physical punishment’ (1992: 143). However, the term hegemony is essentially used to refer to the intellectual, moral and cultural unity, or shared ideological

world-view, which any group must establish if it is to gain (and maintain) power. One of the primary channels through which hegemony operates is language (the language of education, religion, or the media, for instance).

Hegemony, then, is a form of ideology. It is a method of social control achieved (primarily, but not exclusively) through consent whereby the dominant class endeavours to 'maintain control over the "hearts and minds" of subordinate classes' (Miliband, 1982 cited in Ransome, 1992: 132) through 'gaining their support "voluntarily" by persuading them to accept and assimilate the norms and values of their [the dominant class's] own prevailing world-view' (Ransome, 1992: 135). The subaltern classes are those individuals or groups that are subjugated by hegemony, subordinated by the dominant world-view, and excluded from having any meaningful position from which to speak.

The term 'subaltern' was used by Gramsci to refer specifically to workers. In postcolonial studies the term has been used to refer to those individuals or groups dominated or oppressed by a more powerful 'other', within a colonised society. However, as Greenstein (1995) argues, the relationship between the powerful and the powerless is not a straightforward dichotomy (cited in Loomba, 1998: 238) and within a colonised peoples there will be 'several different discourses of power and of resistance' (Loomba 1998: 239). This is, as pointed out by Loomba (1998), one of the reasons why, in O'Hanlon's (1988) view, the subaltern should be analysed as an autonomous subject. O'Hanlon (1988) argues that one of the problems with orthodox historiographies is that they do not allow the experiences and oppositional consciousness of the individual to be heard: 'In trying to write a history from below [that is from the perspective of the subaltern subject], the subaltern historian repeatedly constructs an essential...identity, not

fractured by difference of gender, class or location’ (cited in Loomba, 1998: 241).

O’Hanlon also points out that often national elite groups are used to represent the ideas, experience, and voice of all subordinated peoples and little attention is given to the power relations that ‘went on beyond the narrow circles of elite politics’ (1988: 122). Spivak, for example, referring to the female subaltern subject, argues that the multi-faceted way in which hegemonic control operates (Spivak refers specifically to the way in which colonialism often intersected with patriarchy) means that the voice of the (sexed) subaltern subject is fundamentally irrecoverable: ‘[i]f in the contest of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow’ (Spivak, 2006: 32). Loomba explains that for Spivak (1985) although ‘[e]lite native men may have found a way to “speak”’, self representation was simply not a possibility for those further down the hierarchy (Loomba, 1998: 234).

I would like to emphasise three points at this stage in my discussion. First, in postcolonial studies, the term ‘subaltern’ is not simply used to describe all colonised subjects, but it is used to ‘draw distinctions *within* colonised peoples, between the elite and the non-elite’ (Loomba, 1998: 239). Second, and as O’Hanlon (1988) argues, in order to uncover the experiences and perspective of the subaltern, and to reveal something about the various layers of hegemonic control which operated to subjugate subordinated peoples, it is necessary for the subaltern to be analysed as an autonomous subject. Third, if, as argued by Spivak (1985), the voice of the subaltern is fundamentally irrecoverable, then it must be recognised that the postcolonial historian, or literary analyst, can, at best, only ever represent, or attempt to restore the history of, the subaltern subject.

This brings me to the question of how to represent, or restore the history of, the subaltern subject. For Scott, the *experiences* of the subaltern can provide ‘evidence for a world of alternative values and practices whose existence gives the lie to hegemonic constructions of social worlds’ (1992: 24). Experience, then, can reveal an alternative history – a different perspective, however, Scott argues that rather than simply being ‘evidence for the fact of difference’ (ibid.) experience should be explored in terms of how that difference was established in the first place – what were the social and ideological mechanisms that constituted subjects as different and constructed their experiences (1992: 25). One of the main ways in which subjects are constituted as different is through language (Scott gives the example of categories of representation such as man/woman, black/white (1992: 25)). As such, one way of exploring the experiences of the subaltern would be to try to understand ‘the operations of the complex changing and discursive processes by which identities are ascribed, resisted, or embraced’ (Scott, 1992: 33) and through which subjects are positioned and experience is produced. To put it simply, language not only can reveal something about how the subaltern construed their experiences but it can also reveal something about the ideological and social systems which (through discourse) constructed those experiences to begin with. Scott stresses that as experience is ‘always already an interpretation *and* is in need of interpretation’ it should, therefore, be examined and explained critically (1992: 37).

Language, then, reveals something about how the subaltern construed their experiences – it uncovers an alternative history, a different perspective and world-view. Language also reveals something about the ideological and social systems which helped to construct those experiences – it reveals how subjects are positioned, how identity is

constructed, and, therefore, how experience is produced. What is needed, however, is a method of investigating the experiences of the subaltern subject (as well as a critical language with which to talk about these experiences) which would allow for the identification and examination of the discursive processes that, as Scott puts it, ‘position subjects and produce their experiences’ (1992: 25). To carry out this type of analysis I would like to suggest drawing from two linguistic approaches: systemic functional grammar (see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004); and lexical priming (see Hoey, 2005).

### **2.3 Gramsci and Halliday**

Systemic functional linguistics views language as being made up of a network of systems with a system being ‘[a]ny set of alternatives, together with its condition of entry’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 22). For example, a clause can be either declarative or interrogative. If it is interrogative the Finite can come before the Subject (as with closed yes/no questions: *have you been out?*), or the Finite can come after the ‘Wh’ question word (as with open ended questions: *where have you been?*). In a very general sense we can say that a network of systems represents a network of choices and that each choice, as Halliday puts it, represents the ‘underlying potential of language’ (2004: 26 my emphasis) – ‘what *could go instead of* what’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 22). Two things should be pointed out here. First, Halliday is not suggesting that a speaker makes conscious choices; rather, these are ‘analytic steps in the grammar’s construal of meaning’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 24). Second, in any situation only some of those choices will be available as the speaker is constrained by two things:

1) what the language makes them do (for example, in English, certain verbs (such as raining) are restricted in their use of subject pronoun); and 2) register (in certain contexts the speaker will be required to adopt a specific use of language).

Meaning is found in the selections that are made at each point in the network of systems - each selection being viewed in the context of what 'might have been meant but was not' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 24). These selections (or systemic choices) are, in turn, realised through the lexicogrammar. To transform experience into meaning an individual will select from the network of systems available, and the selections that are made will depend on, amongst other things, how the event is construed. The lexicogrammar of a text therefore (text here refers to an instance of written or spoken language), when viewed as 'the outward form' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 23) of systemic choices, not only will reveal something about how the individual construed events and interpreted reality, but, to return to Scott's argument, will also offer the possibility of uncovering something about language and hegemony - the discursive processes which position subjects and construct experiences to begin with (Scott, 1992: 25).

## **2.4 Gramsci and Hoey**

For Hoey (2005) the notion of choice is problematic: individuals do not choose from a network of systems but are instead primed to use language in a certain way, in certain contexts. The term 'priming' refers to the way in which words seem to attract certain grammatical and collocational environments as a result of 'the cumulative effects of an

individual's [personal and unrepeatable] encounters with [a particular] word' (Hoey, 2005: 13). In other words, as an individual's experiences of language are unique, so too will be their primings (Hoey, 2005: 11). This potentially creates problems – if an 'individual's primings...differ too greatly from those of others' (ibid.) then communication could not take place. To ensure that primings do not vary too much from individual to individual there are, in every culture, what Hoey describes as 'harmonising mechanisms' (2005: 181) in place: that is, mechanisms for ensuring the 'consistency of primings across speakers' (ibid.) – education arguably being the main one. Hoey's concept of 'harmonisation' thus seems to complement Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Harmonisation can be viewed as a form of control not through coercive means, but through channels associated with civil society, for example, education, media, and religion; it is 'the exercise of power over the language of others' (Hoey, 2005: 182) through consensual means. The individual, simply by using language in the way that they have been primed to use it, effectively reinforces the very power structures which they are suppressed by. Furthermore, and similar to Scott's (1992) argument that language both reflects and constructs experience, an individual's primings will also shape the way in which they perceive and experience the world.

## **2.5 Concluding Remarks**

Halliday's (2004) account of systemic functional grammar and Hoey's (2006) theory of lexical priming offer a potential framework within which the voice of the subaltern subject can be critically analysed. These two theories start from different ends of the

lexicogrammatical scale; however, both offer insight into how hegemony works.

Whereas Halliday prioritises systems (the grammar of a clause), Hoey prioritises the lexical. For Halliday a speaker is constrained by register (the communicative function a speaker needs to perform is dependent on the context of situation, and will require a distinctive use of language accordingly). For Hoey a speaker is constrained by lexis (an individual will be primed to use words in certain ways, in certain contexts). Hegemony can thus be observed from both ends of the lexicogrammatical scale.

Before continuing, I would briefly like to comment on how corpus linguistics might complement the linguistic theories outlined above. Baker suggests that corpus linguistics is ‘a useful way to approach discourse analysis because of the *incremental* effect of discourse’ (2006: 13). For Baker, ‘[o]ne of the most important ways that discourses are circulated and strengthened in society is via language use, and the task of discourse analysts is to uncover how language is employed, often in quite subtle ways, to reveal underlying discourses’ (ibid.). Corpus linguistics allows the analyst to identify whether a word, phrase or grammatical structure is part of an underlying hegemonic discourse (ibid.). Indeed, Hoey’s work on lexical priming is based on corpus research – only through examining a large body of texts is it possible to identify the way in which certain words are primed for use in discourse. However, systemic functional approaches to discourse analysis could also benefit from corpus research. Corpus methods of analysis allow the grammar of a text to be studied in quantitative terms (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 35), making it possible to identify whether grammatical patterns are ‘personal and idiosyncratic’ or ‘widely shared in a [particular] discourse community’ (Baker, 2006: 13).

## CHAPTER 3: CORPUS LINGUISTICS AND STYLISTICS

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter will consider the role of corpus linguistics in the field of literary discourse. I will use the term ‘discourse’ in perhaps its most general sense to refer to ‘the words in a literary text...as opposed to its story line’ (Murfin and Ray, 2003: 113). The field of literary discourse relates to various sub-fields including literary criticism and stylistics. The role of the literary critic is to interpret and evaluate a literary text, which will involve looking at the language of the text. The role of the stylistician is to analyse and describe the linguistic features of a literary text and to interpret these findings as explicitly as possible (Short, 1996: 2). As such, the two fields (literary criticism and stylistics) are closely related and can quite often overlap. This chapter will focus on the area of stylistics and more specifically how corpus linguistics can contribute to this field of study. Section 3.2 summarises the different approaches to stylistics which can be broadly categorised into two main groups: textualist and contextualist approaches. Section 3.3 discusses how corpus linguistics can contribute to the field of stylistics and Section 3.4 outlines, what I view as, the role of corpus linguistics in the study of literary discourse.

## 3.2 Approaches to Stylistics

In its broadest sense stylistics is the study of the language of literature, ‘a field of empirical inquiry, in which the insights and techniques of linguistic theory are used to analyse literary texts’ (Wynne, 2005: 1). Theories relating to, for example, semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonetics enable us to name and identify the distinguishing features of a literary text (Bradford, 1997: xi). Stylistics looks at the style of a text, as defined by its linguistic components, as well as the literary effect of the language within the text. There are a number of approaches to stylistic analysis which Bradford groups into two main categories: textualist and contextualist (1997: 13). Textualist approaches focus on the structural difference between literary and non-literary texts and make a clear distinction between what is literary language and what is ordinary practical language (Rivkin and Ryan, 2004: 3). The stylistic features of a particular literary text are viewed as ‘productive of an empirical unity and completeness’ (Bradford, 1997: 13). This means that the text is viewed as an autonomous work of art to be explicitly, objectively and scientifically examined, independent from socio-historic, cultural or intertextual factors. The stylistic devices are viewed as ‘an inherent property of the literary text, to the exclusion of the reader’ (Weber, 1996: 1).

In contrast, contextualist approaches to stylistics view literary style as being ‘formed and influenced by its contexts’ (Bradford, 1997: 73). Style is not inherent in the text but is ‘an effect produced in, by and through the interaction between text and reader’ (Weber, 1996: 3). Unlike with textualist approaches, stylistic effect is not considered fixed and stable but is affected by the interaction between ‘author, the author’s context of

production, the text, the reader and the reader's context of reception' (ibid.). The stylistician would not examine a literary text as an empirical unity, but would view the text as being a product of the context in which it was produced. Stylistic devices are not inherent; rather they are influenced by, and reflect social, cultural, and political ideologies, beliefs and assumptions. Contextualist approaches draw from systemic functional linguistics, conceptual metaphor theory, and speech act theory all of which view the 'formal features [of a text as] reflect[ing], imitate[ing] or correspond[ing] to a reality which exists out there independently of language' (Weber, 1996: 6).

Before continuing, I would briefly like to comment on 'The History of Mary Prince'. There are problems regarding the extent to which the slave narrative (such as that of Mary Prince) can be viewed as literary. These narratives are historical documents – personal testimonies that are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural context in which they were produced. Their purpose was not to be creative, but was to provide a detailed and factual account of the slave's experiences. These narratives were used by abolitionists as evidence of the real horrors of slavery and as such played a key role in the anti-slavery campaign. How these narratives are viewed (whether as literature or historical documents) will affect the way in which they are analysed. If viewed as literature the stylistician might look for examples of figurative language - the use of simile, metaphor, or metonymy, for instance. If viewed as historical documents the critical discourse analyst might look at relations between discourse and power, how participants are discursively positioned, or how the text reflects its socio-cultural context. In this thesis I take the position that as a first person narrative 'The History of Prince' falls into the category of literature. However, like Carter (1999), I also take the position that literary

language and ordinary language are different ends of the same continuum and as such the analytic tools that are used by the critical discourse analyst can also be used by the stylistician – and vice versa. I am not analysing ‘The History of Prince’ to see the extent to which the text is literary (as with textualist approaches to stylistics); rather, I am analysing Prince’s narrative to see what the language can reveal about her experiences as a slave. As such, I am more interested in contextualist approaches to stylistics.

### **3.3 Corpus Approaches to Stylistics**

Stylistics and corpus linguistics share some similarities. As pointed out by Wynne, both are fields of empirical inquiry: ‘[t]he empirical approach to stylistics relies on linguistic evidence in the literary work. Corpus linguistics, also an empirical approach to linguistic description, relies on the evidence of language usage as collected and analysed in Corpora’ (2005: 1). Yet despite these commonalities, the role of corpus linguistics in the field of stylistics is still somewhat ambiguous. Wynne points out that although several important studies have been carried out which highlight the potential benefits of using corpora to study literature there ‘is still little use of language corpora, or the techniques of corpus linguistics, in the study of literary style’ (2005: 1). There are three possible reasons for this.

## Reference Corpora

The first reason relates to the size of corpora. Reference corpora are typically used to provide ‘a representative sample of a particular language variety’ (Baker et al., 2006: 139), against which a text can be measured. However, as discussed by Louw (1997: 240), up until fairly recently the size of corpora has been limited, raising concerns regarding the extent to which reference corpora can provide a representative norm.

In addition to this there are methodological concerns regarding the validity of measuring a literary text against a reference corpus in the first place. There are two problems here:

1. Language changes and evolves over time. This creates methodological problems in comparing, say, a literary text from the nineteenth-century (such as ‘The History of Mary Prince’) against one of the general reference corpora available today (such as the British National Corpus, or the Bank of English).
2. Although it would be difficult to create a general reference corpus from the nineteenth-century, it is quite possible (using data from Project Gutenberg) to create a nineteenth-century reference corpus of literary work. There are however methodological problems in comparing a literary text from the nineteenth-century with a reference corpus of other literary texts from the nineteenth-century. Although such a comparison would allow the analyst to investigate certain aspects of intertextuality, a reference corpus of nineteenth-century literature would not provide a representative sample of language as a whole.

## Tools and Formatting

The second reason relates to the more practical problems of working with electronic data. Complicated copyright laws mean that many texts are simply not available in digital format and for those texts that are available, variations in editorial principles create problems in terms of consistency. In addition, using corpus methods to analyse a text requires some familiarity with text encoding, tagging schemes and text analysis software (Wynne, 2005: 4).

## The Role of Corpus Linguistics

The third reason is of a theoretical nature and relates more generally to how corpus linguistics can contribute to the study of literature. Computational methods not only would challenge more traditional methods of literary analysis but could potentially displace critical work to date. Louw suggests a concern among literary scholars that the 'principles on which criticism operates might be derived at via methods other than reader's intuition' (1997: 243). There also seems to be lack of clarity regarding what corpus linguistics can actually do. Van Peer (1989), for example, raises concerns regarding the value of purely quantitative methods of analysis (often associated with corpus linguistics). Van Peer argues that by converting language to numbers, the analyst is 'involved in an act of reification, in which...fundamental ingredients of the texts, e.g. their (highly important) range of figurative meanings, are eliminated from the analysis' (1989: 302). Furthermore, Van Peer suggests that '[i]n counting words as words only,

one may easily overlook the fact that such words will have very different meanings and connotations in different literary works, or in the hands of different authors' (ibid.).

To briefly recap, there are three main concerns which need to be addressed. The first two concerns are of a more practical nature and relate to the technical and methodological issues of working with large electronic corpora. As the field of corpus linguistics develops so too will the size and range of corpora available. Developments in text analysis software (WordSmith, W-Matrix, and AntConc to name just a few) mean that it is now easier to search corpora. Copyright is still a problem for those analysts wishing to work with more contemporary texts as much twentieth-century literature is simply not available in electronic format. The third concern is of a more theoretical nature. There is ambiguity regarding how corpus linguistics might contribute to the field of literary studies. In the following section I will address this third concern in more detail. Using Stubbs's (2005) analysis of Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' as a case study, I hope to show how corpus linguistics can contribute to the field of stylistics.

### **3.3.1 Stubbs**

Stubbs (2005) agrees with Van Peer (1989) regarding the importance of intertextuality. A text is not 'a self-contained autonomous object' (Stubbs, 2005: 21); rather, it consists of, and makes reference to, fragments of other texts. Stubbs argues in favour of a hermeneutic method of analysis 'which identif[ies] observable evidence of meaning in the form of inter-textual relations between texts and corpora' (ibid.).

In a study of Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' Stubbs investigates the frequency and distribution of individual words as well as recurrent phraseology. Throughout the analysis, reference corpora are used (the imaginative prose section in the Brown Corpus and the written component of the British National Corpus) to provide a norm against which 'Heart of Darkness' can be measured.

Wordlists are used as the starting point. The findings showed that in addition to the content words which allude to a sense of vagueness or lack of clarity in 'Heart of Darkness' (*fog, mist, smoke*), a high frequency of grammatical words (over 32 occurrences) are used to denote uncertainty (*something, somehow, somebody, like, sort of*) – a feature previously unnoticed by literary critics. *Seem* is also a high frequency word, as is *like* and *looked*. These words, when used in expressions such as *X was like Y*, *X looked like Y*, and *X seemed to be Y*, all contribute to the sense of vagueness. Stubbs compared this data with the reference corpora and found that grammatical words denoting vagueness are notably more frequent in 'Heart of Darkness'.

Stubbs, like Van Peer, recognises the limitations of looking at quantitative data alone and suggests that basic wordlists cannot reveal anything about word distribution, intertextuality collocation or phraseology. For example, the distribution of the words *heart, dark, and darkness* increases towards the end of 'Heart of Darkness' when the story becomes particularly oppressive. Such 'distributional facts' (which can easily be identified using corpus software) 'start to say something about the structure of the whole text' (Stubbs, 2005: 12), which wordlists alone would not reveal. In terms of intertextuality, references in Conrad's novel to binary oppositions such as *civilised* and *primitive* are typical of pseudo-anthropological books of the time. However, an analysis

of wordlists alone would not reveal the way in which 'Heart of Darkness' was influenced by (or indeed influenced) the ideas of Victorian Britain. Stubbs shows how '[q]uotes and near-quotes from specific texts can quickly be identified by computer-assisted searches' (2005: 13). Stubbs also used corpus methods to examine collocation in 'Heart of Darkness', observing that the content word *grass* often collocates with words that suggest death, decay and desolation, as in 'a dead silence, grass sprouting between the stones'. In order to understand the connotations of individual words, it is necessary to look at their recurrent collocates; however, Stubbs recognises a potential methodological problem here as 'we can only do this if we know in advance which words to look at' (2005: 15). Corpus software can, however, help in identifying word clusters across a text. Finally, Stubbs argues that purely quantitative methods of analysis cannot reveal anything about phraseology. By carrying out a search for all two, three, and four word sequences, Stubbs showed that the sense of repetitiveness in 'Heart of Darkness' (often commented on by literary critics) comes not from repeated use of content words, but is the result of recurring lexicogrammatical patterns.

Stubbs's research is important because it addresses concerns regarding quantitative methods of analysis. Stubbs shows how corpus findings not only can build on (and add to) existing research, but can also reveal new insights. Other studies have also used corpus methods to test theories and to examine literary texts. Deignan (2005), for example, examined a cross section of the Bank of English to study how metaphor is used in natural language; a study carried out by Semino and Short (2004) used corpus methods to examine speech, thought and writing presentation across a body of texts, including narratives, news reports and biographies; and, finally, a study by Carter (1999) used the

CANCODE corpus to investigate the extent to which everyday language displays literary features.

### **3.4 Concluding Remarks**

The research I have discussed in this chapter highlights the potential benefits of using corpus methods to study literary discourse. The concern that computational methods of analysis could overturn more traditional techniques is somewhat unsubstantiated. Corpus work to date has been used to complement, rather than replace, reader's intuition.

Corpora have mainly been used to test hypotheses, verify intuitive stylistic practice, and to build upon existing research. Corpus stylistics can contribute significantly to the field of literary analysis without necessarily rejecting or overturning current practices. I would argue in favour of what Baker describes as 'triangulation'. That is 'a more eclectic approach to research, whereby different methodologies can be combined together, acting as reinforcers of each other' (2006: 16).

More research is, however, needed into the different ways that corpus linguistics can be applied in the study of literary discourse. In the following chapter I will use corpus methods to carry out a systemic functional analysis of the narrative of Mary Prince.

## CHAPTER 4: A LINGUISTIC STUDY OF 'THE HISTORY OF MARY PRINCE, A WEST INDIAN SLAVE'

### 4.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I carry out a systemic functional analysis (using corpus methods) of 'The History of Mary Prince, A West Indian Slave'. I have two main research objectives. The first objective relates more generally to the role of corpus linguistics in the field of literary discourse. Using 'The History of Prince' as a case study my aim is to illustrate how corpus linguistics can contribute to the study of literature and stylistics. The word 'contribute' is important here as I am not proposing the overthrowing of current methods of literary analysis; rather I view corpus linguistics as a field of empirical inquiry which can complement existing (more traditional) techniques, many of which tend to rely on the literary critic's, or stylistician's intuition. My study shows how findings based on corpus research not only can provide detailed linguistic evidence to support existing theories relating to the narrative of Prince, but can also provide new insight into Prince's narrative, revealing aspects of the text which have gone unnoticed in previous studies. The second objective relates more specifically to the field of postcolonial studies. My aim is to illustrate a technique of linguistic analysis (one that uses corpus methods to explore a text from a systemic functional perspective) which can be used to critically examine the voice of the subaltern subject.

In my analysis I will be comparing two sets of data: the narrative of Mary Prince - a female slave from the West Indies, and the narrative of Ashton Warner - a male slave

also from the West Indies (both narratives were first published in 1831). Comparing the two sets of data will enable me to ascertain the more salient features of Prince's narrative. So, although I will be referring to both corpora throughout my analysis, the main focus of my discussion will be on 'The History of Prince'.

Section 4.1 provides a brief overview of the main research that has been carried out to date relating to 'The History of Prince'. In this section I discuss how my own research, which examines the language used by Prince to talk about her experiences, might contribute to this existing body of knowledge - much of which has tended to focus on narrative strategy within 'The History', and how Prince rhetorically positions herself as an authority to speak on slavery. Section 4.2 explains, in more detail, the linguistic model I use to analyse the narrative of Prince. In this section I illustrate how, in systemic functional linguistics, the grammar of a clause can reveal something about how a person construes their world experiences. Section 4.3 describes the (corpus) methods I used to carry out my investigation and presents the main findings. Section 4.4 interprets these findings within the theoretical framework previously outlined in Chapter 2.

## **4.2 Background Remarks**

'The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave' is a short slave narrative of less than 15,000 words. The narrative outlines Prince's experiences as a slave from her birth in Bermuda in 1788 until 1828, when, whilst living in London, she finally walked out on her then masters Mr. and Mrs. Wood. The narrative was transcribed by amanuensis Susan Stringland and consists of extensive supporting documentation including a sixteen-

page editorial supplement by Thomas Pringle (secretary of the anti-slavery headquarters in London), the purpose of which, as will be discussed later, was to authenticate the narrative and to give credibility to Prince. 'The History of Mary Prince' was first published in 1831 by F. Westley and A.H. Davis. In that same year it was also published by Waugh and Innes. Three editions were produced in the first year of publication. A digitised version of the third edition was made available in 2000 by the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, as part of the 'Documenting the American South' project. The text I have used is taken from this collection.

A limited amount of critical commentary is available on 'The History of Mary Prince'. As discussed in Chapter 2, this relative absence of material, in part, may be due to the highly contested theoretical and methodological problems relating to the study of the subaltern subject – problems that are further exacerbated when the subaltern is female. McBride (2001: 92), for example, questions the extent to which it is possible to recover the voice of the slave given the way in which the slave narrative was tailored as it was to the white abolitionists' political agenda. Furthermore, the slave, McBride argues, 'had to be responsible to hegemonic discourses about slave experience because white abolitionists owned the publishing apparatuses...that allowed them to disseminate their discourse about slavery' (2001: 92-93). The slave narrative was a powerful marketing tool in the campaign for abolition as it was viewed as evidence of the true 'horrors of bondage' (Andrews, 1988: xxxii) through firsthand experience. Instead of learning about slavery and the slave experience from white abolitionists the 'good people in England might hear from a slave what a slave had felt and suffered' (Andrews, 1988: xxxii citing Prince, 1831). However, for the abolitionists' campaign to be effective (as with any

campaign for change) there needed to be a certain amount of political and ideological cohesion. The slave narrative had to conform to, and reinforce the antislavery discourse being disseminated throughout Europe, and it had to be believable to white Europeans who had very little understanding of slavery. It is for this reason that many slave narratives are, as Stepto puts it, 'full of other voices' (1979: 3). The purpose of these additional voices (which includes testimonies, editorial notes, and witness statements) was to 'authenticate the former slave's account' (ibid.) and to ensure that the abolitionists' key arguments were communicated.

One of the principal moral arguments used by antislavery campaigners related to the unjust enslavement of women. Beckles highlights how nineteenth-century European culture, 'in which women were perceived as needing social and moral protection from male tyranny' was simply not compatible with the 'physical brutalization of females and...[the] disregard for black motherhood and maternity' (2000: 173) which was taking place in plantations. Abolitionists recognised this ideological contradiction regarding the role of women and used it to their advantage. The female slave, previously '[d]e-gendered in the eyes of middle-class readers because [she] performed manual labor' (Fisch, 2007: 232), was presented as virtuous, feminine, and sexually vulnerable. '[T]he suffering slave mother, and the helpless slave girl' (Fleischner, 1996: 5) thus became popularized images in the campaign for abolition. However, in publicising the slave woman's vulnerability abolitionist groups simultaneously 'exposed these women in ways that were antithetical to nineteenth-century formulations of womanhood' (Fisch, 2007: 232-233). To put it simply, for the female slave to give a first-hand account of her personal experiences was to contradict nineteenth-century ideas regarding the 'privacy of

“woman” (Fisch, 2007: 232). Furthermore, to speak about sexual activity of any kind (even ‘rape, sexual abuse, and forced promiscuity that is [often] the lot of the slave’ (Paquet, 2002: 32)) was to contradict Christian evangelical ideas regarding acceptable female behaviour and femininity. These social and religious constraints meant that ‘slave women were [therefore] confined to claiming legitimacy on very narrow grounds – as sexually “virtuous” – that obscured the realities of slave women’s exploitation’ (Fisch, 2007: 233). The female slave, therefore, had to negotiate her voice within a complex ideological system - a system in which nineteenth-century cultural norms would ‘have to inform her narrative if she were to secure a public hearing’ (Ferguson, 1992: 282).

To summarise the discussion so far, in attempting to uncover the voice of the female slave the analyst is presented with three problems:

- To what extent was the narrative tailored to hegemonic discourses about slave experience?
- What is missing from the narrative – what has been omitted because of social or religious constraints?
- To what extent do the authenticating voices influence the narrative? Whose voice are we hearing - the editor’s, the transcriber’s, or the slave’s?

It is perhaps because of these methodological problems that previous studies of ‘The History of Prince’ have tended to offer historicist readings of the text, focusing primarily on how Prince claims narrative authority and authenticity for herself within such a complex and repressive socio-cultural environment. Ferguson, for instance, looks at the

way in which Prince rhetorically positions herself as ‘a slave-representative, as well as an individual slave-agent’ (1992: 283). Ferguson argues that Prince speaks in a ‘double-voiced discourse’ (1992: 284) which allows her to (subtly) address different audiences, whilst at the same time adhering to abolitionist and evangelical dictates. For example, Ferguson discusses the way in which Prince refers to the Reverend Mortimer, a friend of evangelist Thomas Pringle (Prince’s editor):

Mr. Mortimer tells me that he cannot open the eyes of my heart, but that I must pray to God to change my heart, and make me to know the truth, and the truth will make me free (Ferguson, 1992: 284 citing Prince 1831).

In this passage Prince appears to be conforming to evangelical doctrine. Prince states that it is spiritual truth that will free her, and it is only an omniscient God who has the power to end slavery. Ferguson points out, however, that despite this religious proclamation ‘[Prince] knows full well and at painful cost that her life has been a protracted battle against slave-owners for an elusive comprehensive liberty’ (1992: 284). Ferguson argues that the way in which Prince repeats Reverend Mortimer’s discourse, the ‘mimicking, deadpan statements’ (ibid.) that she employs, appeals to the African-Caribbean reader-listeners ‘who have lived through kindred experiences and realize she is restricted in what she can say’ (ibid.). The African-Caribbean reader, Ferguson suggests, ‘hear[s] an altogether different voice – reserved, grave, mocking’ (ibid.).

Another example of this ‘double-voiced discourse’ can be found in the following passage:

But [pro-slavery forces] put a cloak about the truth. It is not so. All slaves want to be free...I know what slaves feel...We don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment [but] when we are quite done up, who cares for us, more than for a lame horse? (Ferguson, 1992: 283 citing Prince, 1831).

Ferguson points out that after 'warmly acknowledging the assistance of "very good" missionaries, she [Prince] simultaneously inscribes the presence of an additional audience' (1992: 283). In using the first-person 'I' followed by the plural 'slaves' ('I know what slaves feel') Prince gestures towards a 'familiar but silent dialogue of lamentation based on shared experience' (1992: 283). Prince aligns herself with, and speaks on behalf of, all African-Caribbean slave communities. The historical importance of this passage has also been discussed by Andrews (1988). McBride points out that for Andrews, the line 'I know what slaves feel' is particularly significant as it challenges 'pro-slavery advocacy's attitudes about the slave's authority to speak on matters of slavery' (2001: 87). Whereas pro-slavery groups believed that white men of reason were most suitably equipped to speak objectively on issues of slavery, it was thought by abolitionist groups that 'real slave experience and the literal slave body [were] the best proof or evidence of the brutalities of slavery' (McBride, 2001: 88). Prince, in this passage, therefore reinforces abolitionists' logic. Andrews argues that in stating 'I know what slaves feel', Prince 'declares herself to be a more reliable authority on [the morality of] slavery than any white man and to be fully capable of speaking for all her fellow slaves, both male and female, against any white man' (1988: xxxiv).

Both Ferguson and Andrews focus on narrative strategy within 'The History of Prince'. They look at how Prince claims authority to speak on slavery, and the subtle ways in which she addresses different audiences. However, although revealing, these

studies do not, McBride argues, ‘fully account for the *origin* of the “authority”...or “double-voiced discourse” attributed to Prince’s narrative’ (2001: 88 own emphasis). How is it that Prince, a female slave in the mid nineteenth-century, was able to claim such authority in the first place? For McBride, Prince’s authority as slave representative and her ability to address different audiences comes from the way in which she ‘rhetorically positions herself in relation to [her] *experiences*’ (ibid. my emphasis). Prince participates in what McBride describes as a ‘politics of experience’ (2001: 89) which operates within the narrative on three distinct levels:

- 1) ‘[I]t positions Prince as the authority’ (McBride, 2001: 90). Prince is in a position of power because she has firsthand experience of slavery. A significant moment in the text, for McBride, is when Prince describes the cruel and brutal treatment of the slave “old Daniel”. Here, Prince becomes a ‘self-appointed “expert witness” by virtue of being an “eye witness”’ (2001: 89).
- 2) ‘[I]t makes Prince’s actual (or unmediated) experience into a kind of fetish object’ (McBride, 2001: 90). The reader is always ‘one step removed from the “real” experience’ (McBride, 2001: 91) which generates a (fetishistic) desire to possess that experience. This fetishistic desire for the real experience is further fuelled by ‘rhetorical gesture[s] of unspeakability’ (McBride, 2001: 94). That which cannot be recounted, either because it is too painful, or because of religious, or social constraints becomes that which the reader most desires to know.

- 3) '[I]t mystifies the slave experience and by doing so makes Prince into a kind of channel for the reader' (McBride, 2001: 90). The reader (typically white Europeans, ignorant of slavery's particulars) can never obtain the real experience - they 'can know slavery only through [Prince]' (ibid.). Prince's assertion 'I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows' (1831: 11) is significant because it emphasises Prince's value as a channel through which slavery can be understood.

McBride's study certainly helps to explain, in his words, 'the origin of the "authority"...or "double-voiced discourse"' (2001: 88) which Andrews and Ferguson attribute to Prince's narrative. For McBride, Prince's narrative derives its value and authority from the fact that she is speaking from within the slave community. Prince is in a position of authority because she has firsthand, authentic experience of slavery which the reader can only know through her. The way in which Prince rhetorically positions herself in relation to her experiences is what gives the narrative its authority. However, what McBride fails to consider, in any detail, is how Prince construes those experiences. A systemic analysis of Prince's narrative would complement McBride's work as it provides another way of looking at experience which focuses on the experience itself (as reflected through the grammar of the clause), rather than simply on how Prince rhetorically positions herself in relation to that experience.

### 4.3 Systemic Functional Grammar

In systemic functional linguistics the grammar of a language can be visualised as a network of systems (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 23). Each system represents a set of alternatives, which would suggest that in any language there are certain choices available for construing experiences in different ways. The way in which a person construes their world experiences will be organised by (and reflected in) the grammar. Halliday describes experience as consisting of ‘...a flow of events, or “goings-on”’ (2004: 170) and suggests that the grammar of a clause organises these ‘goings-on’ into participants (the things or people that are involved in the event); processes (the verbal group which tells us about the event); and circumstances (the adverbial or prepositional group which provides more detail regarding the ‘...time, space, cause, [and] manner’ (ibid.) in which the event took place) (see also Thompson, 2004: 86-88). In systemic functional linguistics this is known as the system of transitivity.

In the system of transitivity there are different process types for construing different experiences. Material processes, for instance, are those which relate to outer experience (‘what we experience as going on “out there”, in the world around us’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 170)) and usually describe an event or action, for example: *work*, *give*, and *go*. In contrast, mental processes are those which relate to inner experience (what we experience as going on inside ourselves, in the world of consciousness’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 170)) and usually describe emotions, thoughts or perceptions, for example: *see*, *know*, *think*. There are, in total, six categories of process type (material, mental, behavioural, verbal, relational, and existential), each with its ‘own

model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 170). For example, the verb *see* realises a mental process. Mental processes relate to the domain of inner experience and are described by Halliday as 'processes of sensing' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 197). In mental process clauses the participant who senses (in other words, the participant who feels, thinks, wants, or perceives) is always human - this participant is described as the *Senser* (as in *Jon* in *Jon saw there was a problem with the proposal*). The part of the mental process clause which describes that which is felt, thought, wanted, or perceived is known as the *Phenomenon*. The *Phenomenon* can be a thing (*Jon saw a rabbit*), an act (*Jon saw a man running across the field*), or a fact (*Jon saw a mistake in the document*). To summarise then, a mental process clause will always have a *Senser* – a human participant who is 'engaged in the mental process' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 197), and a *Phenomenon* – the thing, act, or fact which is felt, thought, wanted, or perceived. In contrast the verb *jump* realises a material process. Material processes relate to the domain of outer experience and are described by Halliday as processes of 'happening' and 'doing' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 180). Halliday explains that in material process clauses there is always one participant (the *Actor*) that 'brings about the unfolding of the process' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 180). The unfolding process may be confined to the *Actor* alone as in *Jon jumped*, or the unfolding process may extend to a second participant (the *Goal*) as in *Jon jumped on a spider*. Unlike in mental process clauses the participant engaged in the material process (or more specifically, the participant responsible for the unfolding of the material process) can be animate or inanimate.

In the same way, behavioural, verbal, relational, and existential processes also have their own schema for construing their respective domains of experience. Systemic functional linguistics, therefore, provides a way of examining how experience is construed by an individual. Each individual will perceive the same event in different ways and this will be reflected in the grammar that they use. The grammar of a clause, therefore, can reveal something about ‘who did what to whom’ (Thompson, 2004: 86). Systemic functional linguistics also provides a critical language with which to talk about how experience is construed by an individual. It provides the language with which to talk about an event, the participants involved, and the circumstances in which the event took place.

#### 4.4 Methods and Findings

I began my investigation by running a search to find the most frequent verbs in both corpora.

**Prince Corpus**

Verb	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Type of process
go	34	2.3	Material
get	19	1.3	Material
come	19	1.3	Material
think	18	1.2	Mental: cognition
say	19	1.3	Verbal
know	19	1.3	Mental: cognition
take	16	1.1	Material
give	15	1	Material
see	11	0.7	Mental: perception
keep	11	0.7	Material

**Warner Corpus**

Verb	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Type of process
get	15	1.6	Material
take	13	1.4	Material
make	13	1.4	Material
work	12	1.3	Material
go	11	1.2	Material
give	10	1.1	Material
see	8	0.9	Mental: perception
bring	7	0.8	Material
put	6	0.6	Material
say	6	0.6	Verbal

Fig. 1: Ten most frequent verbs (base form only) in both corpora

From the above tables it appears that verbs relating to cognition are more important in the Prince narrative than in the Warner narrative. Of the ten most frequent verbs three realise mental processes in the Prince narrative compared with one in the Warner narrative. The fourth most frequent verb in the Prince corpus realises a mental process – *think*, whereas we have to go down to the seventh most frequent verb in the Warner corpus to find a mental process – *see*. These initial results are, in themselves, quite revealing as they suggest a certain amount of cognitive awareness, reflection and introspection on the part of the writer. The interiority that is expressed through mental processes of cognition and perception may potentially support Andrews’s (1988), Ferguson’s (1992), and McBride’s (2001) interpretation of Prince as a witness as well as a victim.

Having carried out this preliminary investigation I realised that my search had only produced the base form of the verbs. It was therefore necessary to carry out a new search, but this time using the lemma (so that all forms of the verb could be identified: *take, takes, taken, took, taking*, for example). The results were as follows:

**Prince Corpus**

Verb	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Type of process
go	106	7.18	Material
come	70	4.74	Material
say	70	4.74	Verbal
get	50	3.39	Material
give	50	3.39	Material
take	45	3.05	Material
think	41	2.78	Mental: Cognition
see	39	2.64	Mental: Perception
tell	36	2.44	Verbal
know	34	2.3	Mental: Cognition

**Warner Corpus**

Verb	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Type of process
say	51	5.54	Verbal
go	47	5.11	Material
take	37	4.02	Material
get	29	3.15	Material
make	28	3.04	Material
tell	28	3.04	Verbal
come	24	2.61	Material
know	24	2.61	Mental: Cognition
see	24	2.61	Mental: Perception
give	23	2.5	Material

Fig. 2: Ten most frequent verbs (all forms) in both corpora

What was interesting about this second search was that several of the verbs which appeared to have a high frequency in their base form in the Prince corpus (when compared with the Warner corpus), did not show the same high frequency when a search of the lemma was carried out. KNOW, for example, although used more frequently by Prince in its base form, has roughly the same overall frequency in both corpora. This is perhaps more clearly highlighted by the following table:

KNOW	Prince		Warner		Difference in %
	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	
Base Form	19	1.3	4	0.4	225
All Forms	34	2.3	24	2.6	13

Fig. 3: Frequency of KNOW in both corpora

There is only a 13% difference in the frequency with which both Prince and Warner use KNOW (in all of its forms) however there is a 225% difference in the number of times that KNOW is used in its base form. In total Prince uses the base form 19 times compared with Warner who only uses it four times. Similarly, there is only a 40% difference in the frequency with which both Prince and Warner use KEEP (in all of its forms) however there is a 250% difference in the number of times KEEP is used in its base form. In total Prince uses the base form 11 times compared with Warner who only uses it twice - as shown in the following table:

KEEP	Prince		Warner		Difference in %
	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	
Base Form	11	0.7	2	0.2	250
All Forms	21	1.4	9	1.1	40

Fig. 4: Frequency of KEEP in both corpora

These findings raised the question of why some verbs are used more frequently in their base form by one writer, and not by the other. I decided to investigate further those verbs which are marked in terms of similarity and difference (i.e. those which have a similar overall frequency in both corpora (a difference of less than 50%), but which have significantly different counts in their base form (a difference of more than 200%)).

KNOW and KEEP both met these criteria in the Prince corpus. In what follows I will focus on these verbs in more detail.

#### **4.4.1 KNOW**

Using the concordancing function within WordSmith I carried out a search for all occurrences of KNOW in both corpora. Instances of KNOW being used to mean acquaintance were discounted and I focused on instances of KNOW meaning knowledge of something. The results have been summarised in the following table:

	Prince (34)	Warner (24)
<b>Negative structures</b>	<b>14</b> (10 of which refer to Prince herself not knowing)	<b>6</b> (3 of which refer to Warner himself not knowing)
<b>Positive structures</b>	<b>11</b> (6 of which refer to Prince herself knowing)	<b>14</b> (8 of which refer to Warner himself knowing)
<b>Causative structures</b>	<b>4</b> (in 2 of these instances it is Prince who is <i>made</i> or <i>caused</i> to know)	<b>1</b> (in this instance it is Warner who <i>causes</i> the people of England to know)

Fig. 5: Summary of the uses of KNOW in both corpora

In the Prince corpus approximately half of all instances of KNOW are used in negative statements. This would, in part, account for the high frequency of base forms in Prince's narrative, as negative structures often follow the pattern: *do/does/did + not + base form*. There are five instances of the structure *noun + did/do + not + know* in the Prince corpus and in all of these occurrences it is Prince herself that is in the position of Senser (the participant undergoing, or experiencing, the mental process):

- 1 and did what she could for me: I don't know what I should have done, or what would have become of me
- 2 who took me to my new home. I did not know where I was going, or what my new Master would do with
- 3 I was free in England, but I did not know where to go, or how to get my living; and therefore, I did not
- 4 I could answer, for I did not know well what to do. I knew that I was free in England, but I did not
- 5 But I was a stranger, and did not know one door in the street from another, and was unwilling to

The Phenomenon (the thing which is '...felt, thought, wanted or perceived' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 203)) in each of these occurrences can be categorised into two main groups: action and location. In lines 1 and 4 Prince describes a situation in which she did not know what she should do or what action she should take. There is a sense of

powerlessness and passivity in these lines; lack of knowledge and a lack of clarity regarding where she is or what she should do prevents Prince from being able to act. In lines 2, 3 and 5 Prince describes a situation in which she either did not know where to go, or where she was, revealing a sense of isolation and a feeling of uncertainty. Prince experiences frustration and fear as she tries to negotiate strange and unfamiliar environments.

In the remaining negative statements, in which Prince is positioned as Senser, the Phenomena of the processes are:

- a) I went home again, **not knowing** what else to do
- b) but the hand of that God whom then I **knew not**
- c) I **knew nothing** rightly about death then
- d) I **never knew** rightly that I had much sin till I went there

In occurrence (a) Prince is again describing a situation in which she does not know what action to take. In the remaining three occurrences (b, c, and d) the Phenomena can be broadly categorised under the theme of religion. In (b) Prince is describing a time in her life before conversion; in (c) she talks about not understanding the meaning and religious significance of death; and in (d) Prince describes how she did not realise that she was a 'great sinner' until she attended church. In all three occurrences (b, c, and d) KNOW is used in the past tense. Prince is reflecting on her life prior to discovering Methodism and there is a clear sense of life before and life after conversion. Religion, for Prince, 'aids acceptance' (Ferguson, 1992: 284), it brings knowledge, enlightenment and a position from which to speak.

To summarise the findings so far, the data showed that Prince uses KNOW in negative statements almost as frequently as she uses KNOW in positive statements (a ratio of approximately 1:1 positive/ negative). This in itself may not seem particularly significant; however a study by Halliday, which investigated the probabilities associated with certain grammatical choices (1993: 2), revealed that a speaker of English is 90% more likely to choose a positive statement than a negative one (a ratio of 9:1 positive/negative). This would suggest that Prince is using KNOW in negative structures proportionally more than one would expect. This is perhaps more clearly illustrated by the following chart:

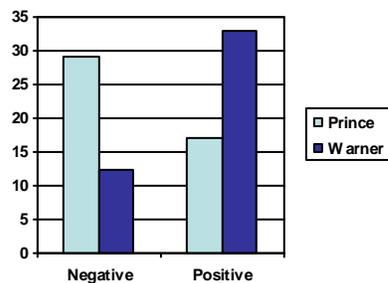


Fig. 6: Positive and negative counts of KNOW in both corpora

The chart shows that KNOW is much more likely to occur in a negative statement in the Prince corpus, when compared with the Warner corpus. A typical utterance from Prince is: *I did not know where/what*, whereas a typical utterance from Warner is: *I knew of/that/it/where*.

Turning now to the use of KNOW in positive statements, the data showed that in the Prince corpus only a third of all occurrences of KNOW (11 instances out of a total of 34

occurrences) are used in positive structures and out of these there are only six instances where Prince is in the position of Senser:

11 down for me. I have been a slave myself--I know what slaves feel--I can tell by myself what other slaves feel.  
12 I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows; and I would have all the good people in England to  
13 season their yams and Indian corn. It is very wrong, I know, to work on Sunday or go to market; but will not God 14 for  
14 I did not know well what to do. I knew that I was free in England, but I did not know where to go, or how to get  
15 and it was according to my strength. I knew that Mrs. Williams could no longer maintain me; that she was fain to  
16 I did not then tell my Mistress about it; for I knew that she would not give me leave to go. But I felt I must go.

In lines 14, 15 and 16 KNOW is being used to project another clause (described as the ‘idea clause’ in systemic functional grammar – the content of what is being thought or felt). What is noticeable in lines 15 and 16 is that the idea clause being projected is a negative statement:

- I knew that Mrs. Williams could no longer maintain me
- I knew that she would not give me leave to go

In both of these occurrences Prince is showing an awareness of what her Mistress is not able to do or will not do. In line 16 although the idea clause that is being projected is a positive statement: ‘I was free’, it is immediately followed by a negative statement: ‘but I did not know where to go’, suggesting that Prince has only a partial understanding of her environment:

- I knew that I was free in England, but I did not know where to go

What I would like to suggest here is that even when KNOW is used in positive statements, what follows is often something negative. KNOW, in the Prince corpus, appears to attract a negative grammatical environment.

Lines 11, 12 and 13 are worth attention as these are the only instances in which Prince appears to be assertively claiming knowledge of something. The Phenomenon in each of these occurrences is not a thing, or a physical act (something which ‘...can be seen, heard [or] perceived’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2005: 205)), but it is, what is described in systemic functional linguistics as, a fact (something which is ‘...construed as existing in its own right in the semiotic realm’ (ibid.)). In other words, what Prince is claiming knowledge of is not something which can be explained on a material or physical level, it is something much more abstract than that – a universal truth:

- a) I know what slaves feel
- b) I know what a slave knows
- c) It is very wrong, I know, (to work on Sundays)

What is interesting about occurrences (a) and (b) is that Prince appears to make no distinction in terms of gender. This is an inclusive and powerful voice whereby Prince is aligning herself with, and speaking on behalf of, all slaves. As discussed in Section 4.1, lines (a) and (b) have attracted considerable attention in previous studies. In stating that she ‘know[s] what slaves feel’ and she ‘know[s] what a slave knows’ Andrews (1988), Ferguson (1992), and McBride (2001) all comment on the way in which Prince is able to rhetorically position herself as an authority to speak on the subject of slavery. However,

I would argue that these statements have even more significance when viewed against the backdrop of the high frequency of negative instances of KNOW in Prince's narrative.

Occurrence (c) requires more context:

It is very wrong, I know, to work on Sunday or go to market; but will not God call the Buckra men to answer for this on the great day of judgment – since they will give the slaves no other day.

Here Prince is claiming knowledge of what is right and wrong. This is quite a strong and defiant use of KNOW as Prince seems to be criticising the religious convictions of her oppressors who force her to work on the Sabbath. Religion, it would seem, not only aids her acceptance but also gives Prince the language with which to challenge her oppressors. At the same time, however, there appears to be an acceptance of a hierarchy and there is no obvious anger towards either God or her oppressors. Although religion 'may win her [Prince] access into the master discourse...she is still pinioned in the discourse of her violators' (Ferguson, 1992: 284).

Finally, I would like to comment briefly on the use of KNOW in what I have described as causative structures:

22 I must pray to God to change my heart, and **make me to know** the truth, and the truth will make me free.

23 more things than these; she **caused me to know** the exact difference between the smart of the rope, the cart-whip,

24 This is slavery. I tell it, **to let English people know** the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God,

25 and I would **have all the good people in England to know** it too, that they may break our chains, and set us free.

In lines 22 and 23 Prince is either *made* to know something or is *caused* to know something. Although it could be argued that in line 22 Prince is in fact asking for this

knowledge, the grammar of the clause in both occurrences suggests that she has no choice – knowledge is something which is given to, or forced upon Prince by a more powerful other.

#### 4.4.2 KEEP

In analysing KEEP it was necessary to adopt a slightly different approach. Unlike KNOW, KEEP cannot easily be assigned to a specific category of process type as it appears to serve very different functions depending on its phraseology. Although no obvious, repeated phraseological patterns were found in the Warner corpus, three main uses of KEEP could be identified in the Prince corpus:

FORM	FUNCTION	EXAMPLE
KEEP + noun + from + noun  BE + kept + from + noun	1) to prevent someone from doing/needing something	they gave me a little money to keep me from want  after we had thus been kept from our rest
neg. KEEP + up/on + with + noun	2) inability to cope with something, or to continue with something	If we could not keep up with the rest of the gang of slaves
noun + KEEP + noun	3) to have something	Oh the Buckra people who keep slaves

Fig. 7: Functions of KEEP in the Prince corpus

## Function 1: prevent

In this set of occurrences KEEP could be substituted with the verb *prevent*. The actions of one participant stop or prevent another participant from doing or sensing something:

- a) they gave me a little money from time to time to **keep me from** want
- b) and proper time given in the week to **keep us from** breaking the Sabbath
- c) after we had thus been **kept from our** rest

In occurrences (b) and (c) the Goal (the participant affected by the action) is Prince and her fellow slaves, and the Actor (the participant carrying out the action) is Prince's master. In both instances, therefore, it is the actions of the master that prevent Prince from acting herself.

In occurrence (a) Prince describes being given money from Methodist abolitionists to prevent her from going hungry. Although the actions of the abolitionists are clearly positive (they are ensuring that Prince has money for food and clothing), in all three occurrences (a, b, and c) Prince is not in a position of control – the will and actions of another (more powerful) participant are being imposed upon her.

## Function 2: inability to cope with something, or to continue with something

There are three instances where KEEP is used as part of a negative structure, which would contribute to the high frequency of base forms in the Prince corpus, when compared with the Warner corpus:

- a) [Poor Daniel] **could not keep up with** the rest of the slaves
- b) If we **could not keep up with** the rest of the gang of slaves
- c) I fell sick and I **could not keep on with** my work

The Actor, in these occurrences, is either Prince or her fellow slaves. In all three occurrences Prince refers to the slave's inability to cope with the unrealistic physical demands that are placed upon them. In lines (a) and (b) Prince describes situations in which the weaker slaves are unable to work as fast as the rest of the gang. In line (c) Prince describes being unable to continue working because of sickness. Just as Prince is aware of what she does not know she appears to be aware of her physical limitations – what she cannot do.

## Function 3: have

In this third category the form *noun + KEEP + noun* is used. KEEP, in these instances, could be substituted with verb *have*:

- a) my mistress became too poor to keep so many of us at home
- b) Oh the Buckra people who keep slaves
- c) I kept her with me a week

In systemic functional grammar the verb *have* realises a relational process. There are different types of relational process however the occurrences listed above (if *keep* were to be substituted with *have*) are all of the attributive, possessive type. An attributive relational clause is used to show how one entity relates to (or is an attribute of) another entity (Halliday (2004: 216) gives the example *Jon has a piano*, where *piano* is an attribute of *Jon*). The attributive clause can then be further analysed in terms of whether it is intensive (X is Y – *Jon is funny*), circumstantial (X is at Y – *Jon is at home*), or possessive (X has Y – *Jon has a car*) (see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 216). In a possessive attributive clause the type of relationship being established between the two entities is one of possession - ‘one entity possesses another’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 244). Studying the examples (a, b and c) outlined above, it appears that the sense of possession which is typically construed through the verb *have* (which realises a relational process) is being construed through the verb *keep*. In occurrences (a) and (b) the Possessor (the entity to which the attribute belongs) is the master, and the Possessed (the attribute or thing that is possessed) is the slave. Although in occurrence (c) the Possessor is Prince and the Possessed is Prince’s younger sister, KEEP, in all of these instances, has the effect of objectifying human participants – people are possessions.

### 4.4.3 SAY

Both KNOW and KEEP were found to have significantly high counts in their base form in the Prince corpus, when compared with the Warner corpus (a difference of over 250%). The frequency counts for SAY were not as striking as the counts for KNOW and KEEP however the discrepancy was enough to warrant further investigation.

SAY	Prince		Warner		Difference in %
	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	
Base Form	19	1.3	6	0.6	116
All Forms	70	4.74	51	5.54	14

Fig. 8: Frequency of SAY in both corpora

The data showed that Prince uses SAY in its base form significantly more than Warner – a difference of 116%, as shown in Fig. 8. The high frequency of the base form of SAY (in the Prince corpus) was particularly interesting as one would expect (in a narrative that is reporting past events) the simple past form of the verb (*said*) to be used almost exclusively. Although the simple past form is common in both corpora (there are 47 occurrences of *said* in the Prince corpus and 46 occurrences in the Warner corpus) almost a third, 27%, of all occurrences of SAY in the Prince corpus are in the base form, compared with only 11% in the Warner corpus. I decided to investigate why there is such a high frequency of the base form of SAY in the Prince corpus.

I began by carrying out a search for all occurrences of the base form of SAY in the Prince corpus. I discounted instances of SAY being used by the editor, Thomas Pringle

to authenticate Prince’s narrative. I also discounted instances of SAY being used as discourse structures (as in *I must say* and *I dare say*). Out of the 15 remaining occurrences, nine attracted my attention because of common phraseology: *noun + SAY + noun*. Upon closer inspection I found that these occurrences could be grouped in terms of whether it was the colonists speaking, or Prince herself speaking:

**Group One - Colonists:**

some people foreign people they the man they	SAY	slaves do not need better usage slave are happy slaves don't want to get out of slavery slaves be quite happy in slavery they can't do without slaves
--	-----	---

**Group Two - Prince:**

I I I have never heard a slave I have never heard a Buckra man	SAY	Not so. How can slaves be happy when they have a halter round their neck the truth so [that slaves are happy] so [that slaves are happy]
---	-----	---

Fig. 9: Instances of the base form of SAY in the Prince corpus

In systemic functional linguistics ‘[t]he process of a verbal clause is realized by a verbal group where the lexical verb is one of saying’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 254). Verbal process clauses (such as the ones in Fig. 9) ‘allow the reporter to attribute information to sources’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 252). Here Prince is clearly attributing information to two distinct groups: the colonists and the slave. SAY, in these occurrences, is being used as a rhetorical device to establish a dialogue between two oppositional voices, as in *the colonists say X; the slaves say Y*. The use of tense is also significant. In verbal clauses where the ‘Sayer is realized by a nominal group denoting a

conscious speaker' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 254) the present simple tense selection can indicate a more "relational" sense of the verbal process. In other words, SAY is not being used in its typical verbal sense to mean speak, but instead is being used in a relational sense to mean 'expresses the opinion that' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 254 my emphasis), or has the opinion that. Coupled with this, it is also interesting that there is no participant representing the addressee in these verbal process clauses. Although Prince is clearly directing her argument at the colonists - addressing their misconceptions about slavery - she does so in a non-confrontational way.

Further investigation showed that all of these occurrences belonged to the same paragraph:

I hear some people in this country **say**, that the slaves do not need better usage, and do not want to be free. They believe the foreign people [West Indians], who deceive them, and **say** slaves are happy. I **say**, Not so. How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? and are disgraced and thought no more of than beasts?--and are separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sisters, just as cattle are sold and separated? Is it happiness for a driver in the field to take down his wife or sister or child, and strip them, and whip them in such a disgraceful manner?--women that have had children exposed in the field to shame! There is no modesty or decency shown by the owner to his slaves; men, women, and children are exposed alike. Since I have been here I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame, I think, since they can see and do such things. They [English people in the West Indies] tie up slaves like hogs--moor them up like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or cattle, or horses never were flogged;--and yet they come home and **say**, and make some good people believe, that slaves don't want to get out of slavery. But they put a cloak about the truth. It is not so. All slaves want to be free--to be free is very sweet. I will **say** the truth to English people who may read this history that my good friend, Miss S---, is now writing down for me. I have been a slave myself--I know what slaves feel--I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me. The man that **says** slaves be quite happy in slavery--that they don't want to be free--that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I never heard a slave **say** so. I never heard a Buckra man **say** so, till I heard tell of it in England. Such people ought to be ashamed of themselves. They can't do without slaves, they **say** (Prince, 1831: 22).

For McBride, in using the first-person 'I' Prince 'declares explicitly that her insight is better than that of any of the English' (2001: 100). Prince is able to claim this authority because she speaks from within the slave community and has firsthand experience of slavery. However, in this passage, I would argue that Prince does more than simply position herself as an authority to speak on slavery. In using the present simple tense Prince is able to universalise her argument. She is not referring to one colonist or group of colonists, but is referring to anyone who is involved in the process of colonisation, from plantation owners in the West Indies to the King of England (notice the line 'They believe the foreign people, who deceive them, and say slaves are happy'. Here *they* refers to the people of England, but *foreign people* refers to the white West Indians who also have a vested interest in maintaining the colonial model). Similarly, Prince is not only speaking for herself when she defiantly states 'I say not so', but she is expressing the opinion of all slaves. In using the present simple tense Prince does more than set up a dialogue between two opposing groups. She challenges the deep-rooted beliefs, values and ideologies upon which colonialism is based.

#### **4.4.4 GIVE and TAKE**

So far in this chapter I have investigated the use of KNOW, KEEP, and SAY. These verbs were shown to have significantly high counts in their base form in the Prince corpus when compared with the Warner corpus. One of the reasons for this, certainly in the case of KNOW and KEEP, can be attributed to a higher frequency of negation in the Prince corpus. I would now like to focus on two verbs which were found to have similar

lemma *and* base form counts (a difference of less than 50%) in both corpora: GIVE and TAKE. Focusing on GIVE first of all, the data showed a difference of only 10% in the frequency with which Prince and Warner use this verb in its base form, and there is a difference of only 35% in the frequency with which GIVE is used in all of its forms, as highlighted in the following table:

GIVE	Prince		Warner		Difference in %
	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	
Base Form	15	1	10	1.1	10
All Forms	50	3.39	23	2.5	36

Fig. 10: Frequency of GIVE in both corpora

Similarly, there is only a 27% difference in the frequency with which Prince and Warner use the verb TAKE in its base form, and there is a 29% difference in the frequency with which TAKE is used in all of its forms, as shown in the following table:

TAKE	Prince		Warner		Difference in %
	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	Raw Frequency	Normalised per 1000	
Base Form	16	1.1	13	1.4	27
All Forms	45	3.05	37	4.02	29

Fig. 11: Frequency of TAKE in both corpora

It is not especially significant that GIVE and TAKE were found to be two of the ten most frequently used verbs in both the Prince corpus and the Warner corpus. GIVE and TAKE are common verbs in English and therefore one would expect them to have high frequency counts. These verbs are, however, worth particular attention for two reasons.

The first reason relates to the lexicogrammatical environment in which GIVE and TAKE commonly occur. As will be discussed later in this chapter, a clause containing the material process GIVE or TAKE will often have an Actor (the participant that initiates the act of giving or taking - and therefore is in a position of power) and a Recipient (the participant to whom something is given, or something is taken to or from and therefore is NOT in a position of power, but instead plays a passive role in the exchange). When used in the type of lexicogrammatical environment being described here, I would argue that power is an inherent semantic property of these verbs. A systemic functional investigation into GIVE and TAKE, and their corresponding participants, would, therefore, offer valuable insights into the way in which subjects are positioned and the power relations that are at work.

The second reason why GIVE and TAKE are worth particular attention is to do with the very fact that these verbs are so commonly used. GIVE and TAKE are embedded in everyday discourse to such an extent that it is easy for them to be bypassed in any literary or linguistic analysis, and yet these verbs set up quite distinct power relations between subjects. The way in which these verbs encompass a notion of power but do so in an unmarked, unnoticed way is, I would argue, a possible example of how hegemonic control operates through language. Through these verbs subjects are discursively positioned and power relations are subtly established, replicated and maintained. The dominant class gives the subaltern classes food, medicine, and work. The subaltern classes therefore come to view food, medicine, and work as things which they are not in a position to obtain, or to administer, themselves. I will return to this second point later in my discussion however I would now like to focus in more detail on what a systemic

functional analysis of the lexicogrammar of GIVE and TAKE can reveal about the power relations that are apparent in the narrative of Prince.

As discussed in Section 4.3, the way in which a person construes their world experiences will be organised by, and reflected in, the grammar of the clause. Experience, for Halliday, consists of a ‘flow of events’ (2004: 170) – each event developing and changing through time. This flow of events is organised by the grammar into clauses, each clause consisting of ‘a process unfolding through time’ and ‘participants [that are] involved in the process’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 175). Within a material clause there are two phases of unfolding: the ‘initial phase’ and the ‘final phase’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 184). In the initial phase the Actor of the clause ‘brings about’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 180), or initiates, the unfolding of the process. The final phase is ‘the outcome’ – it represents how the Goal is affected, or altered, by the unfolding of the process (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 184). It is worth noting here that whereas transitive clauses will involve two participants (the Actor – the participant that initiates the process, and the Goal – the participant that is affected by the process), intransitive clauses will only involve one participant (the Actor both initiates and is affected by the process).

In material clauses there are two main categories of outcome which will determine whether the clause is of the creative type, or the transformative type (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 184-185). In creative clauses, the outcome of the unfolding process is the ‘coming into existence’ of the Goal (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 184 my emphasis). For example, in the clause *Jon produced a document* the outcome of the unfolding process (produce) is that the Goal (a document) is created. In transformative

clauses the outcome of the unfolding process is the ‘change of some aspect of an already existing...Goal’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 185 my emphasis). For example, in the clause *Jon closed the door* the Goal (the door) already exists, but it is affected, or transformed, by the unfolding process (close) – the door was open and now it is closed. In transformative clauses the way in which the Goal changes as a result of the unfolding process can be broken down further in terms of whether it is ‘an [1] elaboration, [2] extension or [3] enhancement of the...Goal’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 186). I will not go into unnecessary detail regarding the different types of transformative clause here other than to say that the processes GIVE and TAKE belong to “‘transitive transformative” clauses of the “extending” type’ (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 191), which are used to ‘denote a transfer of the possession of goods’ (ibid.).

In transitive transformative clauses of the extending type there are three participant roles: the Actor (the participant that initiates the unfolding of the process), the Goal (the goods which are being transferred), and the Recipient (the participant ‘that [the] goods are given to’ (ibid.), taken to, or taken from). So, for example, in the clause *Jon gave the book to Vicky* Jon is the Actor, the Goal is the book, and the Recipient of the Goal is Vicky. The Goal (in this case the book) is transformed, or changed, by the unfolding process in that it is passed, or transferred, from one participant to another. The Recipient is also transformed, or changed, by the unfolding process in that it is the Recipient who ultimately benefits from the transference of the goods. It must be noted, however, that the term ‘benefits’ is somewhat problematic as it suggests that the Recipient positively gains something from the transfer. In the clause *Jon gave Vicky a notice of eviction*, for example, Vicky is clearly not going to ‘benefit’ (in the more typical sense of the term)

from this transfer. The term ‘benefit’, therefore, can refer to both positive and negative outcomes.

The lexicogrammar of transitive transformative clauses of the extending type clearly establishes power relations between the three participant roles. The Actor (the participant that is carrying out the act of giving or taking) is in a position of power, whereas the Recipient plays a passive role in the exchange. Regardless of whether the Goal (the goods being transferred) is something positive or something negative the power relations between the Actor and Recipient remain the same. When analysing processes such as GIVE or TAKE important questions to ask might be:

- Who or what is in the position of Actor? Who has the power and ability to transfer the goods?
- What are the goods being transferred?
- Who is the recipient of these goods and in what way are they affected by this exchange?

I began by looking at GIVE. There are 49 occurrences of GIVE in the Prince corpus. In 34 of those occurrences it is Prince or her fellow slaves that is the Recipient of the Goal (the goods being transferred). The Actor (the participant(s) initiating the act of giving, and therefore in a position of power) in these instances can be grouped into three main categories: the colonists, missionaries, or God. In instances where the Actor is the colonists, the Goal falls into one of the following categories: time, or more specifically

lack of time; violence; documentation relating to the slave; food and medicine; or work,  
 as shown in the following table:

Actor	Process	Recipient	Goal
they them he she colonists our Master Mr Wood Captain Darrel	GIVE	us me the slaves	<p><b>Time (5)</b>            (no) time / no other day / no proper time / (no) leave to go (somewhere) / leave to do (something)</p> <p><b>Violence (6)</b>            a round hundred / fifty lashes / a hundred lashes / several heavy blows / a threatening / licks</p> <p><b>Documentation (3)</b>            a note / a written paper / a good character</p> <p><b>Food and medicine (3)</b>            our allowance of raw Indian corn (x 2) / medicine</p> <p><b>Work (3)</b>            Tasks</p>

Fig. 12: Participant roles in clauses containing GIVE in the Prince corpus

In Halliday's account of systemic functional grammar the Goal of transformative clauses is usually a physical object - a material possession which is passed from one participant to another, such as food, medicine, or documentation (see Fig. 10 above). What is noticeable in the Prince corpus (and indeed the Warner corpus), however, is that many of the instances of GIVE are used metaphorically to refer to time, violence, or work (see Fig. 10 above). I decided to analyse metaphorical occurrences of GIVE (as in *they give the slaves no other day*) using the same framework that is set out by Halliday for analysing literal occurrences of GIVE (as in *they gave me a little money*). Although in metaphorical instances of GIVE the Goal (the goods being transferred) is not a physical object, the grammar of the clause effectively positions the Goal as though it is. Time,

violence, and work become ‘things’ - objects which can be owned, exchanged and transferred from one participant to another. For instance, below are occurrences of GIVE in which the Goal of the clause refers to an act of violence:

1 he could think of, (too, too bad to speak in England,) and giving me several heavy blows with his hand, he said, "I shall  
2 she would get my master to strip me and give me fifty lashes: "You have been used to the whip," she said, "and you  
3 come home to-morrow morning at twelve, on purpose to give you a round hundred." He kept his word--Oh sad for me! I  
4 usage. I cannot remember how many licks he gave me then, but he beat me till I was unable to stand, and till he himself  
5 I cannot easily forget it. He tied me up upon a ladder, and gave me a hundred lashes with his own hand, and master  
6 first time she threatened to have me flogged; and she gave me the threatening so strong of what she would have done

Taking line five as an example, although ‘a hundred lashes’ is not a material object which can be passed from person to person, the grammar of the clause, I would argue, has the effect of objectifying violence. ‘A hundred lashes’ becomes something which can be transferred from a participant with power (in this case ‘He’ refers to the master) to a participant without power (in this case ‘me’ refers to Prince). In all of the above occurrences the grammar of the clause emphasises that violence is something which the slave has no control over – the slave is the recipient of violence, but they are not in a position to administer violence themselves. As with time and work, violence is something which only the colonists possess and therefore have control over. Only the colonists are in a position to provide time, to distribute work, or to administer violence.

When the Actor refers to the missionaries, the Goal typically falls into one of the following categories: food, clothing, or money – as can be seen in the following concordance lines:

7 They [Anti-Slavery Office] were very good to give me a supply, but I felt shame at being obliged to apply for relief  
8 Mrs Mash; for though very poor, they [Morovians] gave me food when my own money was done, and never  
9 They [Anti-Slavery Office] did all they could for me: they gave me a little money from time to time to keep me from  
10 some Quaker ladies, who hearing of my case, came and sought me out, and gave me good warm clothing and  
11 missionaries were very kind to me--they were sorry for my destitute situation, and gave me leave to bring my  
12 After the reading was over, the missionary gave out a hymn for us to sing. I dearly loved to go to the church, it was

In all of these occurrences the Goal (the goods being transferred) is something positive: money, food, and clothing – material possessions which are, in most cases, of advantage to the recipient. However, from a lexicogrammatical perspective, regardless of whether the goods being transferred are something positive (warm clothing) or something negative (violence) the Recipient of the transfer (in this case the slave) remains passive and powerless. Money, food and clothing are possessions which only the missionaries are in a position to apportion and although the slave positively gains from the transfer they remain a passive participant in the exchange. The dominant class, it would seem, is in a position to reward or to punish.

When the Actor is God the Goal refers to liberty and freedom:

13 I still live in the hope that God will find a way to give me my liberty, and give me back to my husband. I endeavour  
14 God, and call loud to the great King of England, till all the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for

Interestingly, in line 13, it is not the colonists or the master who is in a position to bring liberty, freedom and justice to the slave – only God has the power to do this. It is God who can give Prince her liberty and it is God who can bring Prince justice and reunite her with her husband. In line 14 Prince is asking the people of England to pray to God that slavery might end:

This is slavery. I tell it, to let English people know the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God, and call loud to the great King of England, till all the poor blacks be [given free](#), and slavery done up for evermore.

This line is quite revealing and provides a clear example of what Ferguson (1992) describes as Prince's "double-voiced discourse" (see Section 4.1). Prince begins with the suggestion that prayer (or more specifically God) can end slavery. As previously discussed, religion for Prince brings acceptance – it enables her to enter into the master discourse and it provides a platform from which she can speak. In stating 'I hope they will never leave off to pray God' Prince is speaking out to Christian Evangelical England. However, Prince, and her fellow slaves, know that prayer alone cannot end slavery- it is only those in political and economic power who can do this – as such Prince extends her appeal to 'the great King of England'. In doing this she addresses two audiences: the Evangelical-abolitionists, and the slave community on whose behalf she speaks.

There are two instances where Prince or another slave is in the position of Goal – the goods being transferred.

15 en bought of Mr. Myners, as I have mentioned, by Miss Betsey's grandfather, and [given to her](#), so that we were by  
16 among the family. I was bought along with my mother by old Captain Darrel, and [given to his grandchild](#), little Miss

In these occurrences the slave becomes a possession which is passed from one participant to another. In lines 15 and 16 the Recipient of the transfer is a child (the master's grandchild, Miss Betsey) - this is significant as in 36 out of 49 occurrences of GIVE in the Prince narrative it is either slaves or children who are in the position of Recipient.

Slaves, like children, have no control over what they are given - they are passive participants in the transfer of goods.

Examples of the lexicogrammatical patterns described so far are also evident in the Warner corpus. There is however one main difference between the Prince narrative and the Warner narrative. Out of 49 occurrences of GIVE there are six instances where Prince is in the position of Actor – the participant carrying out the act of giving. There are no instances of this in the Warner narrative. In three of these occurrences Prince describes not being able to give satisfaction to her Master:

17 worked very hard to please them, both by night and day; but there was no giving satisfaction, for my mistress  
18 but I had to go on. I continued to do my work, and did all I could to give satisfaction, but all would not do. Shortly  
19 bundles of clothes, as much as a boy could help me to lift; but I could give no satisfaction. My mistress was always

‘Satisfaction’ is an abstract noun which relates to emotion. In these occurrences satisfaction is something which Prince (being the Actor of the clause) is in a position to give. However, in each occurrence Prince is unable to complete the act of giving because the Recipient (Prince’s master) prevents her from doing so. Prince is again showing an awareness of what she is not able to do. There is a sense that Prince realises the hopelessness of her situation.

There are three further instances of GIVE in which Prince is in the position of Actor. These occurrences are significant because Prince is clearly in a position of control:

20 loved her better than any creature in the world. My obedience to her commands was cheerfully given: it sprung  
21 solely and mistress have driven me out, or threatened to drive me--and I will give them no more occasion to bid  
22 d that I was idle and would not do my work--which was not true. I gave this paper afterwards to a gentleman who

In line 20 Prince describes (wilfully) giving obedience to her mistress. Prince pities the way in which her mistress is continuously abused by her husband (Prince's master). Prince has a strong bond with her mistress and empathises with her pain. In line 21 Prince describes giving her master no more opportunity to threaten her with eviction. Prince is now living in London and makes the decision to leave her master and seek emancipation. In line 22 Prince refers to a document which states that she is a free woman. Prince gives this document to a gentleman who is then able to find her employment. Out of 49 occurrences of GIVE it is only in these three lines that Prince has absolute control. These lines embody three moments in Prince's life when she is in a position to give.

Moving on now to the verb TAKE, a search of both corpora revealed that TAKE is often used as part of a verb noun combination: *take care*; *take notice*; *take place*. In such instances TAKE has become delexicalised and does not carry any meaning on its own. The meaning of TAKE in other instances depended largely on its phraseological environment, for example: *took off my hat* (removed); *we took the road that led to hamble* (chose). One phraseological pattern which was evident in the Prince corpus, but was not evident in the Warner corpus was *noun + TAKE+ charge/care of + something*:

1 for change of air, and carried me with them to **take charge of** the children, and to do the work of the house. While I  
2 into my head. "To be free is very sweet," I said: but she **took good care to** keep me a slave. I saw her change  
3 their daughters home; and they took me with them to **take care of** the child. I was willing to come to England: I  
4 went from home, as they sometimes did, and left me to **take care of** the house and premises, I had a good deal of  
5 morning before sunrise, sitting among the damp weeds; to **take care of** the cattle as well as the children; and to do

It is not surprising that these instances of TAKE were only evident in the Prince corpus as they clearly refer to Prince's role as a female. I was, however, more interested to find examples of TAKE being used as a transitive transformative process of the extending type (with an Actor, a Goal, and a Recipient). Two main patterns were found in both corpora:

	Mary Prince (44)	Ashton Warner (37)
noun + TAKE + noun + somewhere or to someone <i>he came and took me back to my Master</i>	11	5
noun + TAKE + noun + away/from + something <i>he sent his people to take me away</i>	1	8

Fig. 13: Instances of TAKE being used in transitive transformative clauses in both corpora

The data showed that whereas Prince is more likely to use the pattern *noun + TAKE + noun + somewhere/to someone* (there are 11 instances of this pattern in the Prince corpus compared with only five in the Warner corpus), Warner is more likely to use the pattern *noun + TAKE + noun + away from + something* (there are eight instances of this in the Warner corpus compared with only one in the Prince corpus).

Pattern 1: *noun + TAKE + noun + somewhere / to someone*

In the Prince corpus there are nine instances where the Actor is the master and the Goal (the goods being transferred) is the slave. In these occurrences the slave is the object being transported. The Recipient (the participant that benefits from the

transference) is either the master or a relative of the master (as in a, b, c and e below), or it is a place (as in d, f, i, j, and k below).

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| a) He <b>took</b> me                           | with him to wait upon his daughters                        |
| b) they <b>took</b> me                         | with them to take care of the child                        |
| c) Mr. Wood <b>took</b> me                     | with him to Antigua, to the town of St. John's             |
| d) He <b>took</b> me                           | by the hand, and led me out into the middle of the street  |
| e) he came and <b>took</b> me                  | back to my Master  |
| f) he <b>took</b> her                          | up in his arms and flung her among the prickly-pear bushes |
| g) I <b>took</b> her                           | on shore with me, for I felt I should love her directly    |
| h) The gentlemen of the Society <b>took</b> me | to a lawyer, who examined very strictly into my case       |
| i) Master Benjy, who <b>took</b> me            | to my new home   |
- j) absence from Mrs. Pruden. A few hours after this **I was taken to a strange house**, and found myself among
- k) day. **My mother** worked for some years on the island, **but was taken back to Bermuda** some time before my

There are two instances where the Actor is Prince or the Abolitionists (in (g) Prince describes taking her sister off a slave ship and onto shore for a while; and in (h) Prince describes how a gentleman from the Society for Abolition took her to see a lawyer). However, the point to make here is that in all 11 occurrences the Goal of the clause is the slave. The slave is effectively an object which can be transferred from one place to another.

Pattern 2: *noun + TAKE + noun + away/from + something*

There are eight instances of the pattern *noun + TAKE + noun + away/from + something* in the Warner corpus:

12 it is generally given to them in March or April, and it is **taken away** in December or January.  
13 came to hear what was to be done with me, and why I had been **taken away**. But all they said was of no use; they  
14 Mr. Wilson where I was, and he sent his people to **take me away** by force. When the manager came into the yard,  
15 he When my aunt found Mr. Wilson bent on **taking me away** by force, she went to Mr. Jackson, the gentleman  
16 morning to Mr. Donald, the manager who had first **taken me from** my apprenticeship away to the estate by force.  
17 over-cropped, and is no longer productive for canes. This is **taken from** them the next year, when, by manuring  
18 mother and aunt, and of Pierre Wynn, and the home I had been **taken from**. The estate of Cane Grove was in the  
19 you under his name." He then told me that he was sorry **to take me** as he did, but he was forced to do it, by Mr.

The Goal (that which is taken away) in these occurrences can be categorised into two main groups:

1. Land: each slave is given an area of waste ground. This land has been over-worked and can no longer produce cane. The slave is expected to re-cultivate this land by 'manuring and planting [it] with yams and other things' (Warner, 1831: 40). When the land has recovered its strength and is once again workable it is taken away from the slave.
2. Warner himself: on different occasions Warner describes being taken from his home, his mother, his employer, and his apprenticeship.

It would appear that whereas Prince experiences situations in which she is taken to someone or something, Warner, on the other hand, more frequently experiences situations in which he is taken away from someone or something.

## 4.5 Concluding Remarks

Language, as a form of hegemonic control, operates in subtle and pervasive ways; its power lies in its ability to go unnoticed by those being suppressed. An example of this might be the way in which power and control is expressed through verbs.

The high frequency of KNOW in negative statements in the Prince corpus (when compared with the Warner corpus) would suggest that Prince often finds herself in situations where knowledge is not available to her. In addition, an analysis of KEEP revealed that Prince often experiences situations over which she has no control. The actions of a third party prevent Prince from acting herself, so in the same way that she is prevented from going hungry by well meaning abolitionists, she is prevented from resting by her master. Prince's perception of the world, her sense of self, seems to centre on what she does not understand or what she cannot do. It would appear that certain verbs (*know* and *keep*) attract a negative colligational environment, which might suggest that Prince's personal encounters with language have primed her to use these verbs in this way.

The use of GIVE and TAKE (both in the Prince corpus and the Warner corpus) also reinforces this sense of passivity and powerlessness in 'The History'. Prince is often in the position of Recipient in clauses containing the verb *give*. Food, medicine, and documents of identification are all things which Prince is not in a position to obtain herself – they are given to her by a more powerful other. The metaphorical occurrences of GIVE are especially interesting. In these instances time, work, and violence become objects, or possessions which only the master is in a position to transfer. In positioning

herself as the Recipient of these things, Prince emphasises the powerlessness of her situation. Finally, in clauses containing the verb *take* Prince is often in the position of Goal – she is a commodity being transferred from one place to another. In these clauses Prince is objectified.

There are, however, moments of authority in the Prince narrative that are not apparent in the Warner narrative. Prince's statement 'I know what slaves know' is even more striking when viewed against the backdrop of the high frequency of negative occurrences of KNOW in the Prince corpus. The use of SAY in the present simple tense is another example of how Prince rhetorically positions herself as an authority to speak on slavery. In this passage Prince subtly, but assertively speaks out on behalf of all slaves. Prince speaks with confidence and determination when she addresses misconceptions about slavery. There are also six instances where Prince positions herself as Actor in clauses containing GIVE. Three of those occurrences are particularly significant as these are moments in the narrative when Prince is clearly in a position of control: she chooses to obey her master, she chooses to leave her master, and she chooses to find employment.

In this chapter I have only focused on five verbs however I would argue that this initial investigation shows the benefits of carrying out this type of analysis. Taking as a starting point a simple numerical discrepancy, of no ideological interest, I was able to move into representations of experience and how these experiences might reflect in some way the ideological and social systems which operated to suppress Prince.

## Chapter 5: CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this thesis I proposed a method of linguistic analysis which would allow for the experiences and perspective of the subaltern to be critically examined, whilst at the same time revealing something about the ideological and social systems which, through discourse, helped to construct those experiences in the first place. The type of analysis I proposed drew from Halliday's (2004) account of systemic functional grammar and Hoey's (2005) theory of lexical priming, and used corpus methods to investigate the voice of the subaltern from these two linguistic perspectives. In this thesis I have only been able to focus on one of these linguistic models in detail – systemic functional grammar. Systemic functional grammar provided me with the framework and the critical tools with which to examine, and talk about, 'The History of Mary Prince'. Using corpus methods of analysis, however, allowed me to be more objective and methodical in my approach. Not only that, but in using computational method of analysis I was alerted to a train of thought which an ordinary reading of 'The History' perhaps would not have allowed.

This early analysis of the two bodies of writing indicates clear differences in process usage; however, there is too little data at this stage to make a positive statement and I would need to extend my analysis to a greater selection of process types. Even then, my research would only reveal something about Prince's own unique experiences and perception of the world. In order to situate Prince's narrative as belonging to a wider discourse, and in order to make any claims about the voice of the subjugated female subject, I would need to carry out similar studies on narratives written by other female

slaves to see if there are any commonalities. However, to return to O'Hanlon's (1988) argument, in attempting to write histories from the perspective of the subaltern, the starting point must always be the individual subject.

To develop this research further I would need to do two things:

- First, I would need to carry out a more in-depth study of the 'The History'. In this thesis I have only examined the system of transitivity; however, I could extend my investigation to look at other areas of systemic functional grammar.
- Second, I would need to look at a larger body of texts to see if there are any commonalities which might suggest evidence of underlying hegemonic discourses. Looking at a larger body of texts would also enable me to investigate evidence of lexical priming.

What I hope this study shows, however, is the potential benefit of using corpus linguistics and systemic functional grammar to analyse the voice of the subaltern subject.

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