

Exploring Don McBrearty's *Race to Freedom: The Underground Railroad: Slaves and Other African Americans Involved in the Underground Railroad*

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Since the early 19th century, the network known as the Underground Railroad had played an important role in helping slaves escape to the North, that is, to freedom. In 1850, however, it was getting harder for runaway slaves to succeed in their attempt because a revised Fugitive Slave Act was authorized. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 allowed slave catchers to capture fugitive slaves in any territory or state, and forced citizens to assist them. In Don McBrearty's *Race to Freedom: the Underground Railroad* (1994), the characters Thomas and Sarah escape from the field with the help of Dr. Alexander Ross, a Canadian abolitionist working on behalf of the Underground Railroad. On their way to Canada, Thomas and Sarah are supported by a lot of people: conductors, agents and stationmasters. There are not only white people but also free black people among them, including a black slave catcher who will eventually facilitate their escape. Overall, this study will focus on the role of the Underground Railroad for slaves. Moreover the main aim is to analyze people involved in the network, especially people of color. Therefore, through Don McBrearty's *Race to Freedom: The Underground Railroad*, this essay will discuss the creation of the Underground Railroad network, its importance, and how it influenced the lives and spirit of both free and enslaved black people. The first part of this study will analyze the difference

between house slaves and field slaves, and focus on the meaning and role of the Underground Railroad for slaves as the background to the film. And the second part will explore people who worked for the network and black people surrounding fugitive slaves in this film.

Part 1: The Underground Railroad as a Response to Slavery

By the 1850s, slavery was widespread in the United States, particularly in the South. The film *Race to Freedom: The Underground Railroad* features a slave auction in which many African Americans are put on the auction block. Thomas, the hero, is also sold at that auction as merchandise. African Americans sold as slaves must always work for their master. Slaves are not considered persons but only property because they are bought by their master. This means that slaves are chattel, i.e., a personal possession.

Then, in this film, it is remarkable that slaves can be classified in two types: house slaves and field slaves. Sarah lives in her master's house with him and his wife though she is a slave. Moreover, she always works near her master and takes care of him, even giving him a foot massage. More importantly, she does not have to work in the fields. Jeb also works in his master's house, and among his many chores he is in charge of shaving his master's face. His duties look like those of a butler. And like

Sarah, he does not need to work in the field.

Conversely, Thomas works in the plantation field as an ironsmith. The other black people also work in the field, carrying water and plowing the field with a horse. More generally, field slaves “ploughed, picked and planted crops. . . [and] commonly picked cotton, sugar, rice and tobacco” as their duties. (“The Life of a Field Slave”) Also, of course, they cannot go into their master’s house and must live in cabins with a simple fireplace, a bed, a table and one or two chairs. Although all are slaves, their duties and chores are really different. Their status and job on the plantation says something about their treatment and their feeling about escaping to freedom.

As mentioned above, slaves belonged to their masters. Thus, they had to devote their life to their masters and often, slaves were treated like beasts of burden. When Thomas and Dr. Ross are about to board a train, a conductor asks Dr. Ross to show Thomas’s identification paper. This scene means that people of color must show their identification papers wherever they go and whenever they are asked to. The same goes for the black slave-catcher featured in the story. Even though he catches runaway slaves, the white slave-catcher he travels with carries his identification papers. In other words, even the black slave-catcher is not a free man. Without such papers, life was very difficult for people of color. These papers bound slaves to their masters as much as they bound people like the black slave-catcher to the white people they worked with.

When Thomas and Sarah talk about freedom, Thomas says, “our children go learn to read and write,” and Sarah says, “that’s a nice dream.” This means that slaves and their children could never get an education in those days. It was indeed a dream for slaves to learn reading and writing. This is because of laws implemented since the mid-eighteenth century, forbidding the education of slaves (“Slave Code of South Carolina”). The purpose of these laws was to keep slaves illiterate because literacy could have helped slaves run away, either by contacting people outside the plantation or writing their own papers to freedom. Also, the discussion between Thomas and Sarah is a reminder that a child whose mother is a slave must live as a slave and work for his or her master. However, the film shows that a black child could learn to read and write. A free black family helps Sarah when she is at a loss as to how to escape from her master, and the black boy is reading some newspaper article when she wakes up. It shocks her because she had never met black children who could read and write. But this discovery also plays an important role as it gives her the hope that her child, too, will be able to get education if she can go to the North. At that time, there were big differences between slaves and free people of color, even though both were African Americans.

The master’s treatment of house slaves and field slaves is very different. The master lets Sarah live in his house and gives her nice dresses. He is very shocked to hear that Sarah escaped from the field with Thomas and the other field slaves. And

from the white slave catcher Horton's words, the master also tries to do anything to take her back because he regards her as a special slave. These scenes show that the master treats Sarah with affection. He also seems to treat her like his own daughter, not his possession. Jeb can also live in his master's house and wear good clothes though it looks like his master does not treat him as he treats Sarah. Meanwhile, of course, field slaves must work in the field and wear simple, dirty clothes. Their master treats them only as goods. He makes them do hard work all day. Whether masters treat house slaves with affection or not, they can live more comfortable than field slaves.

At the beginning of this film, Joe, who is Sarah's brother, is running away from the overseer and a group of slave hunters. He is trying to escape to freedom. However, he fails to do so, and they tie him up with some chains and beat his leg with a hammer. It is just as if they try to break his foot so that he will never even think of running away again. Of course, working under their masters is really hard for slaves, but to receive punishment is also severe for them. That is why they hesitated to escape, for the punishment for runaway slaves who got caught was often terrible. Furthermore, successful escapes were rare because their masters did everything they could to catch them because slaves were valuable, and also slaves had no notion of where to go since they only knew the plantation and its surroundings.

The most important theme of this film is escape. As stated above, there are

many differences between house slaves and field slaves. The same can be said of their idea for escape. When the master speaks to Sarah after he expresses his opinion on Fugitive Slave Law at the beginning of this film, she says that “I just want to thank you for being so good to me” while massaging her master’s foot. She appreciates him since he has taken her out of the field and lets her work in the house. She also tries to dissuade Thomas from running away. Besides, when Dr. Ross insinuates that he wants to get in contact with a free black man in order to help slaves escape, it seems that Jeb hardly shows concern about it. These scenes show that house slaves want nothing to do with running away and rebelling because they think working in their master’s house is better than taking the risk of a severe punishment for running away. Conversely, Thomas finally decides to run away from the field so as to change his life of servitude even though he initially hesitated to do so. The other field slaves also decide to escape to freedom with Dr. Ross’s help. Therefore, it can be said that the viewpoint of house slaves and field slaves are opposite.

Malcolm X, a human rights activist, referred to this difference in a speech delivered to Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee workers, Selma, Alabama on 4 February 1965. In that speech, Malcolm X argues: “And if you came to the house Negro and said, ‘Let's run away, let's escape, let's separate,’ the house Negro would look at you and say, ‘Man, you crazy. What you mean, separate? Where is there a better

house than this? Where can I wear better clothes than this? Where can I eat better food than this?' That was that house Negro." (qtd. in Gates Jr). And in that speech, Malcolm X also said: "If someone come [sic] to the field Negro and said, 'Let's separate, let's run,' he didn't say, 'Where we going?' He'd say, 'Any place is better than here'" (qtd. in Gates Jr). Although there were some exceptions, his speech describes the difference well.

In addition, Thomas hopes to escape because he is worried about Sarah and their future child. When he tries to persuade Sarah to escape with him, he talks to her, "Sarah. Jumping the groom, if'n the massa lets you. I want to be in a place where I can be a man. Where I can do for you." Also, after that, he says, "We ain't got nothing but what the massa give us." He means that he wants to support Sarah without Master's help. He thinks it is his duty as a husband. Moreover, when Joe and Sarah talk about escaping, he says that the master will sell Sarah's baby if she does not run away from him. It means that masters make a profit by selling those children as well as by making them work in their own fields. As mentioned above, a child whose mother is a slave must live as a slave and work for his or her master. However, this sentence does not mean slave children can always work with their parents. That is why, even though Thomas and Sarah can be together and get married in the field, he wants to escape from his master to have their own home in the North in order to raise their child in a place

where they are free.

The following paragraphs give a brief summary of the Underground Railroad, which is the main theme in this thesis. Dr. Ross, a Canadian abolitionist, talks about the purpose of the network when he is in conversation with Thomas while bird watching. Ross says, “It’s a group of men and women, liberty loving men and women who devoted their lives to ending slavery.” The phrase “men and women,” in Ross’s mind, includes not only white people but also African Americans like Harriet Tubman and the other conductors or stationmasters appearing in the film. They are indispensable for slaves in order to achieve freedom. Historically, each of them played various roles such as providing fugitives with a refuge or carrying them to safe places. However, the network was not a planned creation in the beginning. The network “consisted of many individuals – many whites but predominantly black—who knew only of the local efforts to aid fugitives and not of the overall operation” (“The Underground Railroad”). Besides, Dr. Ross says that those people “devoted their lives to ending slavery” and some scenes in the film show how they sacrifice themselves to abolish slavery.

Dr. Ross is suspected of helping slaves run away from Master Fairleigh’s and imprisoned for it. Then, just as Thomas meets Harriet Tubman for the first time, he overhears a man who tells Tubman, “You yourself have 40,000 dollar bounty on your head.” These two scenes suggest that someone who helps slaves escape would be

punished severely and sometimes even killed. Needless to say, that is because slaves are only regarded as their master's property. In other words, to help slaves escape is to steal the master's possessions.

In the film, Thomas, Sarah and the other African Americans are trying to escape to Canada throughout the scenes. In America, mainly in the South, slavery had spread out in those days. However, it assumes that Canada tended to take opposite attitude toward America as following scene shows. When Dr. Ross and the masters have a conversation at Mr. Fairleigh's house, the master, called James by Mr. Fairleigh, expresses his opinion, "Unfortunately, some of them have no respect for American law. Even to the point of interfering in manners which are none of their concern." "I'm talking about stolen property, sir. I am talking about harboring our Negroes under the mask of British law." "American Law" means laws, which admit slavery. Especially, it stands for Fugitive Slave Law because only one month has passed since it was adopted. The word "manners" in his word implies the rules in America that slaves are masters' property and any people must not interfere in master's possessions. Although American people have such manners, some Canadians help slaves escape from masters. For this reason, James expresses his opinion by using the word: "stolen property." He also refers to "the mask of British law." It seems that "British law" represents Slavery Abolition Act 1833. It was an 1833 law of the Parliament of the United Kingdom that

abolished slavery throughout the British colonies (Simkin). At that time, Canada was one of the British colonies, therefore, the law applied to the country. Because of these historical backgrounds and situations, James is indignant with Canadian people.

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 is a key to analyze what the context of the film is. The Fugitive Slave Act was adopted on September 18, 1850 by Congress as a compromise between the South and the North. There are some scenes where the characters, such as Mr. Fairleigh, Dr. Ross and Harriet Tubman, refer to the law. At the beginning of the film Mr. Fairleigh, Thomas and Sarah's master, is reading the newspaper *The Carolina Watchman* and comments: "Fugitive Slave Law, Southern Victory, my foot. Victory for the North, too. What's good for cotton is good for all America." The word "it" in this phrase means the law, and his word shows that he agrees with it. Of course, it is much better for him because, thanks to that law, he can keep and control his property. Furthermore, the article of *The Carolina Watchman*, dated October 24, 1850, says, "Great excitement has been caused in some portions of the country by the operations of the Fugitive Slave Law. Arrests of alleged slaves have been made at Pittsburg, New York and elsewhere, the slaves in each instance being safely returned to their masters." Though some people, in fact, opposed this law, this newspaper implied that there was a general consensus for that piece of legislation. The reason for it is caused by the situation of the time. According to one website, the

Fugitive Slave Law “forcibly compelled citizens to assist in the capture of runaway slaves” (“Fugitive Slave Acts”). In addition, it forced them to return fugitives to their masters. In this film, one scene shows that someone who helps slaves escape will get severe punishment. When Thomas, Sarah, and the other slaves escape, the overseer tells Mr. Fairleigh that Dr. Ross must be putting “some fool notions in slaves’ heads.” Then, the master catches Dr. Ross and says, “I want him [Dr. Ross] prosecuted to the full extent of the law.” In those days, citizens who helped slaves or prevented their arrest were subject to a fine as well as imprisonment. Also, the accused who tried to go against the law had no right to testify on behalf of him- or herself and no right to a jury trial (“The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850”). The law helped masters make more profit than ever, but the passage of the law had different meanings for slaves and the Underground Railroad. When Dr. Ross teaches slaves how to escape to Canada, he tells them,

It is true that in the past, many slaves have run away on their own and made it. Unfortunately, now with the new Fugitive Slave Act, it’s no longer enough to escape the South by crossing the Ohio River and into the free states. The fact is that you will not truly be safe until you’ve reached all the way to Canada. Now this is why links to the Underground Railroad are now more vital than ever.

There are two important things in Ross’s words. One is the fact that, by then, fugitive slaves must escape all the way to Canada. It was almost enough for fugitives to run away to the North until the law had passed. But after the Fugitive Slave Act was passed, the North became very dangerous for slaves because the law was applied across the whole nation. In addition, as this film shows, slave catchers, hired by masters,

relentlessly tracked fugitives across the nation. By contrast, people in Canada did not have to comply with the Fugitive Slave Law. That is why Dr. Ross and Thomas are trying to go to Canada, which is safer than the North. The other important thing included in Dr. Ross's words is the fact that the role of the Underground Railroad was becoming more crucial. When Dr. Ross tells the slaves how to escape to Canada, Thomas says, "If we gonna run, I think it's best we just go. Don't trust nobody but our own selves." Thomas insists that it is more dangerous for slaves to escape with the help of the network than to run away by themselves. That is because he thinks that someone may betray him and the other fugitives, and they would be returned to their master. But as it is, slaves could not be familiar with their neighborhood and the geography of America since slaves must work in their master's fields all day and could not get an education. Then some people, including people in the network, tried to resist the law. Therefore, the help the Underground Railroad provided to fugitive slaves was becoming more important than ever. At the end of the film, the credits roll says, "Following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, the Underground Railroad carried more passengers north to freedom than ever before. By 1861, at the onset of the Civil War, almost 40,000 fugitives had escaped to Canada." This implies that members of the network tried to help many more slaves. Moreover, they kept resisting slavery even though the law was harsh on them.

Part II: People Who Worked with the Underground Railroad

This part will explore the roles of people who worked for the Underground Railroad and black people surrounding fugitive slaves. In the film, Thomas, Sarah and the other runaway slaves are supported by members of the network called “conductor” or “stationmaster.” As for fugitive slaves, they were sometimes called “passengers” by the members of the network. These role names have something to do with railroad vocabulary since the network was called the “Underground Railroad.” There had been many attempts to escape to freedom since the first African slaves came to America in the 1600s, but until around 1830, they didn’t have a name for such endeavors. Then, people helping slaves escape named it the Underground Railroad because railroads started to carry passengers across America (“Why was it called the Underground Railroad?”). These names relating to the railroad industry were useful for them because they could talk about their work by using such words without people’s awareness. In the film, the fugitives are tracked by slave catchers hired by Master Fairleigh while the members of the network try to help “passengers” escape. Therefore, the roles of these so-called “conductors” and “station masters” were really important and helped many fugitives escape safely. This part will also analyze their effects on slaves.

Dr. Alexander Ross is a Canadian abolitionist and a member of the network. It can be said that he is the most important person and also one of the main characters in

this film. He comes to North Carolina, where Mr. Fairleigh and his slaves live in, because Mr. Fairleigh invited him to his house by sending him a letter. He stays there under the pretext that he wants to research birds and to do bird watching as an ornithologist. However, his real purpose is to help slaves escape to freedom. Throughout this film, he plays mainly two important roles. One is to help slaves escape to freedom until they arrive at a safe place, even if he sacrifices his life. The other is to give fugitives a lot of information. He tells them how to escape to the North (Canada) and where they should stay on their way, providing them with some tools such as a map, a compass and a gun. In other words, he plays the role of a “conductor.”

He is suspected of helping Mr. Fairleigh’s slaves run away and imprisoned for it, but finally he is released. After that, he searches for Thomas and the other slaves and eventually finds that Thomas is put on the auction block. Dr. Ross tries to help him by telling the auctioneer that Thomas is stolen property. This scene shows his will to help fugitives be free at all costs. Besides, in order to help fugitives escape in as safe conditions as possible, he tells them to use the help of people working with the Underground Railroad. In this film, for example, he arranges for Thomas to meet Harriet Tubman and Levi Coffin. Thomas and the other slaves are going to the meeting place on foot. Then, they use public transportation such as a train and a boat; nevertheless, it is more dangerous for them than walking. In this film, Dr. Ross

provides Thomas with a nice outfit and tries to board a train with him. Moreover, Sarah also gets on a train to go to Canada. She is put in a coffin with a boy named Willy with the help of a white man, who is a conductor. When the conductor opens the lid of the coffin and gives them supper, she tells Willy about Henry “Box” Brown in order to calm his fears. Before this scene, a free black boy is reading the story of Henry Box Brown when Sarah is helped by his family and wakes up on their bed. He says,

And because Henry Brown did not want to live under the yoke of slavery, he put himself in a large box and mailed himself to Philadelphia. The journey took 26 hours, and he had to spend several hours upside down on his head. After he arrived safely and the box was opened, Mr. Brown jumped up and began to sing. After that, people gave him a new name, and he’s known as Henry ‘Box’ Brown.

This story was very famous and it encouraged fugitives. Also, Brown's story plays an important role as a typical example of wearing disguises in this film.

As mentioned above, Dr. Ross gives Thomas a good-looking dress and makes him wear it. Also, Sarah and Willy are put in a coffin on a train. These scenes show that “passengers” would not just use public transportation but also often wore disguises to avoid being recognized and returned to slavery. On their way to the North, using public transportation, it was necessary for them to have the help of conductors in particular. That is because they did not know how to go to the North by train, and only the conductors could put them on a train or other transportation safely.

In this film, stationmasters take other responsibilities for the escape. They

provide the fugitives with safe places to take a rest and to hide. It is also their important role to show the runaway slaves a path that leads them to their next stop. Thomas and the other slaves have escaped from their master, and they find a house burning a candle in the window while they are searching for some place to rest. Dr. Ross says to them, “you will need to search out safe houses along the way. Now these houses will be marked by a candle burning in the window” the night before they start to escape. However, Thomas opposes knocking on the door of the house because he thinks that there’re all kinds of reasons people have a candle burning. Of course, it had been common to do that in those days. Then, the “common” thing is vital. Had it been a distinctive sign only used by the members of the Underground Railroad, slave catchers could have found out where the fugitive slaves hid. That is why, it is really dangerous for Thomas to knock on the house’s door, but finally he and the other fugitive slaves can get a place to rest. Then, this scene shows another important way to distinguish a member of the Underground Railroad from other people. That is a secret word: “friend of a friend.” Dr. Ross tells the slaves that, “while introducing yourselves, always do so with the phrase ‘friend of a friend.’ It is the people that respond to this that will direct you toward the next shelter.” As he says, this word plays an essential role to connect fugitive slaves and people who want to help them. Thomas and the other fugitive slaves often use this word when they try to talk to someone who might be a member of the

network. As stated above, it was the most important thing for the network to be “common” in order to escape unnoticed, so slaves tried to distinguish them by using such secret words at that time.

There are three stationmasters featured in this film. The first one is a white man who has a candle burning and offers the fugitives a place to rest. The second one is a man who is called Mr. Coffin by Thomas. He only arranges a meeting between Thomas and Harriet Tubman and tells him about the system of the Underground Railroad in this film, but he was known as a famous station master at that time. He was called “the President of the Underground Railroad” because of his efforts (Wood). It is said that he and his wife Catherine helped more than 3,000 fugitive slaves escape, and their house was located along important routes to escape to the North, so they offered their house to slaves (Wood).

And the last one is a white woman, Mrs. Andrews. She lives in Portsmouth, Ohio, a state bordering Canada. She provides a place to rest and food for Sarah and a black boy in this film. Also, she tells Sarah where she has to go next in order to escape to Canada, which is exactly the role of a stationmaster. Though she tries to harbor fugitive slaves, her husband Mr. Andrews is against it. A scene shows that he objects to help slaves. While he talks about a male acquaintance who was arrested for helping fugitive slaves, it seems that he can’t understand why the male acquaintance did such

thing. Mr. Andrews says, “he told me that as soon as he was free, he was gonna add another room to his house to hide even more slaves. And he would do so no matter how many times he was arrested.” Mr. Andrews thinks that such idea is absolute nonsense because the Fugitive Slave Act prohibits people from helping people, and they will be put in prison if they do that. Thus, his wife, Mrs. Andrews, has devoted her life to hide fugitives as a stationmaster behind his back. Like Mrs. Andrews and Mr. Andrews’ acquaintance, many members of the Underground Railroad tried to help slaves escape from their master even if though they ran the risk of being arrested.

Black people surrounding fugitive slaves must also be accounted for. This film features several types of African American individuals, and they can be classified into 4 groups. The first group is slaves such as Thomas and Sarah, who are analyzed in the first part of this thesis. The second group is that of the slave catchers, and the third that of conductors such as Harriet Tubman. Finally, the fourth group is that of free black people. Not only white people involved in the Underground Railroad but African American people also helped fugitive slaves.

As stated in Part 1, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 forced all people in America to arrest runaway slaves and to return them to their masters. Therefore, Mr. Fairleigh hires two slave catchers in order to capture his slaves. One of them is a white man,

Horton, and the other is a black man, Solomon. African American slave hunters were not very common, and Solomon's case, especially his relation to Horton and his way of thinking, is worth looking into.

When the white slave catcher firstly meets Mr. Fairleigh and talks with him about the content of his work, he says, "I still got the papers on him [Solomon]. I'm letting him earn his freedom bit by bit." As stated at the beginning of Part 1, Solomon does not have to work for a master on a plantation, but he cannot be free as long as Horton has his papers on him. Without such papers, life was very difficult for people of color. These papers bind him to Hort. This is why their relationship is not merely a business partnership but one of master and slave. Some scenes of this film show us such relation between them. So, the following paragraphs will focus on four scenes in particular to analyze their relationship.

The first scene shows how Solomon regards his partner, Hort. On their way to hunting down Thomas, Sarah and the other two fugitive slaves Walter and Minnie, they finally catch up with one of them, Walter, near the barn next to the stationmaster's house. Then, Horton tries to capture Sarah, but Minnie stabs him with a hoe in order to help Sarah. After that, he is groaning with pain, but Solomon says, referring to Sarah and Minnie, "I'm going to get those women," and tries to leave Horton alone in order to go after these women. Then, Horton says, "Never mind! Get them later." But

Solomon replies, "It's gonna cost us plenty if they get away." What Solomon says and does in this scene shows that he does not regard Horton as important, and he thinks it is more important to capture the fugitive slaves especially Sarah than helping his partner.

The second scene shows that how Horton looks down on Solomon. This scene comes after the other scene, so Horton has caught Thomas and is reproaching Solomon for his action. Horton says, referring to Minnie, "If you were watching my back like you were supposed to, she'd never have stuck me." And he talks about Thomas to Solomon: "Take this one to auction." This word shocks Solomon because he thought that Horton and he would return Thomas to Mr. Fairleigh. Horton's next remark is worth looking into because it shows that Horton always controls Solomon. Horton tells Solomon, "Maybe I'll tell the auctioneer to have a look at you at the same time [when they put Thomas on the auction block]. Get a lot of money for a big buck like you." Although it may be interpreted as a joke, it is also an implicit threat that reminds Solomon that Horton may sell Solomon at any time if Solomon does not obey Horton.

In the third scene, Horton is irritated because little progress has been made with their work. He says, "They's gotta be across the river and into the North by now. . . It means by the time we do catch her [Sarah], the reward money will barely be able to cover your expenses. The fact is, we don't find her soon, you're gonna be owing me money." His word gives an impression that, somehow, the responsibility of catching

slaves falls to Solomon alone, and that failure to do so will cost Solomon a lot. Horton implies that buying Solomon is a business investment and nothing more. Horton bought Solomon to hunt fugitive slaves and if slaves are not captured, Horton's investment will prove to be a bad one. This fact is confirmed in another scene in which Horton and Solomon drop into a pub on their way to capturing the runaway slaves, and a white man, Evan, calls Solomon Horton's "hound dog." As for the comparison of Solomon to a hound dog, it is of course derogatory not only because it lowers Solomon to the level of an animal but also because it emphasizes the way other whites look at Horton and Solomon's partnership. From this fact, Solomon is expected to work as a slave catcher and is regarded as a useless slave if he does not perform well. This is why Horton tells Solomon that he is going to owe him some money. But Solomon replies to Horton, "Long as you got papers in your pocket what say you own me, I won't be owning you nothing." In other words, Solomon insists that he does not owe Horton anything because he is already the possession of Horton. Just after this banter, Horton and Solomon come into conflict with each other. Solomon argues that they should let the Sarah go. By then, Solomon seems eager to earn his freedom, but this word shows that he has a kind side. However, Horton disagrees with Solomon because there is no profits in letting Sarah go. This third scene is crucial because there are big differences between Horton's and Solomon's strategies, and these differences have a great incidence on the

ending of the story.

Then, the last out of four scenes is the scene in which Solomon kills Horton. At the end of the film, Thomas and Sarah manage to reach Canada and meet again.

However, when they talk about what they want to do in the future, Horton and Solomon appear before them again. And Horton says, “I got paper says you and the Miss [Sarah] still the legal property of Colonel Fairleigh. And I got this says you’re coming back with me to Carolina border or no border.” His words make them feel desperate, and it seems impossible for them to escape from those slave hunters because Horton holds them at gunpoint. But then, Solomon suddenly shoots Horton dead. The main reason for Solomon to kill Horton is that he cannot endure his life both as a slave hunter and a slave any longer. Solomon’s feelings have been growing little by little because Horton looks down on him and, as stated above, disagrees with him on crucial issues. After shooting Horton, Solomon walks up to Horton and takes his freedom papers from Horton’s wallet and tells Thomas and Sarah, “I don’t reckon nobody will be coming after you now. Nice piece of land you got here.” Of course, he talks to Thomas and Sarah, but his word means that he will also be able to be free because he killed Horton and could get back his freedom papers.

Slave catchers’ activities should be described further. As stated in Part 1, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 forced people in America to arrest fugitive slaves and to

return them back to their masters. This is why slave catchers “were allowed to capture an escapee in any territory or state and were required only to confirm orally before a state or federal judge that the person was a runaway” (“The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850”). So, the role of slave hunters was regarded as important both by masters and supporters of the law. Of course, slave catchers went on a hunt at the instigation of slave owners who were ready to pay a lot of money to get their property back. In this film, the overseers take two dogs in order to run after Thomas and the other fugitive slaves. At that time, masters, overseers, or slave hunters would use savage dogs trained to hunt and follow the track of fugitive slaves. Thomas uses cayenne pepper to throw off the hunting dogs. In addition to the dogs, slave hunters ride horses and carry firearms. When Horton and Solomon find out one of the fugitive slaves Walter, Horton shoots him dead though Walter entreats Horton not to shoot. As discussed above, slaves were worth a lot of money and masters usually tried to keep them alive. However, they were sometimes killed. This fact is supported in the scene in which Mr. Fairleigh and Horton talk about the expenses for capturing the fugitive slaves, and Horton says, “I’m gonna need 500 dollars apiece if we bring them back alive. 200 if we bring them back dead.” His words are on assumption that they might kill the fugitive slaves if they have trouble in getting them back to Mr. Fairleigh. Actually, he kills Walter but he tries not to kill Sarah because Mr. Fairleigh wants her back intact and has promised to pay him

double if he can bring her back alive. In addition, Horton thinks that the fugitive slaves are only means of livelihood and in the case of Thomas, he actually breaks his spoken agreement with Farleigh when he tries to take the latter to auction instead of taking him back to his master. Horton does so out of greed and because it will save him a lot of time to “get back on the trail of them women [Sarah and Minnie].” Of course, slave hunters were mercenaries whose sole purpose was to make money. Greed made them relentless and they constituted a real threat to runaway slaves and the Underground Railroad.

Black conductors were also major actors in the Underground Railroad. In this film, one black conductor and Harriet Tubman appear. When Thomas, Sarah, Walter and Minnie arrive at the place where Dr. Ross is going to be meeting them, a black man riding on a wagon is coming. Both those fugitive slaves and the black man are cautious because they do not know each other, and Dr. Ross has not yet come although he is expected to. However, Thomas and the other fugitive slaves can identify the black man as a member of the Underground Railroad by using the secret word: “friend of a friend.” After that, the black conductor instructs them to get on the wagon. As many sources attest, the wagon was one of the popular ways to carry runaway slaves to the next safe place: “Sometimes conductors used horse-drawn wagons to safely carry runaways

between safe houses. If the wagon didn't have a cover, slaves could be hidden under hay or among crates or bags. Some wagons even had secret compartments hidden in the bottom" (*Underground Railroad*). In the scene, the black conductor's wagon has a cover so that Thomas and the other runaway slaves can hide underneath it. However, the quotation shows that there were many types of wagons to hide fugitive slaves. People trying to help slaves escape devised various ways to carry them to safe places.

Thomas meets Harriet Tubman through the introduction of Mr. Coffin. Tubman is known as one of the most famous Underground Railroad conductors. As Mr. Coffin and a white man called Mr. Maxwell say, she had carried many slaves and earned the nickname "Moses" for her leadership. Their mentioning such details is a reminder that Tubman had a strong sense of responsibility and devoted her life to help slaves. It seems that her childhood changed her life and moved her. She was born to enslaved parents, and lived in Maryland as a slave when she was a child ("Harriet Tubman Biography"). However, she decided to escape from slavery and ran away to Philadelphia, using the Underground Railroad ("Harriet Tubman Biography"). After that, she helped many slaves, including her family members, to run away even though she had a bounty on her head ("Harriet Tubman Biography"). What she says and does in this film also shows that she has a strong belief. Furthermore, one scene shows that she is dressed like a man. As stated at the beginning of this part, wearing a disguise was

important for the members of the Underground Railroad in order to avoid being recognized and returned to slavery.

After this description of black people surrounding fugitive slaves, this essay finally turns to free black people. When Sarah is at a loss as to how to escape from Mr. Fairleigh and slave hunters, a free black family helps Sarah. They have a candle burning in the window in order to show that they participate in the Underground Railroad as stationmasters. They provide Sarah with a bed and some food. Also, their existence and words raise her hopes. As mentioned above, a black boy, the member of the free black family, is reading some newspaper article when Sarah wakes up. It gives her hope that not only white people but also black people can learn reading and writing if she can escape to freedom. In addition, the word of the free black woman relieves Sarah. The woman says, "You're gonna be all right now, Sarah. You got a lot of good folks looking after you." The encounter with the free black family makes Sarah keep her will power. Then, the free black woman refers to their lives when talking with Sarah. She says, "We still worry about our children. And we gotta carry our papers with us everywhere we go." It shows that the lives of free black people were unstable, and it was very hard for them to keep their own freedom. According to John Hope Franklin, there were about 488,000 free black people in America (165). However, there were

many people who were against the existence of free black people. And also, free black people always ran the risk of being taken back to slavery because white people could insist that those free black people were slaves even if it was a complete lie (Franklin 165). From these facts, the black family appearing in this film also takes a big risk in order to help Sarah escape to Canada.

This thesis has focused on slaves and other African Americans involved in the Underground Railroad. The first part has analyzed slaves' fates and treatments, what escaping from slavery means, and outlined the Underground Railroad. The main characters Thomas and Sarah finally decide to escape to Canada, but they have different points of view in escaping from their master because they have been treated very differently by the latter. After the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was authorized, it was more dangerous for fugitive slaves to escape to the North than before, so the roles of the Underground Railroad became more vital. The second part has focused on people surrounding fugitive slaves and paid particular attention to people who worked with the Underground Railroad. There were many roles in the secret network, and the various roles in the network are reminiscent of actual railroad professions. In this film, Dr. Alexander Ross plays an important role as a conductor, and the other people also work as conductors or stationmasters. However, slave catchers hired by Mr. Fairleigh try to

capture the fugitive slaves. In the second part, the analysis of the African American slave catcher Solomon is also important because it offers an unexpected perspective on the paradoxical situation of an African American man who is both a slave and a slave catcher. This thesis has discussed the various roles of the Underground Railroad and the situation of fugitive slaves. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 made it even more difficult for both the members of the network to help slaves and for the latter to run away from their masters. Yet, the Fugitive Slave Act did not deter the people involved in the Underground railroad for their resolve to abolish slavery was unshakeable.

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Summary

本論文は、映画“Race to Freedom: The Underground Railroad”を通して、19世紀半ばのアメリカにおけるアフリカ系アメリカ人の社会的地位や暮らしぶりを読み解き、そして地下鉄道と呼ばれる秘密組織が社会や奴隷たちに与える影響や役割について分析することを目的とする。

第一章では、大きく分けて2つの事柄について焦点を当てている。一つ目は奴隷たちの生活と地位についてであるが、特にハウススレイヴとフィールドスレイヴの違いに着目した。映画の主人公の1人であるサラは前者に分類されるが、所有者から可愛がられ、彼の家に彼らの家族と共に住み、土地では働かずに所有者の身の回りの世話をしている。一方、トーマスと呼ばれるもう一人の主人公は、土地内の小屋に他の奴隷たちと共に住み、朝から晩まで所有者の土地で働かされている。つまり、彼らはどちらも同じ奴隷でこそあるものの、身にまとうものや住居、労働内容、所有者からの扱いなどに関して大きな違いがあったのである。こういった生活の差は、自由への逃亡という危険で大きな試みへの考え方の違いにも表れており、ハウススレイヴたちが危険を冒してまでも自由を手に入れることに抵抗を感じていた一方で、過酷な労働を強いられていたフィールドスレイヴたちの自由に対する思いは強くなっている。また、この章で取り上げるもう一つの事柄は、奴隷の逃亡を秘密裏に手助けしていた地下鉄道という組織の成立背景や当時の社会の傾向についてである。この映画ではカナダ人の奴隷制廃止論者であるドクターロスという人物がトーマスたちの所有者のもとを訪ねたことを発端に、地下鉄道の役割や当時のアメリカの社会情勢、カナダとの奴隷制度に対する姿勢の違いなどが明らかになっている。1850年当時、逃亡奴隷法の法制化によって奴隷が逃亡することのリスクがより高まり、アメリカ国内の法が適用されないカナダを目指す奴隷が増加し、それに伴って地下鉄道の存在意義も高まっていったのである。

第二章では、映画に登場する地下鉄道の人々の様子を分析することで、本論文が目的とする地下鉄道という組織の仕組みや役割に焦点を当てるとともに、この映画の主人公であるサラやトーマスといった奴隷たちと関わるアフリカ系アメリカ人たちについて言及している。この章でも大きくテーマを二つに分けて分析を行っているが、一つ目は地下鉄道の一員である「車掌」「駅長」と呼ばれた人々の働きについてである。この映画ではカナダ人のドクターロスが主に逃亡奴隷たちを導く「車掌」としての役割を担っており、奴隷たちにカナダへ逃亡するための方法を教え必要なものを与えるとともに、体を張って次の安全な地点へ送り届ける役割を担っている。そして「駅長」と呼ばれた人々はその名の通り、「駅」と呼ばれる休息地を逃亡奴隷たちに提供するとともに、次のルートやポイント地点を指示する役目を担っていた。また映画のなかで地下鉄道のメンバーや逃亡奴隷たちが用いた“friend of a friend”という言葉やランタンなどの道具に着目し、彼らが互いに味方であると判別していた方法についても分析している。そして二つ目のテーマとしては、主人公の

逃亡奴隷たちを追いかけるスレイヴハンターやハリエット・タブマンなどの黒人の「車掌」、そして当時の自由黒人たちについて扱っている。奴隷所有者に雇われ、奴隷たちを連れ戻す役目を任されていたスレイヴハンターであるが、この映画ではホートンという白人のハンターだけでなく、彼の相棒としてソロモンという黒人のハンターが登場しており、本論文では彼らの関係やソロモンの立場について分析している。彼らは単なる仕事上のパートナーというのではなく、所有者と奴隷という当時のアメリカの情勢を色濃く反映した関係であった。またこのパートでは、逃亡奴隷たちに対するソロモンの考え方の変化や、スレイヴハンターという仕事への彼の心情の移り変わりにも焦点を当てている。彼自身も逃亡奴隷たちと同じようにまた奴隷の一人であったものと同じアフリカ系アメリカ人の逃亡奴隷たちに敵対するスレイヴハンターとしての任務を背負わされたことで葛藤し、彼らを助けたいという心が次第に芽生えていくのである。そして当時の自由黒人に関しての分析では、逃亡途中のサラを手助けした自由黒人の家族の様子を取り上げている。自分たちの生活が持たず、教育もろくに受けることができなかつたサラのような奴隷たちにとって、白人たちの脅威はあるものの、ある程度自由に自分たちの暮らしができ、読み書きをすることもできた自由黒人の存在は、辛く危険な逃亡の中で自由に対する希望をサラに与えている。また彼らは地下鉄道の活動を行う上で逃亡奴隷たちを導く存在として大いに貢献していたのである。

これまで映画を通して地下鉄道の役割や逃亡奴隷たちの置かれた環境に主に焦点を当てて分析してきた。所有者やスレイヴハンターによる追跡はもちろん、逃亡奴隷法によってアメリカ全国民に逃亡奴隷を直ちに元の所有者に戻すことが義務付けられた当時の過酷な状況は、地下鉄道や逃亡奴隷たちにとって脅威となるものであったが、自由への逃亡は地下鉄道の多くの人々の犠牲や、彼らの変装や暗号といった様々な工夫によって秘密裏に行われていたのである。