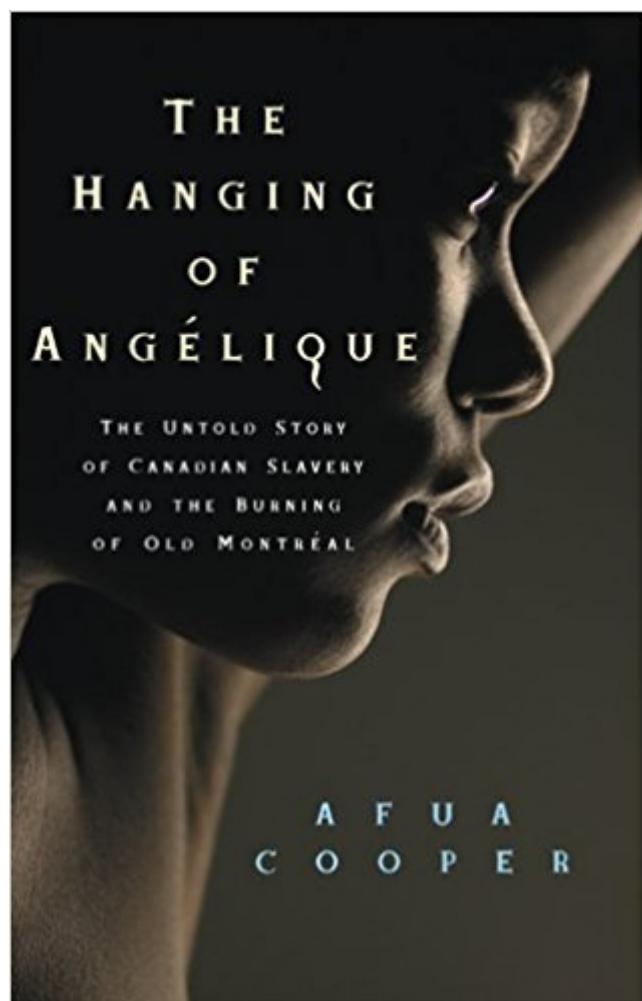


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# **The Hanging Of Angelique: The Untold Story Of Canadian Slavery And The Burning Of Old Montreal (Race In The Atlantic World, 1700-1900)**





## Synopsis

During the night of April 10, 1734, Montréal burned. Marie-Joseph Angélique, a twenty-nine-year-old slave, was arrested, tried, and found guilty of starting the blaze that consumed forty-six buildings. Suspecting that she had not acted alone and angered that she had maintained her innocence, Angélique's condemners tortured her after the trial. She confessed but named no accomplices. Before Angélique was hanged, she was paraded through the city. Afterward, her corpse was burned. Angélique, who had been born in Portugal, faded into the shadows of Canadian history, vaguely remembered as the alleged arsonist behind an early catastrophic fire. The result of fifteen years of research, *The Hanging of Angélique* vividly tells the story of this strong-willed woman. Afua Cooper draws on extensive trial records that offer, in Angélique's own words, a detailed portrait of her life and a sense of what slavery was like in Canada at the time. Predating other first-person accounts by more than forty years, these records constitute what is arguably the oldest slave narrative in the New World. Cooper sheds new light on the largely misunderstood or ignored history of slavery in Canada. She refutes the myth that Canada was a haven at the end of the Underground Railroad. Cooper also provides a context for Canada in the larger picture of transatlantic slavery while re-creating the tragic life of one woman who refused to accept bondage.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Cooper connects Angélique's fate with the wide world of Atlantic, American, and Canadian slavery, and with the intimate world of the household where Angélique worked. An

enthralling and important tale. (Natalie Zemon Davis author of *The Return of Martin Guerre*) As rigorous scholarly research, Cooper examines trial transcripts, private letters, and other New World correspondence to produce an academic coup. Her book offers a new perspective on Canadian slavery, altering the image of ourselves as benign: 'Slavery was as Canadian as it was American or West Indian.' As a dramatic re-telling of one slave woman's life of oppression, *The Hanging of Angélique* reaffirms and extends the feminist slogan that the personal is political. . . . [Told] in the decisive language of an historian and with a sense of urgency befitting a poet. (Montreal Review of Books) [Cooper] convincingly demonstrates that one woman's story can represent larger global forces. The account of Angélique's trial is an important source for Canadian history and the history of the African diaspora. (Toronto Globe and Mail) An evocative, thought-provoking and profoundly accessible work . . . [the] story leads onto the vista of Canada's participation in a huge, often chaotic Atlantic world order and a wider story of African migrations and diaspora. (Calgary Herald) Cooper is to be congratulated for long, careful and thoroughly engaged research and passionate, engaging writing. (Michel Basilieres author of *Black Bird*) The most important piece of Canadian history written in decades, Afua Cooper's *The Hanging of Angelique* shakes the earth beneath the Canadian nation story. Thorough, original, and masterful, this book is a stunning reclamation of one woman's life, but it is also a reclamation of Africans in early North American history. Trenchant and engagingly written, this book is brilliant. (Dionne Brand author of *What We All Long For*) [Cooper] presents us with an enormous range of scholarly research and heartfelt interpretation to explain, contextualize and condemn the slave-owning society of New France, the New World, and Europe. . . . This book is essential. It has the scope of a great historical novel, traversing oceans and cultures, full of sex, romance, betrayal, escapes, sufferings, crimes and tragedies. Cooper's passionate voice punches through dry detail with evident outrage. . . . The *Hanging of Angélique* really is an important and original work. (Michel Basilieres Toronto Star) Cooper's passionate style reflects her commitment to shake Canadians from their complacency about their past. (Winnipeg Free Press)

Afua Cooper is a leading scholar of the African diaspora in Canada. Her many publications include the coauthored collection *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up*, which won the Joseph Brant History Prize. She has also curated three exhibits on black Canadian history. Cooper taught history and Canadian studies at the University of Toronto and Caribbean studies at Ryerson University. She is a celebrated dub poet, whose work is available in print and audio. Essence has listed Cooper as one of the twenty-five notable international women who have "put themselves on

the line to change the world."

Well researched story!

Wow! I had no idea! Through the painful lens of this book, Canada's erased history of slave-owning is viewed, perhaps for the first time. Author Dr. Afu Cooper traces the story of a young woman slave, who, in 1734, under grisly torture, admitted to arson and was hung in public in what is now known as Old Montreal. Highly readable, this history tracks countless countries that trafficked in human lives, bled Africa dry and did untold harm. Canada is among the guilty. Eleanor Cowan, author of :A History of a Pedophile's Wife: Memoir of a Canadian Teacher and Writer

A case had been built against Marie-Joseph Angelique based on innuendo, insinuation, hearsay and Angelique's bad reputation. Under severe torture, the 29-year-old woman, who previously proclaimed her innocence admitted to setting fire to the home of her owner. This fire consumed 46 buildings in Old Montreal. After the grisly execution Angelique's corpse was left hanging for two hours for all to see, then was burnt. That should have been the end of Angelique but 270 years later she has arisen. Thanks to Afua Cooper. In fact through her thorough research Ms Cooper delves into much of the historical occurrences of the time. She puts to rest that myth that there was no slavery in Canada. She opens wide the doors of an unjust justice system. This is not just Black history but Canadian - even world history. It should be required reading for all students of history.

this is not a book of history. it is a book of historical speculation wherein cooper indulges her racist and disturbing "post colonial" fantasies of white murder through her main character consider:- she claims canada is racist because there is no statue of angelique in the very city, montreal, which she burnt to the ground. angelique was a terrorists, who destroyed the only church and hospital in the city and the homes of thousands of innocent hard working people, and cooper wants her to have a statue?- she claims the canadian judicial system was biased against angelique, even though she agrees, ultimately, that angelique is guilty. cooper wants to have it both ways: she wants to paint angelique as the victim of a criminal injustice AND as a proactive and willing agent who struck a blow for all oppressed people with her defiant and violent revolutionary act. she wants angelique to be a blameless heroine, to better serve her agenda that all slave narratives are inherently about courageous blacks fighting injustice, when really this is about a cowardly liar who committed a sin just as bad as slavery. in order to justify her crime, cooper speculates about how hard life was for

angelique (though all evidence points to the contrary)- she also wants to paint HER angelique as an independent minded women who was beholded to none, and yet angelique was, ironically, completely dependent on a white man (her lover) for her escape and its planning, and who cowardly lied about the crime she committed.- she claims angelique's lover cowardly "betrayed and abandoned her" when she was arrested for burning the town and faced execution himself (ie whitey got scarred and ran away). but what was he supposed to do? if the roles were reversed she would easily have justified angelique's "betrayal"- she claims canadian historians who see the tragedy of angelique as a love story (she burnt the city to flee canada with white lover) as racist and sexist for not crediting angelique with cooper's biased and preferred narrative of revenge against an evil society (even though angelique never ran away and started playing with fire until she met her white lover, and there is no evidence montreal was an "evil white society" - quite the contrary, actually)- she details the atlantic slave trade but make NO mention of the complicity of africans themselves in said trade. the one sentence mentioning the complicity of africa is dismissed because "all whites hold institutional power over all blacks" (the kind of unsophisticated nonsense you get from an undergraduate course on colonialism)- she borders on antisemitism by going out of her way to exaggerate the role that jews played in the slave trade, while making NO mention of the role of muslims in the trade (she has only good things to say about islam in this book, as she is herself a muslim, and has nothing good to say about judaism or christianity, the latter of which she sees as nothing but a tool of oppression (islam still has slavery, christianity and christians abolished it)- she borders on french racism, calling all french canadians dirty and filthy. she seems to revel in passages by anelique and her lover about how much they despise the french and want to murder them- her worst sin in this book is of consistently accusing angelique's montreal master of raping her though there is NO evidence for this at all. this is absolutely unacceptable for a professional historian to do. it is often couched in "did he rape her? we dont know, so we'll have to assume he did. i mean, white people raped slaves all the time so why not this guy?". unbelievable. she repeats this over and over in her book hoping if she repeats this PURE SPECULATION enough people will believe this man, who angelique says treated her well, raped her- this book is riddled with speculation and contains NO original research. and yet she claims anglique has been ignored by canadian history, which is written by racist whites, while ALL of her info is culled from secondary canadian sources. and what research the book contains is scant - she basically quotes from ONE book, by trudel (who, by the way, she accuses of being racist and sexist and yet thanks in the afterword for his kind help.)- she paints a very misleading picture of slavery in canada. she says slavery was in canada for FOUR centuries and yet later in the book she says the first slave came to

canada in 1691 and later says that slavery was completely abolished in canada in 1837. you do the math.- she says slavery was every where in canada, that it was systemic, and yet she NEVER gives us the actual number of slaves in canada (it was about 1300 in total, ever). in her footnotes she mentions censuses done that counted the slaves BUT NEVER tells us how many. why? because she knows that her whole book is based on her own lie - the slavery was everywhere in canada, when in reality it was very, very small and much, much different that in the US and latin/south america.- she says artisans owned slaves, yet never once give the name of a single artisan who owned a slave. the only canadian slaveholders we are told of in this book are all part of the french aristocracy (who all left canada for france after british conquest). a few very wealthy merchants are mentioned (though they treat their one slave just like their other indentured servants), but they were also part of the elite. she claims slavery was not the monopoly of the elite, yet gives ONLY examples of elites (maybe 15 slave owners in all are mentioned in her book, out of a population of tens of thousands)- she makes NO differentiation between the slavery in canada and slavery in the south; she says all slavery is equally bad. YET, consider that angelique was allowed to run away several times without ever being punished and she was allowed to carry on multiple love affairs with white men in the open. she would have been killed or worse if she was in the southern states or jamaica. the slavery in canada was very mild compared to the slavery in the south. slaves were baptized and thus considered fully human, had access to the courts (could sue for their freedom), could give testimony in court, etc - all rights no one in the US had. and angelique had her sentence, for BURNING AN ENTIRE CITY FULL OF HARD WORKING BORDERLINE POOR PEOPLE reduced from having her hand cut off and being burned at the stake to hanging only. this seems like charitable restraint- cooper wants to paint canada as just as racist as the south of the US but her own facts, or lack thereof, do not support her own racist assumptions.- she paints all whites as the same (inherently racist) and all blacks the same (consider her SPECULATION about angelique's black hangman - "was he thinking how evil white people are for making him kill one of his own? probably")- fact is that the lives of slaves in canada were no different than indentured servants. life was hard and undignified for over 95% of all people in the 17th and 18th century. yet she wants to make angelique a myrter because she was a cook and a maid, who had other cooks and maids helping her. this book is what is wrong with the post-colonial, identity theory cultural relativism that is sulllying the discipline of history. do facts no longer matter? and let me add that for a "spoken word artist" (whatever that is), this book is poorly written. there is so much repetition and filler in this book, which at 300 pages could easily have come in at 85 without losing anything.

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