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Architectures of Captivity: Imagining Freedom in Antebellum America

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ARCHITECTURES OF CAPTIVITY:
IMAGINING FREEDOM IN ANTEBELLUM AMERICA
BY
RACHEL BOCCIO

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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OF

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Abstract

Architectures of Captivity is a study of the literary construction of freedom through the paradoxical image of captivity. This project deals primarily with literature of the antebellum age, a critical moment in the historical genealogy of American freedom. A major supposition of the project is that the fundamental beliefs we hold about freedom—as citizens of the United States, as inheritors of the liberal traditions of the West, as sympathizers of democratic movements worldwide—were formed at the moment this dissertation interrogates. From the period’s discourses of Romanticism and liberalism and through the rise of the modern nation-state there materialized the fantastical and still powerful fiction of the sovereign individual. Upholding this privileged construct in the antebellum age—its whiteness and masculinity, its bourgeois power, its self-possession and marvelous freedom—were a host of institutions, structures, and practices that held disparate masses of less fortunate people politically, economically, and psychologically captive. These institutions and their iconic architectures (many progressive in purpose and innovation) bound large numbers of slaves, women, indentured laborers, and convicts to lives of perpetual subordination and imprisoned the broader human capacity to constitute, sympathize, and imagine.

This project attends to the meanings of freedom and personhood that emerge from the crucible of antebellum captivity. It is a wide-ranging investigation, one that implicates the historical discourses of modernity, temporality, spatiality, imagination, geopolitics, urbanization, and labor. Methodologically speaking, the project is dialectic. It locates within extreme spaces of captivity oppositional ties and tensions that structured

dominance and resistance and that produced provocative and embodied political and psychological categories, which remain with us today.

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This project could not have been realized without the longstanding guidance and imaginative vision of its advisor, Valerie Karno. As professor, thinker, and person, Dr. Karno amazes. I am deeply indebted to her and to the esteemed members of my broader committee: Martha Elena Rojas, Rae Ferguson, J. Jennifer Jones, and Robert Widell. In the classes of these scholars and through generous conversation, I've honed the literary curiosities and deep knowledge that inform this work.

My graduate journey began twelve years ago at Trinity College, Hartford. It was there that I found intellectual community of the best kind and the poise to command an academic life. I am beholden to Christopher Hager for his inspired courses in nineteenth-century literature, his model of professionalism, and his continued commitment to my work. My greatest intellectual debt is to David Rosen, who for over a decade has been my principal mentor and dear friend. He is one of the most remarkable people I know: brilliant, candid, and profoundly humane. He confirms my faith in our profession, both its prospects and mighty relevance.

Life's endeavors, however great, rarely command our singular attention. These years of study have born witness to the passing childhood of one exemplary boy. Atticus, all achievements and accolades pale in comparison to what it has meant to be your mom. You are my *magnum opus*.

This dissertation is dedicated to its first & most faithful reader, D.F.

Thank you—with all my heart.

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“In this way was bred that fearless self-reliance and independence which conducted our forefathers to freedom.”

—Herman Melville, *Israel Potter*, 1855

Introduction

“The new race is stiff, heady and rebellious; they are fanatics in freedom.”

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1867 ¹

Freedom—the most pervasive and venerated term in the American political lexicon—is also the nation’s most vexed, contested, and volatile ambition. It operates as a kind of rhetorical avatar, a rallying cry for disparate campaigns and purposes: conservative and liberal, Republican and Democrat, orthodox and radical. Freedom is more than an argument, a claim to justice or rights; it is a mode of argumentation—one that has been used to both extend boundaries and to foreclose possibilities.² As such, it is rife with contradictions: freedom schemes venerate sovereignty and ritualize conquest; they promise agency and force subjugation; they aim toward the universal while naturalizing hierarchy.³ Hence, it should not surprise that the discourse of freedom in the United States has developed in tandem with a manifest preoccupation with captivity. If freedom is America’s most beloved ideal, captivity is its foundational narrative and its nightmare.

Architectures of Captivity is a study of the powerfully evocative tensions between freedom and captivity that shaped the literary imagination in the antebellum period. Specifically, I am interested in the ways writers used the trope of captivity to imagine freedom and free personhood at a time when the meanings and possibilities of each were changing. Territorial expansion, the market revolution, political democratization, and other historic cultural transformations critiqued throughout this project substantially enlarged the narrower political concept of liberty—that which was championed by

Revolutionary republicans and Founding Fathers—into a host of personal dreams and political ambitions never quite intended. The story of freedom in the antebellum age is one of major reconfigurations of power, politics, and personhood; the nation was evolving from a questionable and elitist republican experiment to the pluralistic and democratic world power it would eventually become—all while advancing steadily toward disunion and Civil War. It was a remarkable time of cultural change, of unprecedented reformist energy, of religious and utopian awakenings, of expanding rights and democratic participation but also of a doubling down on race and gender assumptions and an expansion of institutional forms of captivity: penal, industrial, domestic, and otherwise.

Contemporary scholars of captivity as a historical condition and as a cultural and aesthetic preoccupation including Gordon Sayre, Paul Baepler, Daniel Williams, Chris Castiglia, and Saidya Hartman generally concur that the “contradistinction” between liberty and captivity in American literature has worked to define and delimit the ideological and imaginative boundaries of both the nation and its people, free and unfree (Williams 7).⁴ In the most conventional conception of the form, the captivity narrative involves violent and hierarchal contact between previously unfamiliar peoples. From its earliest inception in British North America, the genre evoked strong fears and desire among American readers, namely regarding the loss of liberty, the power of enslavement, and fact of racial and cultural mastery. These texts offered “dramatic spectacles” of tyrannical power and severe subjugation (Williams 4). By the nineteenth century, the appeal of captivity and its critical associations—solitude, isolation, domination, and identity formation— had only intensified. Captivity narratives were among the most

widely circulated and popular texts of the period. They included republications of Colonial Indian captivity, stories of military impressments and Barbary capture, tales of western Indian encounter, but also new and grueling accounts of life within near-totalizing architectures and regimes: prisons, plantations, factories, and ships. Uniting these literatures is the theme of freedom and the struggle to maintain or to possess an interior realm that could not be wholly mastered.

The body of scholarship on literary captivity is immensely rich and has established the centrality of captivity within the nation's historical and political foundations. Still, as Williams maintains, the traditional study of captivity has not accounted for the full variety of its texts or of the more evocative impacts of captivity on notions of freedom.⁵ American freedom was indeed constructed through the juxtaposition of free people and captives, as the scholarship on Indian captivity, slavery, and the Barbary crisis has long attested. And yet, it is also the case that freedom and captivity emerge, inextricably bound, from the broader ideologies and humanist language of republicanism, sentimentalism, domesticity, capitalism, and in the agendas of liberal reform. *Architectures of Captivity* contributes to the study of captivity by widening the field's purview to include systems, structures, and stories outside the conventional definition and scope of the genre. I focus on captivity's expanded literary archive and on the trope of the captive figure not because captivity is the only means by which to get at notions of freedom, arguably there are others, but rather because when we encounter captivity—as experience, mode, or metaphor—we inevitably discover meditations on American freedom and the privileged human subject at its core.

Architectures of Captivity is indebted to the seminal work of Michel Foucault, namely *Discipline and Punish*. In many ways this project is a Foucaultian study in that it is involved in critiquing the calculus of antebellum institutions, the mechanisms of power and techniques of domination that produced carceral structures and human subjects. Having said this, I join contemporary scholars such as Chris Freeburg, Katherine McKittrick, Caleb Smith, Michele Lise Tarter, Richard Bell, and David Rosen and Aaron Santesso, among others, in recognizing full and totalizing power to be a fantasy. Hence, my project engages articulations, experiences, and performances of freedom from slaves as well as masters, convicts as well as jailors, indentured seaman as well as captains. Despite vast institutional “machineries of control” that emerged or entrenched during the antebellum decades, captives of all kinds—domestics, wives, prisoners, slaves, madmen, and laborers—“contested, comprised, and transformed” the architectures and systems that held them captive.⁶

Donald Pease’s influential text *Visionary Compacts*, serves this dissertation as a governing consciousness, if not methodological model. *Architectures of Captivity* is concerned not with disciplinary regimes for their own sake but with the political impacts in a young United States of the variable literary discourses of freedom. Pease’s analysis of the abiding social contracts produced by nineteenth-century literary visionaries, by the freedom dreams of Walt Whitman, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Herman Melville is especially crucial today as literary scholars of freedom seek to authenticate historicism and ideological critique in what has been described as our post-critical, post-ideological moment.⁷

While *Architectures of Captivity* is engaged in this critical project—in a historical and ideological critique of freedom—it is first and foremost a literary study. Of principal interest is the allure of captivity on the literary imagination, the magical thinking made available by severe historical realities. The novels, tales, and essays examined within the ensuing chapters, those by canonical and lesser-known writers, all foreground spaces of extreme captivity—madhouses, ships, prisons, factories, plantations, crawlspaces, boxes, and tenements—in their evocative pursuits and portrayals of freedom. These texts belong to a literary archive derived from the circumstances and logics of slavery, penal reform, domesticity, factory labor, and Atlantic seafaring, one that evinces the significance of forms of captivity within the historical genealogy of U.S. freedom. Combining ideas of self and nation, this literature produced, shaped, and articulated “types” of people along a continuum ranging from autonomous, private, and sacrosanct to subjugated, violated, and sub-human. At the crux of every occasion and site of captivity imagined in this project are persons grappling with freedom, struggling to fashion lives that can be articulated through forms of political expression, economic autonomy, and interior sanctity.

As words, freedom and captivity have never been precise or well-defined. My goal is not to fix their definitions or to uncover their “true” or “real” meanings but rather to expose the cultural consequences of their historical reliance within antebellum institutional frameworks, sociopolitical structures, economic systems, interpersonal bonds, and literary productions. Freedom’s “etymological roots” and “core foundations” predate modern understandings of self and society (Smallwood 111). The term’s contemporary significance, which is my concern, is rooted in the historical transition from old-world monarchal orders—where humans functioned as collective and passive

subjects of a divinely-sanctioned throne—to the existence of modern secular nation-states comprised of individuated citizens who ostensibly consent to being governed according to social contract.⁸ The modern discourse of freedom developed from this dispensational shift and from eighteenth-century theories of liberalism, notably the political and philosophical writings of John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Adam Smith. Nowhere was the Enlightenment dream of liberty more fully realized or tested, so argues Stephanie Smallwood, than in British North America. Freedom in the New World was the rallying cry for Independence, the political argument of the Declaration, and the ethos of the nation's founding. It charged the debates that culminated in The Bill of Rights, inspired antislavery, universal male suffrage, and a host of nineteenth-century reforms.⁹

Despite the prevalence of nationalist narratives that posit a teleological view of freedom's expansions over the course of U.S. history—from the Declaration to Emancipation, from the 14th amendment to the Civil Rights Act, from the 19th amendment to *Roe v. Wade*—the preponderance of scholarship on freedom, from a diverse range of disciplines and methodologies, insists on a view that runs counter to this progressive one and that reminds us that freedom is not inevitable, not intended, but rather produced by the radical effort, activism, and vision of communities for whom freedom is most often and egregiously denied.¹⁰ My project contributes to this historiography but also to the critical task of American Studies in that it seeks to explain how the abstract idea of America came to be and how this concept has worked throughout the world both to inspire human liberation and to deny democratic possibility.¹¹ Even as I write this, the United States—self-acknowledged as Leader of the

Free World—proceeds unabated in its global expansion of incarceration; to date over 2.3 million people are held captive in U.S. federal, state, and military prisons and in immigrant detention centers here and abroad.¹²

Generally speaking, I use the term freedom in its political sense, as adhering in meaning and privilege to certain legal rights, civic experiences, and citizen bodies. As this project bears out, freedom in the antebellum period, not unlike today, was marked by race, gender, nation, and class and was framed against violent and extreme forms of captivity. The antebellum period saw an expansion and democratization of the concept of freedom but also a concomitant sharpening of the dichotomy between freedom and captivity, most prominently through regimes of racial subjugation. In the decades leading up to the Civil War, as free market wage labor replaced indentured servitude in the north, chattel slavery became the “master metaphor,” to use Eric Foner’s term, for all occasions and codes that denied personal autonomy and independence (10). From this era emerged the powerfully provocative slave narrative, capable, at its best, of co-opting dominant rhetorical devices and literary discourses. Slavery, while treated specifically in chapter two, is an organizing motif of the entire project. Its excesses, denials, and traumas disturb much of the literature of this period, as Toni Morrison and others have documented. Moreover, as this chapter will establish, slavery’s conventional literary mode influenced captivity writing within analogous regimes, particularly prison.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, freedom increasingly became bound to a conspicuous body and privileged notion of personhood—white, male, autonomous, and inviolable. In many ways, this centuries-long project underscores the fictional nature of selfhood, its continuous, evolving construction, and reminds us that the self is not a self-

evident category, but rather a site of contestation with very significant stakes. Integral to the antebellum era's particular imaginative constructions of freedom, captivity, and personhood was the ascendance of literary Romanticism. The self as sovereign—a concept vigorously challenged by many in the intellectual Left today—gained considerable traction in this period and reached a kind of political and philosophical apotheosis in the Romantic aesthetic. For this reason, among others, Romantic thought has been credited with preparing readers and citizens for democratic movements like antislavery.¹³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, speaking on the tenth anniversary of emancipation in the British West Indies, blended the struggle for slave liberation with Romanticism's veneration of the human person, divine in nature and extraordinary in mind.

“...here is the anti-slave: here is man: and if you have man, black or white is an insignificance. The intellect—that is miraculous! Who has it, has the talisman: his skin and bones, though they were of the color of night, are transparent, and the everlasting stars shine through, with attractive beams.”¹⁴

And yet, despite Emerson's penchant for waxing universal, here and elsewhere, Romanticism privileged a very particular subject, a powerful and white construct—the artist genius. The Romantics that inspired and defined the Transcendental moment in American literary culture shared their European forbear Percy Shelley's reverence for the aesthetic imagination and his lauding of an ascending generation of poets, whom he called the “unacknowledged legislators of the world.” In the classic Romantic view, literary artists were not only secular gods via their imaginative powers, but also different kinds of people—different in authority, privilege, and self-possession. In the American Romantic imagination, in the thought and writings of Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel

Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe, and Emerson, captivity of a particular variety—the kind that promised privacy and solitude—could act as an aesthetic portal to heightened experiences of freedom that were hardly universal. Romanticism not only tolerated, it invited differentiation, a belief in human types that fostered racism and other political and psychic structures of exclusion and difference. The impact of Romanticism on U.S. literary culture was not limited to the Transcendental set; rather, writers as a class (including bourgeois women, fugitive slaves, working-class sailors, and factory girls) drew upon an aesthetic project that is necessarily elitist and thus in certain respects at odds with a fully democratic conception of freedom. What is at stake, then, in the dynamic overlaps and competing desires of Romanticism and more radical forms of democratization is a kind of utopian egalitarianism—a full freedom for all—that just might require, as the epilogue will suggest, an abandonment of what Caleb Smith has called “the harrowing concept of the human” (*PAI* 23).

One of the suppositions of this project is that the human subject, while grounded in history, is also always unsettled, evolving, and fantastical. Hence, the work of imaginative literature and the work of creating feasible or purposeful identities are, as I’ll suggest, profoundly related and also largely under-theorized. A principal motif of captivity involves the political and psychological processes of self-fashioning; it is precisely the genre’s interrogations of personhood—as regards free and unfree selves—that help explain the impact of captivity stories on national conceptions of freedom.¹⁵ Examining a wide range of texts and discourses, this project provides evidence of how the antebellum literary imaginary served to reinforce hegemony through nationalist fantasies of exceptional power and in the staging of performances that ritualize the

production of privilege. Equally, though, this project considers more radical forms of imagination—examinations of captivity that are counterintuitive, that push past political and social boundaries and toward new horizons of freedom. Radical imaginative work is creative work; it is poetic in the most Romantic sense of the term. The literature explored in this project, across its broad spectrum of genre and purpose, is all engaged in calling forth, in naming, in giving image to possible selves—free selves, able to obtain every privilege and possibility that the writers knew to associate with the most evocative desideratum of their time.¹⁷

•••

Chapter one engages two terms and psychosocial conditions critical to the calculus and discourse of prison: solitude and surveillance. In the early nineteenth century, in a spirit of enlightened reform, old-world modes of discipline such as public torture and gruesome execution were supplanted, at least for whites in the north, by a pioneering, institutional method of criminal justice, the modern penitentiary. State of the art, single-celled asylums such as the famed Eastern State Penitentiary, opening in Philadelphia in 1829, became models of a new penal architecture capable of converting social miscreants into disciplined subjects. In droves of promotional literature and on speaking circuits, carceral cages were depicted as tombs, gothic stages upon which ritualistic fantasies of death and resurrection could be acted out.¹⁸ Caleb Smith's decisive book *The Prison and the American Imagination* documents the impact of the rise of the penitentiary—as an ideological force, a disciplinary apparatus, and an imaginative provocation—on a generation of Romantic writers including Dickinson, Melville, Poe, Thoreau, Emerson, and Hawthorne. Though Smith focuses primarily on the period's conflicting conceptions

of solitude, the great innovation of the prison was its unification of contradictory regimes, namely extreme isolation and constant surveillance. These pressures reach supernatural and pathological substantiations in Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*, a novel in which secluded and confined members of a time-honored Salem family—Spinster Hepzibah Pyncheon and her convict brother Clifford—encounter an industrious off-shoot of their family line, Country-cousin Phoebe, and the bewitching, all-seeing mesmerist Holgrave.

As the chapter will explore, Hawthorne draws upon the evocative possibilities of the penitentiary—its uncanny solitude and its dynamics of extreme power—to produce embodied political fantasies of his age: the tyrannical master, the mortified captive, the hapless aristocrat, the domestic angel, and the self-made man. Prison—of a carceral, domestic, and historical nature—is not only the setting of Hawthorne's novel, but the very possibilities, the magical conditions of its freedoms. *The House of the Seven Gables* makes use of a particular redemptive narrative, a transformative vision of solitude that splits the meaning of captivity into disparate racialized and gendered experiences. Captivity within the seven-gabled prison house affords prospects to Holgrave—as a self-reliant, middle-class, white man, an exemplar of moral autonomy and poetic sensibility—that are foreclosed to others interned within. Ultimately, as I'll argue, the novel betrays the fragility and the fiction of embodied freedom but also the distressing and very real consequences of seizing its possessions and privileges—political, economic, and social.

An aesthetics of watching permeates Hawthorne's tale of ghostly captivity, preternatural power, and sentimental romance—one developed thematically through a lineage of captivating male hypnotists. The power of the patriarchal, imperialist gaze has been scrutinized at length in postcolonial, feminist, and critical race theory but only recently, in the work of David Rosen and Aaron Santesso, for example, has it been interrogated as a matter of nineteenth-century psychological, legal, and literary production, as regards such things as characterization and interiority. In the antebellum period, in particular, interiority—the existence of an inviolable, autonomous, and private inner sanctum—was the mark, the fictional sign, of free personhood, vigorously defended in the discourse of political and legal rights but also strategically and forcefully denied subjugated and conquerable populations.¹⁹ The chapter's investigation of the relationship between the penetrating force of the gaze and the fashioning of powerful, free persons commences a study of viewing and sight, notably within contestations of mastery and subjugation that is a through line of the project. In addition, this chapter's treatment of the overlapping discourses and ideologies of citizenship, marriage, prison, and the spectral, illustrates the methodological approach of the project. *Architectures of Captivity* is a dialectical study; it critiques juxtapositions between freedom and captivity—those that informed literary, cultural, and psychological possibility in the antebellum age—through a host of interrelated and concomitant occasions of captivity, logics of discipline, and regimes of sentiment and reform.

Chapter two engages even more directly with the spatial logics of extreme captivity through its analysis of two slave narratives: Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* and Henry "Box" Brown's *The Narrative of the Life of Henry Box*

Brown. There exists a rich and interdisciplinary scholarship, one spanning several decades, that insists upon the urgent political and ideological force of space, particularly as regards black geographies, diasporas, and captivities.²⁰ I will draw on this work, notably the scholarship of Katherine McKittrick, in analyzing the spatial dimensions of freedom in these two racially encoded texts. The spaces of captivity at the center of Jacobs's and Brown's narratives—cramped hiding places that paralyze as well as protect the fugitive authors—are of an intense and potent nature markedly different from the other structures examined in this project. I will treat these spaces as physical architectures but also as evocative and ironic symbols of punishment, redemption, and dehumanization—symbols belonging to discourses that regulated the antebellum liberal imaginary and delimited democratic reform: seduction, sentimentalism, and abolition.

As the chapter will discuss, black writers of the nineteenth century assumed a vexed and complex position within a white discursive realm. Thus, they were compelled to improvise standard practices, literary genre, and social and imaginative discourse in order to confront and resist the legal and political ironies of their existence.²¹ Chapter two interrogates this improvisation, revealing its subversions to be openings toward freedom. Specifically, Jacobs and Brown co-opt white narratives of redemption (notably from the discourse of prison reform), black social space (marginal, inbetween, and interstitial positions), and codes of dehumanization (those that organize the metamorphosis of humans into chattel) in ways that allow each to locate potent freedom within harrowing confines. The freedom Jacobs and Brown claim is a far cry from emancipation; it is not self-evident or even feasible. Still, it manifests—in powerful and provocative ways—the

psychological experience of figurative dimensions of space and the fundamental spatial components of freedom.

Chapter three takes a decidedly more formalist approach to the study of freedom through an analysis of spatiotemporal specificity in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." The experience of time was changing over the course of the nineteenth century in ways that have been well documented. This chapter situates Poe and the short story form in the period's complex literary-temporal repertoire by revealing disparate temporalities and tight spatial confines to be key features of the experience of freedom within narrative. As I'll discuss, time and space were integral conditions of Poe's transcendent sublime. Poe utilized his period's changing experience of time as well as Romantic notions of captive and isolating space to produce a uniquely morbid, yet liberating aesthetic. From incongruent temporal registers (aristocratic and modern) and uncannily enclosed spaces Poe imagined dislocations that are also invitations—experiences of escape and liberation for the artist.

This chapter combines a formalist and Bakhtinian analyses of "The Fall of the House of Usher" against the broader subject of Poe's modern and Romantic sensibility. Like Poe, Mikhail Bakhtin drew upon properties of mathematics and science to give language and structure to counterintuitive concepts he recognized within artistic forms. From Albert Einstein's notion of space/time, Bakhtin conceived the chronotope—a metaphoric accounting within literary genre of the inseparability of space and time. The chapter begins with an analysis of discordant spatiotemporal orders—existing at the chronotopic level of the text—showing these to be a salient feature of the captivity tale and of the ideal aesthetic experience. In its brevity and unity, "The Fall of the House of

Usher” provides a concentrated example of the capacity of mutually exclusive registers to coexist—one linear, chronological, and rational; the other repetitive, recursive, and uncanny. The effect is “ecstatic” and formal, a matter of artistic stricture that is unique to the properties and potentials of the brief tale. Stricture, tightness, and, as we’ll see, spiral—the unification of disparate, irreconcilable registers—are shown to be the formal mechanisms of conversion that produce transcendence in the tale, Poe’s conception of freedom. Poe was obsessed with tightness—with themes of enclosure and captivity—and with the power of form. This chapter reveals these aesthetic concerns to be inextricable from the author’s ecstatic pursuit of a near-maddening and very exclusive freedom.

The diverse imaginative and discursive manifestations of antebellum freedom are the guiding interest of this dissertation. Figuration matters as much as hard facts in analyzing carceral architectures of modernity. Fact and figure are interwoven explicitly in Chapter four, which takes the iconic and dramatic symbol of the deep-sea vessel to be the supreme metaphor, microcosm, and metonymy of the calculus of modern captivity. In its exploration of imposing maritime architecture and sea literatures, the chapter aims at allowing us to “see” in the literary figure of the sea a comparative series of multidimensional renderings of oceanic non-freedom—spatial, material, visual, and metaphorical. The chapter’s first section draws heavily from the work of Marcus Rediker, notably his accounting of the superimpositions of captive regimes: sea-faring, slavery, prison, and the factory. Here, I am interested in the socio-historical institution of the ship, the oceanic reach of slavery, and the industrial conscription of maritime labor. Both chapters four and five recognize concomitances and interrelated agendas of key architectures and institutions of captivity. Hence, chapter four’s critique of the ship and

its literatures initiates an interpretive stance that continues throughout the remainder of the project.

In its second and third sections, the chapter engages two seminal texts of antebellum sea literature: Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* and Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*. Though Dana's text is the less fictional, I emphasize the book's hybridity, its experimentation with popular forms such as initiation and captivity. Dana's literary realism, reformist intentions, and acculturation within the working seamen class are well established. By focusing on the author's use of captive tropes and strategies for exclusion and differentiation, the chapter reveals how the ship functions as the site and circumstance of Dana's distinction and privilege. Vision, as an interpretive concern, works to connect the analyses of Dana's and Melville's narratives in this chapter. The intensity, hierarchy, and violence of ship captivity generate in both texts a means of seeing, a visual perspective essential to the task of creating and sustaining the fiction of free personhood. The chapter's final section offers the project's fullest accounting of the ontological imperatives of race and captivity through its analysis of the master/slave dialectic in *Benito Cereno*. Drawing on the work of Chris Freeburg and Tracy Strong, I interpret Melville's text to reveal the psychic violence of self-making in the imperialist nation-state and the utter impossibility of freedom—at least within any available political or philosophical contexts.

Chapter five takes the ubiquitous industrial space of the factory—the quintessential architecture of nineteenth-century industrialization—as the organizing motif of an overarching analysis of the antebellum market revolution. Departing from previous chapters, which focused literary analysis on one or two key texts, this final

chapter evaluates a range of genre and discourse across the full political spectrum—novels, treatises, essays, periodicals, and tales—that address deep changes to labor practices and conditions. At the crux of the chapter is an interrogation of the era’s critique of wages as a freedom problem. Early republican notions of liberty equated independence with economic means of production. To be free was to be propertied; owning land was akin to owning one’s self. Universal suffrage and industrialization combined to create a category of working-class men that possessed political rights but little economic power. How such persons might be conceived as free was a subject of great seriousness. Wage work posed a crisis to political thinkers, those who saw it as incompatible with freedom, and to reformists who decried the era’s egregious labor conditions. Still, working for wages—even long hours of monotonous toil in environmentally-toxic factories—had proponents: free labor Republicans, prominent capitalists, and, as we’ll see, an outspoken and surprisingly literary caste of female laborers, transplants from the rural countryside who were eager for educative, material, and experiential pleasures.

What emerges from the anti-industrial diatribes of George Fitzhugh, the socialist critique of Orestes Brownson, the sentimental reform of Rebecca Harding Davis, from disparate Romantic evaluations by Melville and Emerson, and in the vast archive of mill writing is a contestation over the meaning of freedom within capitalism. Images of captivity animate both pro- and anti-industrial discourse; consequently the rhetoric of chattel slavery was regularly and dramatically employed, to the chagrin of many black abolitionists, both to defend and decry free labor regimes. Ultimately, as the chapter will show, the literature of early U.S. capitalism reveals a vexed and insistent portrayal of the logics and practical realities of the emerging free market. Wage work in its most salutary

articulations could develop human potential and expand personal and economic possibilities; it could make people free. Alternatively, in the minds and imaginations of anti-capitalists, from slave-apologists to socialists, wage labor—its architectures and schemes—could enslave and dehumanize workers; it could entrap people within unrelenting lives of poverty, disease, toil, and hopelessness.

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On May 23, 2013, just as I began work on this dissertation, President Obama remarked in a speech at the National Defense University in Washington, D.C. that while “Americans are deeply ambivalent about war...[they] know the price for American freedom.”²¹

Architectures of Captivity is motivated by a deep anxiety over the *price* of American freedom and also by a profound sense of our moral obligation to understand how freedom became embodied in ways that deny and construct autonomy and privilege. The meanings of freedom critiqued in this project—those emanating from the period’s interrelated logics and conditions of captivity—produced a sovereign notion of personhood that resurfaces in contemporary rhetorics of personal responsibility and individual choice. The ideal of the sovereign individual cannot be extricated from the history this project engages, from the rise of the nation-state or from the liberal tradition. In a broad range of contemporary freedom talk, our racist, imperialist, and patriarchal past returns. While today we believe that all people are agents, that everyone warrants the same civil rights, this very universalism—when linked to a conception of the human as sovereign— can justify political and economic disadvantage and deny our collective responsibility for structures of oppression. It can act to disable the kind of democratic citizenship that would promote full freedom for all.

The notion of free personhood we inherit from our antebellum past is, in other words, plagued by its racism, patriarchy, and imperialism—and this legacy disciplines our imagination and makes slaves of us all. Taking sovereignist assumptions of free personhood to be inadequate to the demands of democratic justice, the project’s epilogue moves toward a non-sovereign theory of freedom, one which draws on the radical imaginative work of Sylvia Winter, Anthony Bogues, and Sharon Krause. It seeks to unfetter American freedom from its history, from its individuation, from its legacies of domination, interference, oppression, and violence, and relocate it in a revived imagination and in the transformation of self and society. It is my contention that freedom does not have to provide cover for hegemonic possessiveness and exploitive hierarchy. Rather, it can be a radical antidote to an array of twenty-first century crises. This conviction informs my scholarly engagement with literature, past and present, and it inspires this dissertation with purpose.

Notes

1. In “Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England.” 1867. *The Atlantic Monthly*. 1883.
2. Williams makes this point vis-à-vis the earlier Revolutionary concept of liberty. See 2.
3. See Smallwood for an interrogation of freedom as paradoxical. See Tomlinson and Lipsitz for a discussion of the way freedom schemes have worked as a cover for exploitation and racist, patriarchal, imperialist hierarchies. See also Anderson’s discussion of the way structural forms of white racism, emanating out of state and federal legislatures and court systems, consistently and supplely uses

the language of democracy and the language of freedom (the integrity of the ballot box, for example) as a means of undermining black achievement and power.

4. Mutually constitutive genres such as Colonial Indian captivity, slavery, and accounts of the Barbary crisis served to justify and protest slave holding in the New World and also to “construct the boundaries,” Baepler has said, of “barbarity” and “civility” and of “blackness and whiteness” in the U.S. (xii).
5. See Williams, 5.
6. The authors are speaking specifically here about the early American penal system, but their construction of “captives” throughout *Buried Lives*—as subjects acted upon yet always acting—reinforces my representation.
7. The 132nd MLA Annual Convention in Philadelphia will host a panel dedicated to the impact of *Visionary Compacts* on the “Field-Imaginary” of American Studies just as the book celebrates its thirtieth anniversary and republication. Of key interest is the value Pease’s type of historicism and ideology critique has on the field, and related fields, today.
8. See Smallwood, 111.
9. See Smallwood, 113. I am borrowing from her description of the mainstream liberal view of freedom’s historic expansion. See also Reed, 2-3. Thinking specifically about contemporary and state-sanctioned remembrances of the Civil Rights Movement, Reed concludes that such celebrations—where limited progress is depicted as achievement, folded into a progressive view of history—make difficult to articulate radical and alternative visions or to access the real

complexity—organizationally, politically, ideologically—the generative messiness, we might say, of past movements.

10. Ibid.

11. According to Tomlinson and Lipsitz, this critical task has at no time been more difficult or more required. See 1.

12. See Wagner and Rabuy.

13. See Ernest, “Introduction,” 17.

14. See Gougeon and Myerson.

15. See Williams, 7. See also Noble.

16. For more on the radical imaginary, see Bogues, 44-45.

17. See Williams. See also Tarter and Bell, 4. See Smith, *PAI*.

18. Rosen and Santesso locate modern notions of privacy—as a legally protected construct and as a marker of autonomous selfhood—in a Romantic conception of selfhood. Privacy as a right is finally codified in the landmark law review article of 1890, “The Right to Privacy,” co-authored by Samuel Warren and Louis Brandies. For more, see Rosen and Santesso, 105-156.

19. See Gilroy and Baucom on *The Black Atlantic*. See Dayan and Elmer on rethinking *The Black Atlantic*. See Frizsche, Delaney, and Duncan on the spatial politics of black space.

20. See Hager, 19.

21. *The Washington Post*, May 23 2013, Staff Writer.

Chapter One

Solitude, Surveillance, and the Making of Selfhood in Nathaniel Hawthorne's

The House of The Seven Gables

"...I have been carried apart from the main current of life, and find it impossible to get back again...and yet I never meant any such thing, nor dreamed of what life I was going to lead. I have made a captive of myself, and put me in a dungeon, and now I cannot find the key to let myself out—and if the door were opened I would almost be afraid to come out."¹

—Nathaniel Hawthorne, 1837

Readers of Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1851 novel *The House of the Seven Gables* might mistake these words for the anxious and lonely sentiments of the book's aging and reclusive characters, Hepzibah and Clifford, as the two peep together from the arched, second-story window of the grandiose and impenetrable Pyncheon-mansion at the "rush and roar of the human tide" below, unable to join "the mighty river of life" or take the "deep, deep plunge" into the "human ocean," though their "jailor had but left the door ajar" (145-147). In truth, these lines were written by Hawthorne to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, his former Bowdoin College classmate, at the close of Hawthorne's decade-long, self-induced isolation in his family's Salem home. According to Malcolm Cowley, these years "deepened and individualized Hawthorne's talent" (4). And yet, in 1837, it must have seemed uncertain whether the author would emerge from his "condemned solitude" a *Young American*, equipped to seize and conquer that metaphorical "plot of ground which is given to [a man] to till"²—a real life embodiment of his fictional hero

Holgrave—or if he would retreat further and further into the vague, inscrutable seclusion, finally resisting the “fierce impulse” (as do Hepzibah and Clifford) to “throw himself into the midst of life” (*Gables*, 146). Rather than self-actualizing, he might have eroded, becoming less and less a full person, possibly more “owl-like” as he frequently dubbed his fictional inmates;³ Cowley tells us that Hawthorne was known to call his isolated room “an owl’s nest” because he fled it “only at dusk” (1). As we know, Hawthorne did not succumb to the dehumanization and “ghostly punishment” of “dungeon” existence,⁴ but rather lived an exceptional life marked by marriage, children, profitable political appointments, and enduring literary achievement.

Hawthorne may have lived far less like a prisoner in a gothic romance than his opening correspondence to Longfellow suggests; still his post-college years in Salem were indeed isolating, and his seclusion in the lonely house—which, if we are to believe Cowley, was occupied by an “old aunt dressed in black who wandered...among the flowers like the ghost of a gardener” (2)—offered a well-spring of imaginary material from which to draw. The sentient and extravagant Pyncheon-mansion at the crux of *The House of the Seven Gables* is both the novel’s title-character and its *locus operandi* for various substantiations and occasions of captivity and of the disparate selves it produced. As a living, breathing edifice, the house is a kind of architectural avatar, a gothic aesthetization collapsing a myriad of social, historical, and psychological traumas. Bound to this “buildingscape of bondage”⁵ and to its shameful and cursed inheritance are severe power relations signaling a decaying, aristocratic order but also a range of U.S. antebellum institutions that linked captivity and liberty and worked to define meanings of freedom in the period.⁶

Taking solitude and surveillance as *entry points* into the seven-gabled house and into its people, this chapter will examine how liberal, democratic privilege is consolidated within a politics of free personhood—white, male, and middle-class—and through an aesthetics of vision—powerful, penetrating, and imperializing. To do so, I will juxtapose Hawthorne’s Romantic hero, Holgrave, who alone emerges from the prison house capable of inheriting the promises of a burgeoning new social order with the novel’s ghostly cast of characters, those who haunt the boundaries of life and death and who bear witness to what Russ Castronovo terms the “necro ideology” underpinning U.S. citizenship. This chapter will attend to the way Hawthorne’s captive, vacuous, and penetrated characters make possible the authentic, autonomous, individuated personhood at the crux of the Romantic ideal. Ultimately, the novel distinguishes between free people—those possessive of an inviolable and private interior—and captive people, essentially allegorical figures, whose physical and psychic beings align with the circumstances of their realities.⁷

In telling the fictional story of Salem’s historic house, Hawthorne borrowed from competing narratives of prison—one gothic, the other redemptive—and from Romantic notions of solitude. Integral to these discourses, namely the varying and quasi-magical impacts of severe isolation and captivity on a range of human subjects, free and unfree, were the era’s developing notions of interiority—ones which could conflate the work of the novel (of creating believably, autonomous characters) with the psychological and political possibility of free personhood. Despite its democratic themes, Hawthorne’s novel posits inviolable interiority—always already a racialized and gendered construct—as a marker of cultural privilege and as dependent upon visual forms of violation and

surveillance. As with many of the texts examined for this project, the penetrating, powerful force of the gaze (embodied, as it is, in the novel's many mesmerists) is revealed in *The House of the Seven Gables* to be a signifier for and ritual performance of freedom's most predatory pursuits.

Oddly enough, and despite its terror and gloom, *The House of the Seven Gables* has been called Hawthorne's "sunny" romance; the one he writes in the wake of *The Scarlet Letter* and in response to a growing self-consciousness over the "gloom in his writing."⁸ The darkness that permeates both house and novel is lifted by Phoebe Pyncheon's "spiritual force," her "ontological power" to convert a house (even a doomed, decaying, aristocratic mansion-house) into a home (Herbert 95). Her sanguine marriage to Holgrave breaks the Pyncheon family curse, frees the last of its captives, and secures a democratic future as "the redemptive form of the new" (Herbert 95).⁹ The book delighted Hawthorne's wife Sophia; the author, too, seemed pleased, calling *The House of the Seven Gables* "a more natural and healthy product of the mind" (Milder 110). To be sure, its installment of "law-abiding domesticity" provides a "*via media*," as Robert Milder says, between *The Scarlet Letter*'s frightening licentiousness and its austere denials (132, 113-114). And yet, everywhere in this sentimental tale of middle-class ascension the dreadful gothic intervenes, undermining the novel's ethos of democratic egalitarianism and betraying the fragility of its central, privileged construct: the radically-individuated, fantastically-autonomous, self-made man.

We are less than ghosts: Death and Rebirth in the Prison House

The sentient nature of the House of the Seven Gables—its "human countenance"—results from the *presentness* of its past; it is "expressive," the narrator tells readers, of "the long

lapse of mortal life, and accompanying vicissitudes, that have passed within" (9). Built in the time of Salem's Puritan settlement, it "bears the traces"—in both body and spirit—of two tortuously entwined families: the venerable Pyncheons (who've long inhabited the house) and the humble Maules (upon whose rightful land it was erected). Colonel Pyncheon, the progenitor of the family's New England line, ignores the "village gossips" and their warning whispers of "an unquiet grave" when he hires Thomas Maule, son of the executed Matthew Maule, to serve as head-carpenter and to build the family's mansion on the disputed site (12). Readers learn of the Colonel's dubious involvement in the "general cry" that occasioned the elder-Maule's death for the crime of witchcraft and which led to the passing of Maule's "humble homestead" into the Colonel's grasp (12). In the end, despite all misgivings, the house is built—"massive," "hard," and "stern"—much like the Colonel's "rigidity of purpose" and the architect's rightful grievance (13).

On the morning of its consecration, the "proud" house—"breathing," as it were, though the "spiracles" of its "great chimney"—is a complete anathema of Puritan thrift and simplicity: "its whole visible exterior...conceived in the grotesqueness of a Gothic fancy" (14). Grand descriptions of the home's "first bright hour"—during which sunlight is thrust into ornate hall and chamber—bear little resemblance to the "heavy-browed," "battered visage" young Phoebe finds when she arrives in Salem centuries later. The protrusion of the mansion's grand upper story alone, by casting "a shadow and thoughtful gloom into the lower rooms," announces, on that promising first day, the inescapable darkness that would come to infest the walls with "dry-rot and damp-rot" (152) and the Pyncheons with misery and death. Even before the blessing can be given, closing the destinies of the two families within the space of the seven-gabled house, Colonel

Pyncheon dies suddenly—the victim (so readers are encouraged to believe) of the alleged-Wizard’s mysterious, last prophesy that “God hath given him blood to drink!” (18).

Such is the story passed down through generations of “fireside tradition” in Hawthorne’s fictional world and shared with readers in the opening chapter (12). The present-day, nineteenth-century house, no longer a splendid edifice at which “clergyman, elders, magistrates, [and] deacons” gather, has been transformed into a dungeon (15). What it retains of its former glory, when it was mostly an architectural rendering of the Pyncheon grandness and the Maule mystique, is a frequently remarked upon “impenetrability” (252, 258). The house is not impassable (though few ever seem to enter or exit it), but rather it is dark, hidden, unknowable, and enigmatic—attributes it shares with its inmates. To the aged-spinster, Hepzibah Pyncheon, its longest occupant, and her forlorn brother, Clifford, the “whole interior of the house” is “dismal,” the air “close” and “heavy.” “Dark,” “inexorable” influences render it impossible to “flee” the “dusky passageways” (149).

Readers first learn of Clifford on the eve of his homecoming— after he has spent thirty years incarcerated for the supposed murder of his uncle. Clifford’s return brings the metaphorical relation between the mansion and the prison closer, as his trauma is superimposed upon the House of the Seven Gables. In Hawthorne’s time, during what Caleb Smith terms “the golden age of the penitentiary,” different, often conflicting, ideas were circulating about what prison could mean and how its meanings could be embodied (*PAI* 136). The period’s reformers, deeply influenced by Christian theology and Enlightenment rationality, understood solitary confinement as a kind of “architecture of

reflection”: isolated from all society, the penitent soul turns inward to be purified and reborn (C. Smith, *PAI*, 3). Carceral discipline also restaged, in powerfully evocative ways, the social contract underpinning U.S. political order: the prisoner, a violator of the ties (legal and moral) that bound the republican nation, could be temporarily exiled from the social body (thus maintaining its purity) and eventually returned (thus performing the nation’s promise of redemption and self-reinvention).¹⁰ At the same time, first-hand accounts of dehumanizing isolation and mind-snapping boredom troubled visionary fantasies and tales of enlightened sentimentality, countering the idealism of prison reform. In anti-prison rhetoric, the convict figured as a monstrous-other, an “exile from civil society,” akin to “savages and slaves” (C. Smith, *PAI*, 39, 41).

Hawthorne fashions Hepzibah and Clifford, characters heavy-laden with “torturing anxieties and horrible despair,”¹¹ from this nightmarish sensationalism. As one of a multitude of captive experiences embedded within the illogicality of the mystical house, imprisonment—of a cadaverous death-in-life existence—is written onto the bodies of its victims. Hepzibah and Clifford personify the Foucaultian formulation of internalization: in mind and body they reproduce the ghostly circumstances of their captivity. For Michel Foucault, the effect of the nineteenth-century penitentiary, aligned in fact with its reform agenda, was the creation of the modern “obedient subject,” trained to occupy the temporal-spatial architectures of a capitalistic society (128).¹² In the Foucaultian extreme, prison fashions human automatons: disciplined, ordered, and routine. And yet, *The House of the Seven Gables* is not the Panopticon. As opposed to unrelenting surveillance (a topic I will discuss in later sections), intense solitude render Hepzibah and Clifford more ghost-like than real, more irrational than habitual. Hepzibah

is “invisible” (64) in the halls of her “quiet grave” (42); rising suddenly, she is like “a ghost at cock-crow” (42); frowning daily in the looking-glass, she is greeted by a “ghostly sphere” (34). Her voice “contracts a kind of croak” that is called “death itself” and “ought” to be “buried,” so the narrator says, with the person it inhabits (119). Hepzibah’s psycho-social incarceration in the prison house permeates the entirety of her being: her heart is termed “a dungeon” in which “a cold spectral sorrow” “imprison[s]” the “joy” that has “long laid chained” (92).

Clifford, especially, has been, in Smith’s words, “mortified by incarceration” (*PAI*, 64). His “imprisonment” is called “perpetual”—it persists even after he is “summoned forth” from his “living tomb” (24). The “prison atmosphere” is said to be “lurking in his breath” (191). When Phoebe, newly arrived to the House of the Seven Gables, first hears Clifford’s “strange, vague murmur,” she likens it to “an indistinct shadow of human utterance” (87-88); Phoebe fears “a ghost [is] coming in the room” (87). The “long-buried man” (24), a “wasted, gray, and melancholy figure,” occupies the table as “a substantial emptiness, a material ghost” (95). Brief moments of clarity bring only a “deep sadness”: “Hepzibah!—it’s too late,” cries Clifford toward the novel’s end: “We are ghosts! We have no right among human beings—no right anywhere, but this old house, which has a curse on it, and which therefore we are doomed to haunt” (148).

By all accounts, Hepzibah and Clifford are destined to remain, indefinitely, in the spatio-temporal nightmare of the House of the Seven Gables. For a time half-alive, but eventually fully-dead, their fate is to relive—again and again—the nightmare of some “deed of sin” or the “crisis of life’s bitterest sorrow,” to join, in this way, all the “departed Pyncheons” through “a sort of mesmeric process” that is essentially punitive

(22). For Clifford, the cursed house is always an extension of the prison cell; as such his face frequently “darken[s], as if the shadow of a cavern or dungeon has come over it; there is no more light in its expression than might have come through the iron grates of a prison-window” (99). Clifford’s psychic confusion extends to the surface of his body; it is inscribed in the very lines of his skin:

That gray hair, and those furrows—with their record of infinite sorrow so
deeply written across his brow, and so compressed, as with a futile effort to crowd
in all the tale, that the whole inscription was made illegible... (123)

Clifford’s face presents an “illegible” “tale,” an unreadable story, analogous to the inscrutability of the Pyncheon past and of his prison trauma. Readers are told his “sorrow” is “infinite,” which is to say that it is endless but also inestimable and unbounded, all aspects that eradicate the possibility of meaning. There is a permanence to the marks; they are “deeply written” and “compressed” within “his brow.” Though the “effort” to explicate is “futile,” the “whole inscription,” “illegible,” Clifford’s body is a “record,” it is physical evidence of a story that defies telling, and in this way his body replicates the enigmatic house it is trapped within.

Herman Melville (who in “Bartleby” authors American literature’s most enduring psychically-wan figure with mysterious connections to the catacombs) took notice of Clifford, claiming Hawthorne’s character is “full of an awful truth throughout...he is no caricature. He is Clifford.”¹³ If by the label “caricature” one imagines exaggerated depiction for comic or grotesque effect, then indeed Clifford is not this. Hawthorne is quite serious, I would suggest, (if not fearful) of his “ghosts.” Nonetheless, in

constructing Clifford, the author draws from theories of identity that produce a “type” of old-world subject, allegorical in its complexity, that offsets the liberal subject (Holgrave) blossoming, concomitantly, in an adjacent gable.¹⁴ We recall, part of the narrative of nineteenth-century prison reform upheld that from the “tomb of darkness, abjection, and soul-destroying loneliness” an “enlightened and renewed soul” would “rise” (C. Smith, *PAI*, 84). Enclosed within the solitude of the cell, the convict was supposed to find relief in the inner sanctum of the self.¹⁵ The idea was Romantic at its core—revising a relationship between “solitude and the shape of the soul” that is ancient in Western culture (C. Smith, *PAI*, 92).¹⁶ It formed around emerging ideas of interiority, which according to Chris Castiglia differentiated individuals possessive of a private, inward site of imagination, self-fashioning, and freedom from “others”—readable types of a sort, who were “full,” as Melville says, of certain sociopolitical truths throughout.¹⁷

In Clifford, exteriority and interiority collapse, resulting in a character for whom the rhetorical promise of prison solitude is impossible. Clifford’s vacuousness, his lack of a robust and nurturing interior life is not merely a function of carceral victimization. It is also a mark of aristocratic identity: the narrator calls Clifford “the prisoner” but also “the potentate,” a term evocative of monarchical culture (124). In their intellectual history of liberalism, David Rosen and Aaron Santesso identify the equation of surface with depth in literary character as “a late expression of allegorical sensibility”—remains of pre-liberal thinking in nineteenth-century liberal world (61). *The House of the Seven Gables*, bound as it is by a metaphysical connection to the entire Pyncheon line—a relic, in this way, of old-world systems that “incorporate” (to use Tocqueville’s terms) “family feeling” “with the estate”—is an illustrative metaphor.¹⁸ The mansion architecture forms

an exterior body that is one and the same as the family interned within, and which has no sanctifying force—nothing of the imaginative hearth, warm and purifying, we associate with middle-class domesticity. The aristocratic structure decays with the psychological, economic, and social decline of the Pyncheons. Its “heavy-browed” and “battered visage” (75) replicates the “furrows” “deeply written” (123) across Clifford’s “altered, aged, faded, ruined face”(102). As we will see, Holgrave’s body operates as a different kind of architecture, one that protects and shields a private essence. For Clifford, the gentleman aesthete, all the world—all of its meaning—is surface: color, warmth, sound, texture. Recoiling from Hepzibah’s homely features, the “instinctive lover of the Beautiful” basks in the “sweet tones” (122) and “blossoming” beauty (125) of Phoebe. But, in the end, it is all pleasing “perception,” none of it “belongs to him” as “an individual” (125).

As both a “wretched, abjected victim of oppression” and as a “metaphor for modern subjectivity at large,” the offended, aristocratic Clifford haunts the House of the Seven Gables—novel and home (C. Smith, *PAI*, 110). He is the proverbial figure Smith identifies “lurk[ing] around every corner” of a literature “preoccupied” (as antebellum literature was) with “the problem of freedom” (111). If the penitentiary functioned, as Smith attests, as “an institutional scene” for the “incarnate performance” of a “fundamental” U.S. political fable—that from the “remains of a sacrificed beast” (old world, monarchal, violent, excessive) an “enlightened subjectivity” could “rise,” readers must look beyond Clifford to discern Hawthorne’s triumphant casting of the prison drama (*PAI*, 49, 84).

Holgrave’s quarters within the House of the Seven Gables have all the secluded, dungeon-trappings associated with the most gothic of prison lore: ¹⁹ his is a “remote

gable...with locks, bolts, and oaken bars on all the intervening doors” (31). And yet, Holgrave’s solitude does not produce the cadaverous death-in-life effects we’ve seen with Clifford; rather, through the crucible of his confinement, Holgrave passes from a “homeless” jack-of-all-trades to a landed patriarch. To be sure, differences in history and in duration figure largely in the disparate experiences Clifford and Holgrave have with the Pyncheon-mansion. Even so, I want to suggest that Holgrave’s transformation, especially in its connection to the house, has as much to do (if not mostly to do) with his Romantic brand of personhood: unique, artistic, and inviolate. As the novel bears out, Holgrave’s self—radical in its enclosure—is an “agent of relief” and the only “true space of freedom.”²⁰

...

Hawthorne was part of a generation of writers, who in following Emerson’s call to “study the art of solitude,” invariably engaged with the subject of prison and its contemporary debates.²¹ We recall how Henry David Thoreau remembered his brief incarceration in 1846 (for failing to pay taxes) as a “transformative experience” (C. Smith, *PAI*, 120). Jail provided Thoreau a “peculiar vantage point” for critiquing social power (C. Smith, *PAI*, 120). In the solitude of the cell, Thoreau finds, what Smith calls, a “renewed sense of freedom” that is also interior: The jailors “had resolved to punish my body,” says Thoreau in “Civil Disobedience,” but “they could not reach me” (126).²² In more aesthetic terms, Emily Dickinson famously “imagined herself as a prisoner” and “came to represent a Romantic myth”: the poet, in extreme solitude, “discovers a private and visionary sensibility” (C. Smith, *PAI*, 2, 1). For Hawthorne, as for Dickinson, imprisonment was, in Smith’s words, “an ambiguous condition, “sometimes oppressive”

(as the opening letter to Longfellow reveals) but also “mysteriously liberating” (*PAI*, 2). Forced in childhood by way of an injury to substitute formal schooling for the privacy of a world of books and the seclusion of his backyard garden, Hawthorne’s “innate imaginative power” blossomed (Herbert 61). Such is the role solitude assumes in the standard account of Hawthorne’s artistic development. (Recall Cowley’s claim that post-college isolation in Salem “deepened and individualized Hawthorne’s talent.”) More recently, this view has been challenged so much so that it is now considered “very old fashioned” and “naïve,” claims Ellen Butler Donovan, to think of Hawthorne “quietly engaged in drawing rooms” unconnected to the “actual bustling nineteenth-century world he inhabited” (41). Even so, it is worth remembering that such magical thinking about solitude was bolstered for Hawthorne by his era’s Romantic conceptions and by the women around him. Sister Elizabeth maintained that had her brother’s “genius” not been “thus shielded in childhood” he would never have developed “the qualities that distinguished him in after life.”²³ During their engagement, Sophia welcomed similar self-revelations from the author, who wrote of his emotional and artistic purity: “But living in solitude till the fullness of time was come, I kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart.”²⁴

T. Walter Herbert links the emblematic energies pervading the psychic space Hawthorne claimed in his “preference for solitude” with broad social changes amid which “self-making” emerged as a privileged “ideal of white male identity” (60-61). Rosen and Santesso agree, citing that new arguments for privacy and for solitude, those that posited its psychologically generative and transformative force, emerged from Romantic thinkers who saw *being alone* as crucial to the creation of aesthetic and

personal sovereignty. Emerging from this philosophy, as Rosen and Santesso note, are questions most Romantics failed to grapple with, ones that have vexed the entire liberal tradition: Do all persons equally require or “merit” privacy? And, what is the person that might be considered free? ²⁵

Against British Enlightenment (particularly Lockean) notions of the importance of proper upbringing in the development of morally autonomous Republican citizens,²⁶ Holgrave is “left early to his own guidance” (154)—the proverbial American self-made man.²⁷ Holgrave’s lack of grounding—his “episodical way”—is captured in the ridiculous number and diversity of “professions” he’s occupied by age twenty-two (ten in all, ranging from supernumerary official to dentist to daguerreotypist). His absence of tangible resources (family, fortune, and education) is transformed, through the myth of self-creation, into an “inward spiritual potency.”²⁸ Holgrave’s rise in the novel from lowly origins to high position performs the nineteenth-century “ruling narrative of manly worth,” credited by Herbert with underpinning the cultural hegemony of the ascending middle class (33). As a “self-creating self,” Holgrave symbolizes what Emerson called “the new importance given to the single person,” a notable sign of the Romantic time.²⁹ All this aside, what is most “remarkable” about Holgrave, what sets him apart, so argues the narrator, is that the dubious company of seaman, peddlers, politicians, factory laborers, and fanatics, into which he has been thrust with “careless alacrity,” has had no effect, whatsoever, on his sacred interior (155).³⁰ Holgrave, readers are told, “never lost his identity” (155). Though his “exterior” self (posed in terms of location, status, and duty) “continually changes,” the “innermost man” is “never violated” (155).

If private and protected “natures” and inner essences were understood to be the ingredients of self-fashioning and the privileged property of the free, then solitude was the magical enclosure that carried one through states of living death, deviancy, bare life, and animality into moral enlightenment, citizen-subjectivity, rebirth, and renewal.³¹ For Hepzibah and Clifford, the inscrutable, haunted Pyncheon-mansion is a site of dehumanization, a prison-tomb of “darkness, abjection, and soul-destroying loneliness” that dismantles their minds and bodies, turning them into figures of that abjection (C. Smith, *PAI*, 84). For the artist Holgrave, Hawthorne’s quintessential free, liberal subject, the remote, “tomb-like” gable is a *grave*—from which his purified, “renewed” soul rises *whole*. Following the logic of Castronovo, we might see the two procedures as coextensive. Castronovo’s critique of the ideology of citizen-subjectivity in a free, democratic nation is directed against a “bloodless intellectual tradition” that protects the privilege of white, mostly bourgeois men by binding freedom to a particular prosthetic, idealized body and unfreedom to a host of “conspicuous embodiments.”³² I will return to this point later, but what must be asserted here is that the dichotomy Hawthorne develops between Holgrave and the other characters (I’ve focused largely on Clifford thus far) reflects an anti-democratic penchant in a novel otherwise assumed to reflect its democratizing age. Starkly opposed to Holgrave—an authentic, innate individual, able to grow and develop in solitude, maturing, ultimately, into an embodied site of political, social, and economic freedom—Clifford and Hepzibah remain empty, allegorical constructs (aging aristocrats but also mortified convicts); they are fettered to the back and forth of human interaction and social circumstance, without inner resources of their own. As Holgrave explains to Phoebe,

Miss Hepzibah, by secluding herself from society, has lost all true relation with it, and is in fact dead.... Your poor Cousin Clifford is another dead and long-buried person, on whom the Governor and Council have wrought a necromantic miracle. I should not wonder if he were to crumble away, some morning, after you are gone, and nothing be seen of him more, except a heap of dust. Miss Hepzibah, at any rate, will lose what little flexibility she has. They both exist by you! (188)

Humble Phoebe abjures Holgrave's analysis, but events in the novel prove him correct. Clifford lives by Phoebe; she "supplies" the "pure air," which he "inhales" (126). Within her company he is "brought back into the breathing world" (125), made to believe that it is "no longer a delusion" (124). Hepzibah, too, is bolstered by Phoebe's presence. The reticent hermit "fling[s] out her arms" and "enfolds Phoebe" in "unwonted joy" (92). Once "wishing" to "be done" with the world and alone in her "quiet grave" (42), Hepzibah—an ever-shadowy figure—voraciously clings to the tangible form of the sweet-tempered, energetic, country-maiden as if to substantiate her own vagueness, her "invisible," "shadowy" existence (64).

Against Clifford and Hepzibah, Holgrave's intrinsic selfhood and inviolate interiority mark him as an artist, a visionary, and as a container for the nation's most sacred desideratum—freedom. As Smith reminds us, the idea that "the inner world of the soul" is the "true territory of freedom" was a "Romantic commonplace" (*PAI*, 118), one implicit in the narrator's remarks about Holgrave: "There appeared to be qualities *in* Holgrave, such as in a country where everything is free to the hand that can grasp it..." (159). Without social position, family status, or inherited wealth, Holgrave is likened to the United States itself—a *tabula rasa* of a sort, but one with rich and

abiding interior resources, of land and of labor, that in 1851 were being dispossessed of African Americans, Native Americans, and women in service of the nation's own making.³³ Martha J. Cutter and Caroline F. Levander consequently name Holgrave as an exemplar of the "new American Adam"—a collapsed construct (bodily and national) with a literary history from Crèvecoeur to Franklin to Emerson.³⁴ Instituting an affinity between freedom, personhood, and power, this masculine ideal was imagined as fit to inherit the nation's promises—of privacy, liberty, and property. In other words, just as the American body politic was being defined against old-world, European cultures and also heathenish African ones, the individualized "American body"—pure and free—was being defined against lesser bodies within the nation's borders (Native Americans, women, slaves, Catholics, Jews, and other racialized minority groups) through exclusionary political policies and through psychological and philosophical theories.³⁵ Human interiority emerges as a key ideological site of this cultural work.³⁶ Eric Foner explains that the "boundary of the sovereign self," increasingly understood as interior "privacy," was concomitantly recognized as a realm with which neither "other individuals nor [the] government had a right to interfere" (57-58). Like the liberal tradition in which it was entrenched, "interiority emerged" always already an antithesis of its egalitarian potentials. Whether in the form of fabulous, invulnerable depth or as eradicated, emptied, "exposure" (Holgrave's daguerreotypes figure prominently in later discussions of personhood) interiority served to differentiate between "types" of people: those for whom "everything is free" and also others from whom freedom could be "grasped" (159).³⁷

Describing the nineteenth-century “poetics of the penitentiary”—the “images and tropes that gave meaning to the violence of modern incarceration”—Smith insists that “enlightenment sentimentality” (manifest, as it is, in Holgrave’s paradigmatic personhood) is “bound up with the violent, ghostly nightmare of [the carceral] gothic” (*PAI*, 39). Historically (as a Maule), spatially (as a lodger), temporally (as a figure of modernity), Holgrave’s fantastic rise and self-fulfillment is inextricable from the prison house and from the less fortunate of its inhabitants. This is not to say that the character should be blamed, exactly, or even credited for his fortune; rather that Hawthorne, cognoscente of the cultural and ideological imaginary in which men like Holgrave (real and fictional) are born, posits privileged selfhood and inviolable interiority as the reward of Holgrave’s innately artistic and subjugating vision.³⁸ In a related claim, Rosen and Santesso point to autonomy’s historical shift inward, into a private and protected realm of originality, genius, and individuation—one, which by the mid-nineteenth century, was increasingly located in white, male, middle-class bodies. They recognize a dialectical response in the rigid social construction, from outside in, of less privileged bodies.³⁹ They call it “something of a devil’s bargain”: allegorical types (with no interior lives or real agency) “guaranteeing” the inwardly complex, authentic, and autonomous people at the crux of the liberal ideal (138). In other words, Clifford and Hepzibah (and also Phoebe, for reasons we will see) might be said to throw the deeply individuated personhood of Holgrave into relief.⁴⁰

You look into my heart: Surveillance, Sovereignty, (In)violate Person

All its darkness aside, Hawthorne’s romance is not a tragedy. Hepzibah and Clifford, long-fettered to the mansion’s tormenting riddle, do partially break free from its

parameters and its death-like erosion of body and mind. Their deliverance comes via Phoebe, who, cast in the role of the “true New England woman” (69), is “a cheerful little body” (69) “active” in “temperament,” “joyful” in activity” (71), “pleasant” and “practical in all her affairs” (74). Standing upon the threshold of the “sordid,” “ugly,” and “dismal place,” she is a “ray of sunshine” (64), a “religion in herself”: “warm, simple, true” (148). As previously noted, the House of the Seven Gables, an allegorical, old-world structure, collapses surface and depth. It registers the interior essences of those it shelters, providing, as Shawn Michelle Smith claims, a kind of “external evidence for the purity or malady of individual souls” (24). Consequently, the haunted, gloomy mansion is revived by the introduction of an angel to the house: Over time “the grime and sordidness of the House of the Seven Gables seemed to have vanished...the gnawing tooth of the dry-rot was stayed...the dust had ceased to settle down so densely from the antique ceilings...” (121).

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, cheerful ideologies of domesticity, self-making, and futurity abound—and are finally bounded, as we’ve seen, in the figure of Holgrave, as a “sense” and as a spectacular vision:

[Holgrave] had that sense, or inward prophecy...that we are not doomed to creep forward in the old, bad way but that this very now there are harbingers abroad of a golden era, to be accomplished in his own lifetime. 157

Focusing on the body, Castronovo has historicized the assumptions of citizenship (of freedom and futurity), revealing nineteenth-century U.S. political identity, the body politic—privileged, white, and male—to be “an artifact built on” and “tied with” other

more “ambivalent bodies” but also hyper-embodied subjects (17). He points to the “mesmerized body,” the “slave body,” and “the corpse” (all figures that pass through Hawthorne’s fictional world) as models or “doses” of difference (in experience, history, and personhood) capable of “disrupt[ing]” the “romanticized” “liberal fantasy” of the nation-state and its abstracted ideal citizen (17).

A major theme of Hawthorne’s novel, one of its principal investigations, is the moral, psychological, and social aspects of “acquiring empire” or sovereignty over another (184). As we’ve seen, Hepzibah and Clifford “exist by” Phoebe (188); they “consent” to her (73); she “animates” (138) and “enlivens” (128) them and by this gains a kind of authority over her elder-relations. Of course, Phoebe is ignorant of her mystical influence, her “beneficent spell” (123) and “natural magic” (67). Her moral purity is affirmed in the dismay she feels toward Holgrave’s assertion of her power: “I should be very sorry to think so” (188). In contrast, the Judge Jaffrey Pyncheon’s “influence” over his cousin Clifford is cast as one of the most “malevolent” in the novel (272). If Clifford is ghost-like, tenuous, and uncertain, the Judge is solid, formidable, and rigid: he is called “a weighty man,” a “solid” “specimen” of “Puritan descent” (108).⁴¹ Hepzibah warns Phoebe, “...he has a heart of iron!” (116). A virtual re-embodiment of the Puritan Colonel, the Judge is “bold” and “imperious;” he “lays his purposes deep” and “trample[s] on the weak” (110). In his domestic affairs, he is “liege-lord and master”: readers are told that his wife “got her death-blow in the honeymoon and never smiled again” (110).

Clifford’s victimization at the hand of the Judge (which repeats the Pyncheon *original sin* of cruel greed) is absolute and relentless. The “strong and ponderous man” is

called “Clifford’s nightmare;” by his “malevolence,” Clifford has “no free breath” to draw (272). Readers learn it is through the machinations of the Judge that Clifford is first imprisoned, the Judge hoping to replace Clifford as the inheritor of their uncle’s fortune. When the novel commences, the Judge has “freed” Clifford (a fact he ardently asserts again and again) for the furtive and callous purpose of forcing Clifford to reveal the whereabouts of documents authenticating a secret family fortune.

The Judge’s authority over Clifford is complete: legally, bodily, and psychically. When Hepzibah refuses him the right to see Clifford, the Judge asserts,

I am his only friend, and an all-powerful one....without...my consent...Clifford would never have been what you call free. Do you think his release a triumph over me? Not so, my good Cousin; not so, by any means! The farthest possible from that!....I set him free!....I set him free!....And I come hither now to decide whether he shall retain his freedom. (202)

The Judge’s boasts are not idle, nor are the ranks of his dominion thin. Despite Hepzibah’s and Clifford’s sense of utter isolation, their conviction that “any mode of misfortune, miserable accident, or crime might happen...without the possibility of aid” (212), Clifford is actually under constant surveillance:

I have taken the precaution [says the Judge]...to have [Clifford’s] deportment and habits constantly and carefully overlooked. Your neighbors have been eye-witnesses to whatever has passed in the garden. The butcher, the baker, the fishmonger, some of the customers of your shop, and many a prying old woman, have told me several of the secrets of your interior. A still larger circle—I myself

among the rest—can testify to his extravagances, at the arched window....From this testimony, I am led to apprehend—reluctantly, and with deep grief—that Clifford’s misfortunes have so affected his intellect, never very strong, that he cannot safely remain at large. The alternative, you must be aware—and its adoption will depend entirely on the decision which I am about to make—the alternative is his confinement, probably for the remainder of his life, in a public asylum for persons in his unfortunate state of mind. (205)

The details of this passage mount a shocking corrective to Hepzibah’s and Clifford’s isolating, desolate experience of their prison house. To its inmates, the House of the Seven Gables has long been “invisible to those who dwelt around or passed beside it” (212). And yet, if we are to believe the Judge (later events do, in fact, reveal a far greater interest in the house and in the affairs of the Pyncheon family than Hepzibah and Clifford have been aware), then Clifford—an utter slave to the whims of the Judge’s “decisions”—is under “constant” and “careful” watch.⁴² The neighbors are “eye-witnesses” to all that has “passed in the garden,” to the late morning repasts, when Phoebe (under the illusion of “verdant seclusion” (128)) often read to Clifford. Even so, they do not form a “surging stream of human sympathy” into which Clifford can “plunge” and then “emerge”—“sobered,” “invigorated,” “restored to the world and to himself,” as he has once dreamed (146). Rather, the “over lookers” are violators of the self Clifford so desperately tries to reconstruct throughout the novel. Their penetrating, “prying” gazes infiltrate “the interior”— the “secrets” and “extravagances”—of the House of the Seven Gables (which is nearly one and the same as the Pyncheons inside)

and the result is a diagnosis of Clifford's "intellect" and psychic "misfortunes," one that opens him up to new forms and threats of captivity.

...

The previous section underscored how solitude—of the unrelenting, dehumanizing variety (not the generative, self-fashioning kind)—was understood by anti-prison activists, gothic enthusiasts, and social critics to produce non-citizens—"specters" and "animate corpses"—who, having undergone a form of "civil death," possessed only a bare "natural life," nothing of the "civil rights" or "humanity" one associates with participation in the social contract (C. Smith, *PAI*, 36). Of course, solitude in the penitentiary— and, as it turns out, in the House of the Seven Gables— did not foreclose the existence of constant, incessant watching. From the prison's earliest inception, convicts were always supervised. Prisons were (and arguably still are) "total institutions"—social worlds in which the prisoner's entire identity is fashioned and grounded through forced and very public rituals of eating, sleeping, dressing, bathing (C. Smith, *PAI*, 37). According to Foucault, the most influential theorist on this subject, the prisoner's body and mind become "a surface for the inception of power" (101). The final goal being the creation of an "obedient subject, [an] individual subjected to habits, rules, orders, and authority that exercised continually around him and upon him" must eventually "function automatically in him" (128-129).⁴³

Once again, interiority is implicated; it is central, in fact, to the creation of the watched self. Recall in Holgrave—the model subject, a conflation of liberal, Romantic, and democratic ideals —interiority equates with protection and inviolability but also

uniqueness and self-invention. We know, however, that the meaning of interiority is not fixed; rather it shifts, reflecting the many “compromises” between governmental power and individual liberty, between society and self that liberal culture demands.⁴⁴

Knowledge (institutional and personal) permitted by disciplinary forms of surveillance—that which is manifest in prison and in other reformist/progressive institutions of the nineteenth-century: schools, hospitals, factories, asylums⁴⁵ is produced, at least theoretically, by invading the privacy of one’s interior life—exposing, interpreting, and eventually eradicating (often in the appearance of “objective benevolence”) a sacrosanct psycho-social core (Castiglia, 135-136).

Following Foucault, numerous scholars and cultural critics have concurred that reformist practices of state and para-state surveillance, those that replaced pre-Enlightenment forms of excessive and public corporal punishment—of the gallows and the scaffold—relocate possession of the body within the mind. As the moral guardian of the novel, Phoebe speaks against the violence inherent in powerful invasions inward. When Holgrave tries to extract from her “thoughts” from “within” Clifford (she being constantly alone with the aged-sufferer), Phoebe replies with “piquancy,” “I cannot see [Clifford’s] thoughts! — How should I?” (156). Phoebe calls Clifford’s interiority “holy ground,” an ethos Holgrave only mocks at: “Had I your opportunities, no scruples would prevent me from fathoming Clifford to the full depth of my plummet-line” (156).

A significant mark of freedom in the novel—a ritual performance in which powerful people engage—involves the penetration and violation of another’s interior sanctum, the sacred space of their individuation (just as Holgrave’s inviolate interior is indicative of his innate liberty and self-determination). According to Shawn Michelle

Smith, Holgrave—a daguerreotypist with “supernaturally powerful vision”— is “posed” as “a particularly penetrating” (I’d add dangerous) “spectator,” set against the many *specters* within the novel (11). Nineteenth-century “claims of cultural privilege” and of power—those consolidated through racialized, classed, and gendered identities—were in part “founded,” as Smith explains, in “visual paradigms” and “circulated” through new media like the daguerreotype (7-8). Hence, Holgrave’s most recent occupation can be said to signal the novel’s preoccupation with human “types” that could ground socio-political realities in the democratizing nation.⁴⁶ Additionally, Holgrave’s uncanny vision situates him as part of a broader aesthetics of watching in Hawthorne’s oeuvre. His affinities to Miles Coverdale (*The Blithedale Romance*) and Roger Chillingworth (*The Scarlet Letter*), in terms of secret motives and constant habits of surveillance, alert astute readers to something worrisome about the novel’s hero.

As a “plebian outsider,” a representative of a new capitalistic era and of its accompanying socio-economic mobility, Holgrave “penetrates,” to use Holly Jackson’s term, the “old realm” of “exclusive,” aristocratic privilege (275). His incursion is not limited to the interior of the Pyncheon-mansion but rather extends to the Pyncheons themselves. Readers are told he “studied” Hepzibah, Clifford, and Phoebe “attentively” and piercingly: he “allowed no slightest circumstance of their individualities to escape him” (156). Alone with Phoebe, Holgrave exposes the “secret character” of the Judge through the “wonderful insight” of his daguerreotype (83). It is a “depiction” the young girl immediately misreads, confusing “the face” (with its “stern eye”) for her Puritan ancestor’s (83-84). Phoebe’s misreading results from her dismissive “mere glance” at the image, but it equally suggests a naiveté regarding interior depths (84). As Holgrave

explains, it is through the power of “simple sunshine” (daguerreotypes being initially called “sun pictures”) that the “merest surface” of a pictured subject (in this case the Judge) is penetrated, revealing “another story” than the one “intended to be engraved” (83-84).

In Holgrave’s daguerreotype, the “exceedingly pleasant countenance,” the “openness of heart,” and the “sunny good humor” with which the Judge greets the world is eclipsed by the “sly, subtle, hard, imperious...cold as ice” regions that lie within (84). Phoebe instinctively recoils from the incursion, “turning away her eyes,” as she does from “a certain magnetic element” she fears is being “exercised towards her” (84-85). Underscoring the relationship between power and the body (figured in this novel as vision and violation) and its ideological significance to an emerging nation grappling with an increasingly democratic conception of the citizen, Jay Fleigelman writes, “Like the sovereign state” the “individual” was thought to be “vulnerable to invasion” (25). Phoebe’s trepidations are a portent: events in the novel prove her own vulnerability to having, in the words of Fliegelman, her “mind misled” and her “heart enthralled” (25).

The extent of the threat posed by Holgrave’s mystical vision, which exceeds whatever “wonderful insights” the daguerreotype can reveal, is captured in the strange tale he tells Phoebe—a story of their ancient forebears (of the “proud,” beautiful Alice Pyncheon and the malevolent, hypnotist Matthew Maule) that foreshadows the trial (erotic and moral) which develops between Holgrave and Phoebe.⁴⁷ Holgrave’s story (a Pyncheon family legend he has recently updated) is of a contest of wills: “Alice puts woman’s might against man’s might; a match not often equal on the part of woman” (177). It begins with the lost land deed, the same one that motivates the Judge to torment

Clifford. Gervayse Pyncheon (grandson of the Colonel) “consents” to turn over the Pyncheon-mansion to Maule (self-proclaimed “son of him who built the house” and “grandson of the rightful proprietor of the soil”) in exchange for documents establishing the Pyncheon rights to “an eastern claim” (170-174). In the process, Maule insists on mesmerizing Gervayse’s daughter Alice—a “clear, crystal medium of pure and virgin intelligence”—for the ostensible purpose of “acquiring the requisite knowledge” through her (175). The father (desirous of a fortune) persuades himself that “Alice’s own purity will be her safe-guard” (179). Alice too, confident of “the preservative force of womanhood” and of her own “high, unsullied purity,” believes “her sphere impenetrable” (177). Ultimately, the “sinister,” “evil” “potency” of Maule’s penetrating gaze “passes” the “barriers” which Alice, in her “pride,” assumes sacrosanct. The psycho-sexual violation of Alice, once achieved, is permanent: “...while Alice Pyncheon lived she was Maule’s slave, in bondage more humiliating, a thousand-fold, than that which binds its chain around the body” (182). Maule’s “destructive masculinity” results in the extreme conquest of Alice (of her body and will) and places him in a long line of tyrant masters (Pyncheons and Maules alike) who wreak havoc in the novel (S.M. Smith 20).

Holgrave is no ordinary teller of tales. Through his “mystic gesticulations,” he “brings bodily before Phoebe’s perception the figure of the mesmerizing carpenter” (184). Consequently, Phoebe’s “free and virgin spirit” (like that of the “ill-fated Alice”) falls under Holgrave’s power: “A veil was beginning to be muffled about her, in which she could behold only him, and live only in his thoughts and emotions” (184). Emphasizing Phoebe’s peril, the narrator asserts Holgrave need only “twine that one link more” in his mesmeric influence before “completing his mastery” (185). The

“temptation,” we are told, is “great” (184). And yet, Holgrave’s “reverence for another’s individuality” finally preserves him from cruelly seizing the power of his predecessor (185).⁴⁸ He “forbids himself” to “render his spell” “indissoluble” and transforms Phoebe’s vulnerability into an ostensible inviolability.

According to Herbert, the conviction that “divine power flows into human relations when hostile impulses are repressed” was a “central doctrine” of the Hawthorne household (24); it is also key to the construction of the democratic self Holgrave exemplifies. Following Rousseau’s classic model of citizen-subjectivity within the social contract, Holgrave trades unfettered life and unrestrained desire for what Fleigelman calls the “easy yoke” of necessary self-restraint and submission—easy for Holgrave, that is, because self-restraint accompanies, as it does in Rousseau’s theory, self-mastery (30).⁴⁹ In a related point, Smith claims that “masculine penetration and domination” in *The House of the Seven Gables* (embodied, as it is, in the many trans-historical iterations of Colonel Pyncheon and the Wizard Maule) is “transfigured” by Holgrave into “masculine reverence for and protection of a peculiarly feminine middle-class essence”—one Phoebe typifies (20).⁵⁰ To be sure, Phoebe’s femininity, her “true womanhood” inspires Holgrave’s care. Consequently, readers feel assured that she is safe from the humiliating bondage Alice suffers as Maule’s slave or that the Judge’s wife endures under her liege-lord and master. But, to what extent does Holgrave’s “reverence” for Phoebe guarantee true, lasting inviolability and its accompaniments: individuation, autonomy, and freedom?

Holgrave does resist the temptation to “acquire empire” over Phoebe’s “human spirit” (184). The scene ends with Phoebe’s departure from the House of the Seven

Gables; she is in full possession of her “free and virgin spirit” (184). Yet, if her “freedom” is any consequence of her “virginity,” Phoebe will not be free for long. At the novel’s close, Holgrave *penetrates* Phoebe once again: he “looks into her heart,” depriving the girl of any choice in confessing her most intimate feelings (266). It is an affective violation that anticipates the physical penetration of their marriage consummation and links the two events as an issue of politics and power. We recall, gender excluded women from the magical as well as actual sociopolitical transformations assured by the social contract. In its place, the marriage choice (figured in domestic literature as the willful confession of private love) offered a complimentary model through which feminine moral and political liberty could be mediated.⁵¹

Finding her own confidence forced, Phoebe cannot declare her love for Holgrave; she can only acknowledge the power of his piercing vision: “You know I love you” (266). Smith contends that “having restrained himself from violently trespassing [Phoebe’s] inner sanctity” earlier in the novel, Holgrave is “ultimately given permission, by Phoebe herself, to look into her heart and to claim it as his own” (28). While I agree Holgrave is rewarded in the novel (his emergence as a “happy man” is closely linked to the self-control he masters in relation with Phoebe (265)), all the worrying signs surrounding their engagement (not the least of which is its haste) complicate, significantly, Smith’s assurance of Phoebe’s volition. For one, Phoebe and Holgrave changeover into lovers (having but briefly been friends) at the same moment the two are captured “within the circle of a spell,” one brought upon them by the threatening “secret” of the Judge’s death and the proximity of his stiffening corpse—in the very next room (264). It is this ominous “influence” that is credited with “hastening the development of

[their] emotions” (264). Phoebe’s “drooping eyes,” over and above all else, alert readers to the impossibility that Holgrave’s breach of her interior affect is voluntary (266).

Milder reads the “hasty” and “implausible” ending of *The House of the Seven Gables* as a “triumph” of literary romance—asserted earlier and pivotally in the chapter “Phoebe’s Goodbye”—through the “elevated mode of feeling and perceiving” that “transfigures” Phoebe and Holgrave (22-23). Against the “earthly pull of reason,” which Milder sees as dominating most of the novel, the critic maintains that Hawthorne “transmutes” the “prosaic” for the “quasi-spiritual” (23). But, in generating “a new world” for his lovers—a sacred Eden for the luminous pair to inhabit—Hawthorne allegorizes them and, in the process, asks us, as readers, to read “past” and “through” bodies that embody national contestations (Samuels 12).⁵² There is, as I’ve been suggesting, an implicit violence in allegorical construction—that is if we accept the Hawthornean, Romantic view of individual freedom and the complex ways it is personified and violated.

Despite Milder’s call to read the union of Phoebe and Holgrave in aesthetically pure terms, their marriage (like Nathaniel’s and Sophia’s)⁵³ was, in truth, “teeming with covert sexual politics” and “alive with *inward* debates” about “the axioms of its own construction” (Herbert 5).⁵⁴ The question of individual freedom—central, as it was, to the nation’s founding and its emerging modern identity—bore “a privileged relationship,” as decades of scholarship has shown, to the discourse of marriage (Morgenstern 108).⁵⁵ Political choice reconfigured as sexual choice—the foundation of early sentimental and domestic literature that posited female self-fulfillment and maturation in marriage—demands an attention to the work of the body and to the way political and psychological

selves are constructed. We know that corporeal and domestic discourses of depth (psychological and spatial) converge in the nineteenth century, inflecting American individuation and liberty with specific interior natures, gendered and racialized, free and unfree.⁵⁶ The union of Phoebe and Holgrave (posed in terms of hypnosis) ultimately reveals the requisiteness of the female body (penetrated and conquered) for the purification of the male self. Through Holgrave, Hawthorne “anchors” white, male, liberal freedom in a “supernatural” “masculine gaze” that violates the female interior even as it claims that space sacrosanct (S.M. Smith 11).

Phoebe’s “transformative femininity”⁵⁷ does have power in the novel: we recall, she converts the gloomy mansion into a home, Hepzibah’s pathetic cent-shop into a profitable venture, and “confines” the “pathless” Holgrave “within ancient limits” (265). Even so, it is the latter “accomplishment,” in particular, that may pose the strongest challenge to Smith’s claim that Holgrave’s “willingness to temper the power of the Maule gaze” actually “alters a legacy of domination in the novel” (24). If we follow the logic of Shirley Samuels, the idealization of Phoebe as a figure able to reign in disruptive or wayward men, occludes the violence female bodies signify (indeed have always signified in literatures of the Encounter through the Revolution) as a figure of national expansion and colonization.

Following Smith’s interpretation, submission is made sacred and the Romantic hero purified by Phoebe’s “permission,” her willingness to be penetrated (28). Herbert concurs, insisting on the cultural weight and pervasiveness of a now “absurd” construct: “the sanctified woman [gives] her husband the power to take command of her” (75). Hawthorne deeply understood the psychological and interpersonal consequences of this

rhetoric. It served as the affective grounding of his marriage to Sophia, for better and for worse.⁵⁸ By posing Phoebe's rightful volition (her "choice" to declare her love for Holgrave) as a violation (even in the tenderest of terms), Hawthorne's novel betrays an anxiety at the crux of the nation's most sacred and foundational institution. Moreover, it asserts a contemporaneous knowledge about the nineteenth-century marriage contract, one which feminist scholars working more than a century later would recognize and carefully critique—namely that marriage "ordained male proprietorship" and "absolute female dispossession," establishing "self ownership" as the "fundamental right of men alone" (Morgenstern 110).

As a masterful example of a quintessential American form, Hawthorne's gothic articulates the fraught space between the cheerful and the dark, between sentimental romance and social reality, which is the "central fact" of American political and literary life (Noble 178). To be sure, Hawthorne's tale of middle-class ascension (as Smith calls it) intends to suggest that civilization (vis-à-vis U.S. nationalism) is advanced (economically, socially, and morally) by Phoebe's and Holgrave's model of marriage (white, middle-class, heteronormative). Through their union, the young lovers "transfigure the earth" (266) and transform The House of the Seven Gables from a bastion of captivity (of inscrutability, dehumanization, and decay) to a bastion of freedom (of purification, fulfillment, and futurity). Likewise, Holgrave steps into the Emersonian dream of self-reliance: he claims possession of "the acre or two of land" "hewn" by the "toil" of his ancient forefather into "a garden-ground and homestead" (as well as the estate's many multiplications).⁵⁹ Holgrave's inheritance breaks the Maule's curse;

Jackson says it “separates the property from the misdeeds of the past so that it can be safely inherited and enjoyed” (278).

The gaze (powerful, disruptive, violating) functions critically in the many transhistorical “usurpations” of “aristocratic privilege” and of property by “artisanal challengers” in the novel: first, sinisterly, by Matthew Maule, who takes mastery of Alice’s body and mind, of her *property within herself*; then finally by Holgrave, the tenant turned owner of The House of the Seven Gables (S.M. Smith 19). We know that property (with its many metaphorical and legal connections to the body) was the foundation of freedom in early America.⁶⁰ Holgrave’s freedom—a matter of his brand of selfhood (of his radical individuation) and finally of estate—is indissoluble from his conquest of Phoebe. It is *through* her, through her rightful inheritance and through her body, that Holgrave “dismantles aristocratic architectures” and “builds a middle-class home” (S.M. Smith 19).

Staked here, in the marriage of the quintessential self-made man and his domestic angel is the ratification of a democratic, middle-class elite—and its terms are eerily evocative of the “odious and abominable past” (161). By legitimizing middle-class ascension and white male cultural privilege in virtuous interior essences (such as in Holgrave’s deep inviolability and in Phoebe’s fantastic purity) and against pseudo-aristocratic decay (seen in Clifford’s and Hepzibah’s ghostly vacuousness and in the Judge’s diseased heredity, moral and biological), *The House of the Seven Gables* recapitulates powerful old-world models of fixed cultural privilege and patriarchal hierarchy that betray the tale’s seeming transition to more democratic structures.⁶¹ Central to the gothic literary form, what it “achieves remarkably well,” is this act of

“unveiling” (Noble 170). Focusing on relics, architectural and human, of an earlier, pre-modern order (castles with dungeons, monasteries, madhouses of all kinds but also degraded members of the aristocracy and clergy), the genre “restores to human consciousness” the social maladies (excessive power, intense greed, perpetual subordination) “imperiling rational presumptions” of enlightened modernity (of moral autonomy, self-mastery, voluntarism) (Noble 175). Broadly envisioned, then, Hawthorne’s gothic recounts the displacement of old-world, dynastic culture by the nineteenth-century domestic family, joining parties (Holgrave and Phoebe) who “embody democratic virtues” rather than “corrupt” and “delusional” aristocratic conditions (Herbert 90). And yet, as Herbert reminds us, “behind this thematic structure stands another”: the middle-class family arrangement takes shape in response to specific contemporaneous social dilemmas. As we will see, the “ogre of the discredited order” returns to haunt the celebrated features of the liberal, democratic ideal (Herbert 90).

As the literary and the occult fuse in Hawthorne’s novel (the hero being a storyteller and a mesmerist), politics become spectral. In *The House of the Seven Gables* (much like in *The Blithedale Romance*),⁶² Hawthorne collapses the mesmerist, a “violinist of individual privacy,” with the liberal reformer (Holgrave is associated with several social movements including abolitionism, temperance, and fourierism),⁶³ and in the process blends popular interest in the unconscious with the political dynamics of a contentious public sphere (Castronovo 103). Holgrave’s early reformist passions find their fullest articulation in his declaration to Phoebe of the tyrannical force of the past:

Whatever we seek to do, of our own free motion, a Dead Man's icy hand obstructs us! Turn our eyes to what point we may, a Dead Man's white, immitigable face encounters them, and freezes our very heart! And we must be dead ourselves, before we can begin to have our proper influence on our own world, which will then be no longer our world, but the world of another generation, with which we shall have no shadow of a right to interfere. 160

Like so much of Holgrave's self and sensibilities, his anti-establishmentarian ardor is closely modeled on Emerson and the ideals of the Transcendental Boston coterie.⁶⁴ In "Self-Reliance," Emerson rallies against the "firmament of bards and sages," locating freedom in the intellectual and spiritual severing of past allegiances (176). Rebellious independence no doubt aroused inner confusion (much as it does today): young "men" have always been compelled to make their way toward middle-class success by securing assistances (of all kinds) from members of the older, established generation: teachers, parents, mentors. Holgrave's outburst against "dead men" expresses not only a desire to liberate himself from an abstracted past but also from a specific historical conflict between the Maules and Pyncheons. Though his actual intentions in taking up residence in the House of the Seven Gables are never revealed, it is clear Holgrave's presence in the mansion is motivated by a "coming to terms" with his place in the "hereditary antagonism" (Tapper xxvi).

Embedded in Holgrave's appeal are key motifs that organize the novel. The "immitigable face" Holgrave assigns his ominous and powerful personification recalls Colonel Pyncheon and also the Judge—both of whose countenances are called "immitigable" (23, 106, 201).⁶⁵ A descriptor for extreme severity, the term conjures

images of the Judge's "heart of iron" (116); it emphasizes what Gordon Tapper calls the true "source of evil" in the novel—not merely "wrath or hatred" but, in the narrator's words, "a certain hot fellness of purpose, which annihilated everything but itself" (115).⁶⁶

If "immitigable" "hearts of iron" are an omen of merciless resolve and unadulterated will— within which "there [is] no free breath to be drawn" (272) (as is said of the Judge's sphere)—then we may wonder why Hawthorne evokes this particular metaphor, it being also evocative of the forceful independence behind the youthful Romantic ideal. "Trust thyself," Emerson entreats, "every heart vibrates to that iron string" (177). Beneath Holgrave's rather dramatic, almost adolescent lament are hints of the psycho-social maneuvers that established independent, autonomous lives in the antebellum U.S. The fantasy of self-making, the magic of solitude, the power of artistic vision, and the privilege of radical individuation—all conditions and circumstances of Holgrave's personhood—required complex negotiations (legal and ideological) that set boundaries between the free self (mediated through autonomous citizenship) and its many unfree, non-selves.⁶⁷

The term "immitigable" raises the specter of power, locating it as an imperializing, internal strength, a universalizing "heart of iron" that "annihilate[s] everything but itself;" the "white" "Dead Man" who wears this face affirms the necro ideology Castronovo has shown political freedom to mandate.⁶⁸ Castronovo's work interrogates the logic of citizenship, the discourses and knowledges that create a type of passive, democratic "social corpse" in the nineteenth-century: "historically lightweight," "ancestrally marked," interpolated into the established "frame of rights" as a citizen (3, 4, 8-9). Despite the "formal equality" and "cultural autonomy" citizenship "guaranteed" its

privileged construct (white, male, middle-class), Castronovo insists that the encounter with democratic politics in the emerging nation-state is always a “near-death-experience” (3). Holgrave’s words, “...we must be dead ourselves, before we can begin to have our proper influence on the world,” speaks to this sociopolitical exchange of life for death that Castronovo reads in Rousseau’s contract. Of course, all bodies are not equally vulnerable. The white, male subject, whose actual body aligns nicely with the prosthetic body politic—with the dream of “bourgeois universality”—is “almost completely screened,” Castronovo maintains, from the harm of necro citizenship (53).

Almost. In a wrenching lament quite at odds with the social reality of Hawthorne’s public life and literary success, the author explores personal anguish in terms that illuminate a private, metaphysical nightmare: the ghostly, haunting, rootlessness of the individuated, autonomous, and privileged man:

...all through my boyhood, I was alone...I grew up without a root, yet continually longing for one—longing to be connected with somebody—and never feeling myself so...I have tried to keep down this yearning, to stifle it, annihilate it... but I cannot overcome this natural horror of being a creature floating in the air, attached to nothing; nor this feeling that there is no reality in the life and fortunes, good or bad, of a being so unconnected.⁶⁹

I have described Holgrave in the purest of Emersonian terms: radically individuated, powerfully visionary, and self-made. Still, such a fantastic expression of human freedom begets a “natural horror” that is, in the end, analogous to the “unconnected,” enigmatic, vacuousness of the corpse, the mesmerized, the decaying

aristocrat, and the buried-alive prisoner. What we discover in the demon-ridden, non-selfhood of Clifford and Hepzibah and in the ontological emptiness of the purified Phoebe is something fundamentally akin to the self-made individual: the vulnerability of all selves fabricated, as they are, by the vicissitudes of gender, race, and class.

Holgrave is at once the purified and privileged product of a sentimental project (literary, ideological, domestic) and a highly vulnerable social construct, bound (as sentimentality is) to the gothic (represented spatially by the House of the Seven Gables) and coextensive with its ghostly products.⁷⁰ In general, gothic stories that explore sociopolitical realities through individual identities focus on the psychic operation of abjection, defined by Marianne Noble as a kind of primary negation: the uniqueness of the self is constructed through a process of “othering,” an objectification of the “not self” (170). Abjection is at the crux of Castronovo’s revision of Rousseau, his representation of the U.S. social contract as a social/sexual/racial contract whereby the white, male citizen establishes a life of freedom by and through the physical, social, and biological deaths and subjugations of non-whites and women. But, as Noble says, the “self thus constructed” is “dangerously indebted” to the “very things it is not for its definition”—the “other” remains the “crucial, albeit negated, part of the self,” “haunting” the self with “a sense of lost wholeness” (170). Perhaps this is why Holgrave is rarely seen until the final parting scene alongside the most emaciated and visceral of the novel’s abjections—the traumatized Clifford—despite that fact that they occupy the same house. It is as if the ideological premise of the novel, rooted in its hero’s innate individuation and unique powers, would unravel, exposing Holgrave, much like a figure in one of his own

daguerreotypes—revealing, once and for all, the fantasy of his self-construction and the sociocultural dependency of privilege and power to subjection and powerlessness.

Collapsing the gothic nightmare and the sentimental dream, *The House of the Seven Gables* represents the threshold of bondage and freedom in antebellum America. This chapter, by relying on a methodology of juxtaposition, has interrogated a set of possible persons generated in the novel through theories and practices of selfhood and through the imaginative thinking—intersecting and interdependent—of solitude and surveillance. Haunting this chapter has been the question: What is the nature of personal autonomy—the individual, who in Rosen and Santesso’s mind, is “not merely acted upon, but acting, tactical,” of “considerable freedom of mind?” (10). Continuing to examine extreme architectures of captivity, later chapters will take up what has been notably absent thus far, which is to say the possibility that a modicum of agency, will, and character, of an unbounded life, might exist beyond—might indeed survive—institutional power, social ideology, political identity, philosophical and psychological discourses, and the categories of race, gender, and class.⁷¹

Notes

1. See Cowley, 4.
2. See Emerson, “Self Reliance,” 176.
3. There are numerous references to Hepzibah and Clifford as owls in Hawthorne’s novel, most notably in the chapter “The Flight of the Owls.”
4. See Cowley, 4.

5. See Gleason, 17.
6. See C. Smith, *PAI*, 18.
7. This chapter is greatly indebted to Rosen and Santesso's study of surveillance in the historical genealogy of liberalism. A critical question these scholars pose is whether key desiderata like freedom came to mean something entirely different for different categories of people. See 173.
8. See Rosenthal, 3.
9. For further discussion, see Herbert's chapter "Democratic Mythmaking."
10. For further discussion of early American prison reform, see C. Smith, *PAI*. See also Williams, Tarter and Bell, and Meranze.
11. See C. Smith, *PAI*, 60. Smith quotes from Charles Dickens's gothic account of Pennsylvania's Eastern State Penitentiary in *American Notes*.
12. See Rosen and Santesso, 56. See C. Smith, *PAI*, 4.
13. See Milder, 19. See also C. Smith, *PAI*, 64.
14. For the discussion of this psychological and literary process vis-à-vis conventional realism, see Rosen and Santesso, 137-139.
15. See C. Smith, *PAI*, 84.
16. For a more complete discussion, see C. Smith's chapter "The Meaning of Solitude" in *PAI*.
17. See Castiglia, 137.
18. See Jackson, 272.

19. See C. Smith, *PAI*, 82. Smith's discussion of New York's Auburn State Penitentiary closely resembles the descriptions of the Pyncheon-mansion, generally, and Holgrave's gable specifically.
20. See C. Smith, *PAI*, 84.
21. C. Smith identifies a generation of authors, canonical and otherwise, whose writing helped develop a "poetics of the penitentiary." See 15 and 18 in *PAI*.
22. See C. Smith, *PAI*, 120.
23. See Herbert, 61.
24. See Herbert, 85.
25. For a fuller discussion, see Rosen and Santesso's chapter "Inviolable Personhood," notably 117-118.
26. See Fliegelman, chapter 4. Holgrave is a kind of "Benjamin Franklin figure," a secular version of the "prodigal son."
27. Herbert interprets Holgrave as quintessential of this archetype. See 91-92, 100-102. For additional discussion, see Tapper, xxvi.
28. See Herbert, 60, for a discussion of the Romantic myth of artistic potency and the broader liberal construct of the self-made man.
29. See Emerson, "Self-Reliance." For more discussion, see Herbert, 33.
30. See Herbert, 100. Holgrave is the Emersonian "lad"—one who "tries all professions" but does not *become* them.
31. See C. Smith's chapter "The Meaning of Solitude" in *PAI*, especially 84. See also Rosen and Santesso's discussion of Wordsworthian psychology in chapter "Inviolable Personhood."

32. I am quoting here from C. Smith's discussion of Castronovo; see *PAI*, 73-75.
33. I am drawing here from the work of Cutter and Levander; see 40-41.
34. See Cutter and Levander, 40-41. Edenic imagery abounds in Hawthorne's novel, linking Holgrave to Adam and his marriage to Phoebe (the "flower of Eden") as a restoration of paradise in a corrupt, sinful world. To the extent that *The House of the Seven Gables* is a kind of origin tale, rooting the nation's history in the Puritan settlement, it draws from and revises (and extends temporally) Edenic metaphors central to the discovery and settlement of the Americas.
35. See Greeson, *Our South*, introduction.
36. See Castiglia, 135.
37. See Castiglia, 135-136. See also C. Smith, *PAI*, Rosen and Santesso, S.M. Smith. My argument also contributes to Robert Milder's analysis of "distinct regional types" in the novel. Ultimately, Milder concludes that part of the "genius" of *The House of the Seven Gables* resides in its characters who "symbolize the poles of human existence" (19).
38. I've been referring to Holgrave's "artistry" throughout the chapter, a representation I cannot assume all readers would agree with. It is altogether fair that Hawthorne's occupational turns toward magazine writing and daguerreotype production, for example, might be considered accidental, the product of a dynamic antebellum society rather than true genius or creative skill. Having said this, Herbert (among others) recognizes a clear and intentional relation between Hawthorne (whose self-identification as an artist was paramount) and Holgrave,

so much so that the younger, optimistic hero is often assumed to be a fictional doppelganger for the older, world-weary author.

39. See Rosen and Santesso, 106.

40. See note 14.

41. See Herbert, 8-9, for a discussion of the pairing of passive/aggressive males in Hawthorne's writing.

42. While on the one hand it might seem a stretch (perhaps a provocative or problematic one) to suggest that Clifford—a white man of landed ancestry—functions as a slave in the novel, especially when we consider that real slaves likely built *The House of the Seven Gables* and are evoked in the book's many hauntings. See Baldwin. Even so, slavery—as the most severe form of captivity in antebellum American—functioned in literature and cultural rhetoric as a “master metaphor” for many experiences of social, political, and psychological bondage including practices and institutions of incarceration and domesticity. See Foner, 58. See also C. Smith, *PAI*, for a discussion of the linkages between slaves and prisoners in the American imaginary.

43. For more discussion of Foucaultian theory as it relates to this project, see Rosen and Santesso, 56. See also C. Smith, *PAI*, 3-5, 83, 100-102, 115, 131; see Noble, 175.

44. For further discussion, see Rosen and Santesso. See also Nikhal PAI Singh on liberalism's many “tensions and ambiguities,” 139.

45. For further discussion of these institutions as “replicating and supplementing” the order and process of the family, a concern integral to the major claims of this chapter, see Samuels, 17.
46. See S.M. Smith, 3, and chapter “Superficial Depths.”
47. See S.M. Smith, 19.
48. See S.M. Smith, 24.
49. See also Castronovo, 7-8, for a discussion of the contractarian logic of citizenship vis-à-vis Rousseau. See C. Smith, *PAI*, 13, 31, 48, and 178.
50. See also Herbert, 75.
51. See Fliegelman’s chapter “Affective Unions and the New Voluntarism,” especially 126. See also Morgenstern.
52. I am drawing here from Samuels’s reading of the political use of allegory in early national literature, see introduction.
53. Herbert invites us to read a comparison between the fictional and actual couples throughout his book.
54. Italics are mine.
55. Fleigelman has argued that changes in the concept of the family particularly the emergence of contractual, voluntary marriage relationships was a major underpinning of American Revolutionary thinking.
56. See S.M. Smith, 11. See also Samuels.
57. See S.M. Smith, 20.
58. For a full discussion, see Herbert.
59. See Jackson for a discussion of property and inheritance in the novel.

60. See Foner, 8-9.
61. See S.M. Smith. See also Jackson.
62. See Castronovo, 112-113 for a discussion of occult practices in *The Blithedale Romance*. I am applying his reading to *Seven Gables*.
63. See Tapper, 50.
64. Tapper calls Emerson Holgrave's "unspoken intellectual model." See xxviii.
65. See Tapper, xxvi.
66. See Tapper, xxvii.
67. See Herbert, 84. For further discussion, see also Foner, Hartman, Patterson, C. Smith, *PAI*, and Tarter and Bell.
68. The logic of necro citizenship is also implicated throughout C. Smith's analysis of the nineteenth-century prison narrative, most significantly in the chapters "Cadaverous Triumphs" and "The Meaning of Solitude" in *PAI*.
69. See Herbert, 59.
70. A critical tradition exists for thinking about the dependence of sentimentality on abjection. See C. Smith, *PAI*. See also Hartman and Patterson.
71. This same "possibility" is a key consideration organizing Rosen and Santesso's important book. See 9.

Chapter Two

Harriet Jacobs & Henry “Box” Brown: Reappropriating Freedom through the Spaces and Narratives of a Subversive Captivity

In the previous chapter, I traced how dominant ideas and practices within the discourse of American penitentiary reform—solitude and surveillance—informed a literary and cultural imaginary in the nineteenth century, helping to produce an ideal racialized, autonomous civil subject. These key components of carceral captivity were revealed to be features of the fictions of free personhood—constituting and delimiting classed and gendered forms of agency, subjectivity, and desire. Phoebe and Holgrave, as we saw, emerge from the historical and architectural horrors of old-world excess and dehumanizing punishment as purified, new world perfections, Edenic embodiments of the ascendant middle class. This chapter continues an investigation of self-making, of the fashioning of a continuous, autonomous, rational person through the crucible of captivity, by way of an analysis of two slave narratives: Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) and *The Narrative of Henry “Box” Brown* (1851).¹ Consequently, it adds to the already complex interweave of domesticity and incarceration the problematics and conditions of race and slavery.

This chapter recognizes the existence of a multitude of interrelated concomitances, including those which exist between self-invention and literary invention, between the disciplinary logics of abolition and of slavery, and, in the case of Jacobs, between two emerging antebellum forms: the prison narrative and the slave narrative. Ordinary adherence to the conventions of genre (as in the slave narrative form) and to

writing practices more generally becomes extraordinary when the narrative act is also a strategy for negotiating existence, for inventing and fashioning the self at its center. Lori Merish has said that slave narratives chart the “discursive making” and “racial marking” of free subjectivity (192). While true, fugitive-slave authors of the antebellum period (from the highly-skilled like Jacobs to the illiterate like Brown) assumed a vexed and complex position within a white discursive realm. They were thus compelled to improvise standard practices and literary conventions, whether attempting to confront and resist the legal and political ironies of their existence or merely to document and communicate the details of everyday life. Interrogating this improvisation as well as the bonds of affiliation—geopolitical, racial, and gender—connecting reformers and discourses in the period is one key task of this chapter.

The speculations the chapter makes requires a form of critical reading—a “creative” way of “seeing,” an imaginative inhabiting of aporetic spaces and unspeakable acts that is necessary if we are to respond to what Michael A. Chaney has called the “textual provocation” of the slave narrative (264).² Following the example of Saidiya Hartman, I will be identifying “tactics of resistance” and modes of being/becoming that enabled “figurations of freedom” to appear from the extremes of captivity (11).³ Though greater attention will be paid to Jacobs’s narrative, particularly to her conversion of the garret hiding space into an interstitial, transgressive zone of individuation and liberation, both texts (Jacobs’s and Brown’s) contribute in unique and provocative ways to broader concerns and themes of the project, including ones already developed in chapter one. Interspersed throughout my analysis of *Incidents* is a consideration of Brown’s famous escape, his subsequent involvement with the abolitionist community, and the tropes that

organized the various and available meanings of his freedom. More than anything, though, it is Brown's ironic animation of dehumanization—his becoming a man by becoming a thing—that compels an analysis of his text alongside Jacobs's. Both narratives show how spaces of captivity and subjection can become occasions of subversion, revealing, ultimately, the “ruse of objectification” underlying the logics of enslavement in the U.S. chattel system (Freeburg 105).

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Beyond the Sentimental Margins of Discourse

A vast body of scholarship exists on Jacobs's classic narrative, in which her employment of well-trying sentimental forms is considered. Critics including Merish, Hartman, Caleb Smith, and Franny Nudelman generally concur that Jacobs utilizes the tropes and language of sentimentalism but also that she co-opts these, often ironically, in ways that expose the contours and limits of sympathy, personhood, and agency within northern abolitionist reform culture.⁴ Treatment of Jacobs's narrative as a sentimental work has focused almost entirely on the mutually constitutive ideologies of race, gender, and abolition. Into this critical conversation and ideological mix, I want to insert the image of the carceral and the technology of the cell. I want to take seriously Smith's contention that Jacobs's work attends not only to the sexual and emotional violence of slavery on black women but also to “the public life of law,” to the “ceremonies” of “performative speech,” silence, and seeing that mark law's “rituals of justice” (*Oracle* 189).⁵ I will consider Jacobs's narrative as fitting within a tradition of prison writing not to provide a corrective to traditional interpretations of the narrative or to read over the impasses of

slavery and of fugitivity, but rather to explore the potentials of extreme punishing captivity within the psychosocial processes of becoming a freer human subject.

Locating a story of judgment, punishment, and redemption at the crux of *Incidents* helps to reveal much about a key tension critics have long recognized in the text: between the black author and her white editor (Lydia Maria Child), between a fugitive's dreams of freedom and the disciplinary logics of an abolitionist regime.⁶ Nudelman and Nina Baym associate the conventions of sentimentalism as literary practice with abolitionist feminism;⁷ antislavery, these critics say, is an attempt to "mobilize" the political implications of correct feeling (Nudelman 944). According to Nudelman, white female abolitionists like Child and Harriet Beecher Stowe (we might add Angelina Grimké and Lucretia Mott) took the bereft and sexually degraded slave girl (along with other lowly sorts) as their "object," grounding their superior racialized moral authority and genteel purity in sympathy for the defiled.⁸ In the face of this rhetorical subjugation, Jacobs stages an ideological transfer aimed at bypassing, sidestepping, the sociopolitical price of pledges of sympathy, namely the white female expectation of black subordination.⁹ Jacobs's response to the limits and delimiting force of gendered abolitionist sentimentality, to the process by which the objectification of the black sufferer begets political subjectivity for the white, female benevolent, is to co-opt a related agenda—penal reform—inserting herself into a redemptive narrative that was understood to be white, one that promised not only to free the body from shackles but to redeem the soul, to restore the miscreant to the body politic.

My investigation will center on Jacobs's seven-year imprisonment in the cramped, coffin-like garret crawlspace of her grandmother's home. Perhaps the most

powerfully subversive form of discursive and material architecture found in any slave account, the garret is the “solitary cell,” the stage, in and upon which Jacob’s civil and social death (as slave, as criminal, as sinner) is performed; it is likewise the scene of her “miraculous” remaking.¹⁰ The garret exists at the “threshold of the speculative and the material”: As a material architecture, it bears a “densely contextualized historical signification,” one I will discuss at length. Its speculative potential derives from the “conditions of possibility”—magical, imaginative, generative—that enclose Jacobs (Chaney 265).¹¹ As we will see, Jacobs’s captivity, though grueling, inhumane, and disabling, is also the crucible through which a new self—free, agential, and redeemed—can take shape and be born.

In “choosing” the garret, to use Jacobs’s term, the fugitive slave steps into a rich cultural imaginary preoccupied by shifting and often conflicting accounts of what it means to live alone and confined (135).¹² She inserts herself within a sentimental narrative of redemption and within a Romantic construction of the self in solitude that was ideologically, formally, and institutionally foreclosed to black people.¹³ At once racially and politically marked, Jacobs’s mode of captivity (the solitary cell vs. the plantation) was, in the nineteenth century, a “highly ambiguous one”: oppressive, for sure, the cell also promised a “mysterious liberation” that the plantation could not (Smith, *PAI*, 2). It is the claim of this dissertation that architectures of extreme captivity intervene upon matters, literary and extraliterary, matters of aesthetic and human form, especially as these pertain to pursuits of freedom. I will be suggesting a theory for interpreting the central image of captivity within Jacobs’s narrative—one that will help to articulate the value of the carceral space, a value measurable in terms of affect, imaginative potential,

and socio-political subversiveness.¹⁴ In this investigation, opportunities emerge for critiquing sentimentalism and its attendant scripts: race, gender, and sympathy. Hence what follows is a consideration of Jacobs's (and Brown's) troubled adherence to abolitionist discourse and imperatives. Understanding the hardened fetters of dominant modes and ideologies, even reformist ones, helps to illuminate the "escape" Jacobs finds in the magical thinking and architectural possibilities—in the tight, captive space—of incarceration.

...

Antislavery and the language of antislavery are nearly impossible to tell apart. Just as slavery involved a policing of language and an entire imaginative structure of racial hierarchy and geographical and biological difference, so too did the rhetorics of abolition. Jennifer Rae Greeson writes at length about the antebellum literary invention of "north" and "south." She credits abolitionist discourse with the ideological construction of the south as violent, as evil, as the seat of national vice, tracing this reformist imperative to an anxiety over northern industrialization and rapid modernization.¹⁵ For my purpose, what is important is that both slavery and antislavery while being social institutions and political movements were also literary affairs—and their discursive realms were staunchly white.¹⁶

Few slaves knew such immediate fanfare or received as wide-spread attention in the abolitionist press as Henry Brown. Two full-length versions of his narrative were published, the first in 1849 by the amanuensis Charles Stearns. Both tell the tale of

Brown's riveting and harrowing escape: in March of that year, Brown ensconced himself in a shoemaker's crate, had the lid nailed tightly shut, and was shipped by Adams Express from Richmond to Philadelphia. The three hundred and fifty mile journey by train and steamboat took twenty seven hours. Although the box was labeled "This side up with care," Brown was violently jostled and left for long periods of time upside down. Hence, it was with enormous relief and much astonishment that he was received alive and ostensibly unharmed by the nervous, waiting assembly in the office of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.

Within months of his escape, Brown adopted the famed—if but vexed—signature, "Box." It was William Wells Brown who introduced the fugitive, jokingly, as "Boxer" to the audience of the New England Anti-Slavery Convention; by evening's end, the name Henry "Box" Brown was fixed. Brown was a sensation at the convention. Possessed of a trained musical voice (he had been a choirman in the Affeviar church in Richmond) and, with what Cynthia Griffin Wolff calls, a "lofty dramatic flair," he performed his "Hymn of Thanksgiving," an arrangement of Psalm 40—the song he purportedly sang upon emerging from the box (7).¹⁷ Brown's narratives and his numerous engagements on the anti-slavery speaking circuit were heavily popularized and promoted in the abolitionist press, in editions of *The Liberator*, *The North Star*, *The Christian Inquirer*, *The Christian Register*, and *The New York Evangelist*.¹⁸ Moreover, Brown was the subject of a popular children's collection, *Cousin Ann's Stories for Children* (Philadelphia: J. M. McKim, 1949), and the seminal image of his "unboxing"—Samuel Rowse's lithograph, *The Resurrection of Henry Box Brown*—came to be an icon of the abolitionist movement.¹⁹

Still, the often cartoon-like recastings of Brown's escape in abolitionist papers and on broadsides "mask[ed]," if "inadvertently," "the risk of death"—actual and psychological—that inheres to escape, specifically, and the fugitive life, more generally (Freeburg 109). Moreover, the deeply racist culture Brown discovered in the north—a culture eager for the "Box," fervent to transpose the human into a sign—was, for him, a source of relentless consternation, even while Brown "vulgarly" courted his new found celebrity.²⁰ According to Douglass Egerton, within only months of obtaining his freedom, Brown "lost his voice" and his identity nearly entirely to the abolitionist cause (143). Although based on interviews, the "overwrought purple prose" and authorial voice of the 1849 narrative is, in Egerton's words, surely "all Stearns" (143).

As it was, abolitionists needed the appalling true-life accounts of southern slavery. Tales of violence, degradation, unimaginable cruelty and suffering were the life-blood of the movement, galvanizing the energies of reformists, arousing outrage among an otherwise tepid moral majority.²¹ *Incidents*, with its exposé-style account of moments of illicit sexual history is particularly arranged, as Greeson has claimed, to "threaten," "shock," and also to "thrill" northern readers ("Mysteries and Miseries" 288). First-hand, eye-witness (we might say "tell-all") accounts of slavery, like Jacobs's, constituted the institution's most damning indictment. Still, as John Sekora has argued, what "occasioned" the antebellum slave narrative—its specific remembrances, language, tropes, themes, length and also its publication and circulation—was the northern abolitionist political vision (a vision that ranged, of course, from the more conservative views of Child and Stearns to the liberal ideas of Garrison and Grimké).²² Generally, though, white sponsors of the genre "compelled" black authors, as Sekora has said, to

“approve” and “authorize” white power and moral authority through their stories of southern trauma (502).²³ We see this in Child’s promise to readers that Jacobs will confess the “monstrous features” of her “concubinage,” all the while knowing that the cultish notions of sexual purity these readers held, that she held, could never truly account for or tolerate Jacobs’s experience (27).²⁴

According to Nudelman, Jacobs and Child “endorse a hierarchical model” of reformist political rhetoric in which “black women suffer and white women agitate” (949). Indeed, underwriting *Incidents* is an abolitionist mandate that Jacobs reveal her sexual degradation and abuse so as to discredit slavery.²⁵ Her confession of misconduct, however, works equally to uphold and sustain—which is to say, to discredit her from—the moral sanctity and purity of white femininity.²⁶ Such occasions lead Sekora to conclude that the African American slave narrative represents the “earliest instance” in American literature of establishing “sameness within difference”—of “exclusion by way of inclusion” (492). Despite her best efforts, Jacobs cannot inaugurate a political alliance²⁷—a strategic interracial sisterhood between northern abolitionist women (many of whom championed feminist causes or who at least were anxious about sanctioned degradations of women that could replicate a form of domestic slavery within marriage) and southern slave women—precisely because the logics of reformist sentimentality forbade it. For Child and her set, Jacobs exists as an “object” of sympathy, not as a “subject” of political agency or equal personhood. Having said this, a distinguishing and oft-noted characteristic of the slave narrative genre is its ability to “subvert white literary and institutional values,” as *Incidents* most certainly does (Sekora 510).²⁸ The very structure of the narrative’s signature first-person narration disrupts a key hierarchal tenet

of abolitionist sentimentality—that a “white narrator” “mediate” between “sufferer” and feeling “community” (Nudelman 949)²⁹

Such “disruptions” amount to conflicts over justice, and these occur in slave narratives, often surreptitiously, at moments of silence and of speaking out, of complying with expected literary forms and modes of discourse and upending them. According to John Ernest, Brown’s second narrative, published in 1851, “resists” joining the “chorus of moral possibility” that operated within the “discursive regularities of abolitionist discourse,”³⁰ possibilities that promulgated racist conceptions of Brown as little more than “redeemed chattel.”³¹ Though details of the text’s authorship are unknown, the second narrative is widely accepted as better representing, in fact and voice, Brown’s “self-presentation” (Ernest, “Traumatic Theology,” 20)³² In Ernest’s assessment, Brown “guides” the second narrative toward a “commentary on spatial and temporal conditions” so as to negotiate the terrain of fugitive experience differently and to break, in ways, from a discomfiting reliance on and experience with abolition’s discursive and political landscape (“Traumatic Theology,” 19).

This departure is evident, perhaps most profoundly, in the motif of language and representation that permeates the 1851 narrative. As a victim of slavery, Brown understood what white spectators, agitators, and sympathizers—within and tangential to the antislavery movement—did not or would not recognize, that language is inadequate to tell the story of slavery, that the real condition of slave trauma is “virtually unrepresentable” (Ernest, “Introduction,” 22). Addressing readers of the genre bluntly, those expectant of titillation, gore, and physical mortification, Brown writes, “The tale of my sufferings is not one of great interest to those who delight to read of...tragical

occurrences and scenes of blood” (42). Brown’s subtle reproach of and refusal to comply with readers’ expectations is rooted, arguably, in the concerns Hartman raises when she warns that “mundane” yet “endurable forms” of racial terror—forms often beyond the reach of description and language—are too easily “obfuscated” by “shocking displays” of physical violence and suffering (42). Refusing the torrid details and ultraist features conventional to the genre, Brown asserts, while “my body has escaped the lash of the whip” (Brown’s life in slavery was marked by a string of comparatively benign masters), “my mind has groaned under tortures which I believe will never be related, because, language is inadequate to express them” (42). Brown refers here specifically to the *black-magical* metamorphous of man-into-chattel: “They robbed me of myself...by the nature of their wicked arts...did they retain their stolen property” (51). A similar unspeakability is claimed by Jacobs, who insists “no pen can describe” the “insults” to which “I was subjected.” Her insistence that “I would not describe them if I could; they are too low, too revolting” (88) is tantamount to a bold refusal to accommodate the “invocations of the shocking and terrible” that abolitionist discourse (that Child) desired, ones which, in Hartman’s words, blur the “uncertain,” precarious “line” between “witness and spectator” (4).

Discursive contestations such as these lead Smith to locate slave narratives with a broader “poetics of justice”—positioning black writers and white editors as “actors” in “legal dramas” (*Oracle* xii).³³ *Incidents* has been “canonized,” Smith claims, as a “critique of ideologies”—legal, civil, and sentimental (*Oracle* 187). Indeed, it is thoroughly preoccupied with appealing to and interrogating sentimental femininity, a cornerstone of abolitionist political power and identity. Jacobs’s multiple apologies,

confessions, and rationalizations provide sites for evaluating the author's vexed position vis-à-vis the rhetorical codes she was forced to work within. Admitting to a years-long, calculative sexual affair with the prominent Mr. Sands (alias for Samuel Tredwell Sawyer, the North Carolina lawyer, state representative, and eventually U.S. congressman) Jacobs writes:

And now, reader, I come to a period in my unhappy life, which I would gladly forget if I could. The remembrance fills me with sorrow and shame. It pains me to tell you of it....Neither can I plead ignorance or thoughtlessness....I knew what I did, and I did it with deliberate calculation....I made a headlong plunge. Pity me, and pardon me, O virtuous reader!....I know I did wrong. (78-80)

All the trappings of ardent apology, the pathetic submissiveness of guilt is, in one way, evident in this over-wrought appeal for “pity” and “pardon.” So too, though, is the complex nature of the crime for which Jacobs must be expunged, and this is acknowledged without abashment: “I knew what I did, and I did it with deliberate calculation.”³⁴ Jacobs’s offense involves more than her illicit sexual encounter with Mr. Sands. Readers, even the “purest” among them, would likely have been prepared to forgive this on the moral grounds Jacobs lays out: she had, as she adds, been “struggling alone in the powerful grasp of the demon Slavery,” forced to endure the emotional and physical violence of her debauched master, Dr. Flint, and his jealous, cruel wife—and, as she laments, “the monster proved too strong...” (79). Jacobs’s explanation (if that’s what it is) aligns faultlessly with the abolitionist position: Slaves are hapless victims of a cruel and demoralizing system. They are “seduced” by wicked sovereigns into all sorts of torrid depravities.³⁵

Jacobs's narrative, at least up until the point at which she escapes Dr. Flint's plantation, is constructed according to the conventions and emotional terrain of seduction, a salient feature of the literary realm of sentiment.³⁶ *Incidents* contains the mode's stock characters (the rake and the innocent) and its tropes (notably the dangers of language). The sinister Dr. Flint verbally violates Jacobs, on multiple occasions. His words penetrate her mind, "peopling" it "with unclean images" (52). As Nudelman notes, the events mimic a physical rape by altering and eventually degrading, in this case, her mind.³⁷ Still, as Hartman has said, Jacobs "deforms the masterful rhetoric of seduction," troubling its distinctions (8-9).³⁸ She replaces the classic hapless victim with the willful, cunning slave—a figure more desirous of freedom and a usurpation of power than of affection.³⁹ Moreover, she exploits the language of sentiment and sympathy, of common ground and shared value, to assert a "deliberative" and "calculative" will offensive, in every way, to the racial and gender norms of the period and to the cultural work in which her text was engaged.⁴⁰ Embedded in her ostensibly apologetic confession is an affirmation of manipulative sexual craftiness as the "instance of her autonomy:" There is "something akin to freedom," Jacobs writes, "in having a lover with no real control over you" (79).⁴¹ Her scheming is an offense, a crime, egregious not only within southern slave culture but within northern abolitionist culture too. Jacobs holds fast to this radical stance, continually casting her sexual sin (of which she is ashamed) within a larger battle of wills between herself and Dr. Flint (of which she is proud): "I resolved to match my cunning against his cunning" (145). Their conflicts are reminiscent of the gendered and classed encounter between Alice Pyncheon and Matthew Maule, when the former

matched her aristocratic pride against the Maule's plebian revenge ("a woman's might against a man's might") to devastating effect (177).

If Hawthorne confirms normative hierarchies through plots of seduction, Jacobs upends them both within and outside the text. The "consensual" relationship that develops between Jacobs and Mr. Sands effects a grotesque parody of the feminine "choice" made sacrosanct in republican marriage. Phoebe's willful submission to Holgrave's "propriety power," we recall, underlies her "constitution" as a true woman and also her subjectivity in civil bourgeois society (Merish 207).⁴² *Incidents* denaturalizes and also parodies this conflation, emphatically inscribing the *union* of personal agency and romantic choice as a site of difference between black and white women. Moreover, as Merish, Nudelman, and Hartman note, she sexualizes domesticity's coveted narrative of romance, reinterpreting feminine power vis-à-vis sex as a sign and vehicle for black subjectivity and freedom.⁴³

Jacobs's much-touted "choice" of a sexual partner is a defeat of her slave master.⁴⁴ Sociopolitically, the act denies him his sovereign right over her body. Economically, it deprives him expanded wealth through reproduction. Psychologically, it renders him impotent. Her conduct is criminal; consequently Dr. Flint says, "Linda...you have been criminal towards me (83)." However, if we apply the logic of Chaney, who reads the fetishizing of black bodies by slave masters as a metaphor for the "powerful capacities of bourgeois feeling," than we might begin to see that the "crime" Jacobs commits against Dr. Flint she also commits against the abolitionist community that sponsors her (181). Jacobs's conduct including her many confessions "effects a reversal" in which sentimental standards of virtue inherent in classic literary and ideological modes

are “deemed inappropriate” and insufficient for “measuring the lives” and conduct of black women (Hartman 105). Hence, Jacobs writes, “That which commands admiration in the white woman only hastens the degradation of the female slave” (53).

Brown’s many “offenses,” so far as the abolitionist community was concerned, were far less nuanced or inevitable. Having fled the United States for England following passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, Brown “dressed flamboyantly,” drank often, remarried a white British woman (reportedly disregarding an opportunity to deliver his first wife from slavery), and failed to attend anti-slavery gatherings (Alexander 311).⁴⁵ Holly Robbins says that Brown, ever the showman, wore “too much jewelry” and offended the taste of his “pious supporters” (6). More importantly, it seems, his popular slave panorama’s “iconoclastic visuals” challenged, too directly, what Robbins calls “tepid white abolitionist sensibilities” (6).⁴⁶ According to one contemporary disparager, Brown “drinks smoke, gambles, sware and do many other things too Bad—to think of” (Ruggles 134). Ruggles interprets Brown’s behavior as a form of liberation; he “had emancipated himself,” the biographer writes, “from his personal history of enslavement,” which included the moral and political subjugations of the abolitionist set, the rigid social codes and categories imposed on ex-slaves working within the cause (159). To be sure, Brown’s behavior eroded his useful image as redeemed and rendered him far less serviceable. By all accounts, his friends abandoned him, illiterate and of insecure means, to the unrefined world of traveling show. His remaining years in freedom, if we can use the term, were marked by a descent into poverty, depression, and substance abuse. They serve, Egerton says, as a “depressing reminder” of his “value”—ever more as a symbol

than as a man— to northern audiences and anti-slavery friends (142). By 1878, the once famous fugitive had disappeared almost entirely from the public record.⁴⁷

For Jacobs, though, the location of struggle, the site of unavoidable sin is always and inseparably the black, female body. Katherine McKittrick notes that eyes, skin, hair, arms, legs, feet, hands, and muscles dominate descriptions and experiences, often demoralizing or unlawful, of self, family, and lovers in Jacob's narrative.⁴⁸ The essence of the crimes for which Jacobs needs to be redeemed (by the standards of her readers, the law and culture of her day, and finally her righteous, judgmental grandmother) is linked, inextricably, to the body—one always-already unprotected, deviant, and licentious by virtue of its racial-sexual mark. A host of ideas and assumptions vis-à-vis natural submissiveness and sexual availability attended the black female body in the antebellum United States, notions that enabled the body's profitability but which also insisted on its basic depravity. Jacobs's criminality precedes, therefore, her offensive acts—first against Dr. Flint and then against the moral, genteel authority, for which her grandmother, with “pure principles” and “vigilant watchfulness,” is an ironic stand-in (52, 54). The slave girl is, in other words, impure and sinful from the start— originally—because she is, as McKittrick notes, “rape-able” (45).⁴⁹ Defying Dr. Flint's sexual mastery renders Jacobs insubordinate; it cannot make her “pure.” Jacobs discovers that as a black body there is no path for redemption. The standards to which her readers keep, are, for Jacobs, impossible. There is, as she explains, “no shadow of law” or of society—north or south—to “protect” her from “the insult...the degradation, the wrongs, the vices that grow out of slavery” (52). It is a sentiment echoed by Brown, who writes of slave families, “The relation of husband and wife, parent and child, only exists by the toleration of their

master, who may insult the slave's wife or violate her person at anytime," and there is "no law to punish him"—not in the north or south (as the Fugitive Slave Act and other legal decrees ensured)— "for what he has done" (56).

Incidents affirms a fundamental betrayal of human relations within the entire spectrum of slavery/antislavery captivity. In narrating her sexual experiences, Jacobs engages with forms of gender, race, sentiment, and sympathy that demand her lawful and proscribed subjugation. In the face of this she co-opts the language and standards of white femininity, asserting autonomy and willfulness as alternative values for slave women and as ones that supersede chastity and submissiveness—a narrative act that while clever and destabilizing cannot in the end redeem. I've likened Jacobs to the heroines of classic seduction. In those tales, the wages of sin are typically death; the fallen woman succumbs, in accordance with the trope, to a shameful childbirth. In the case of Alice Pyncheon, "all dignity of life" is "lost" in "humiliation" and in a zombie-like "bondage" to her wizard-keeper (182-183). For Jacobs, though, a figure always hopelessly outside the feminine ideal, always—as chattel-person— on the margins of humanity, "her fall" is an opportunity, an occasion to restage her life story within a more transformative logic, one offered by the dramatics of criminal justice and its multiform pathways for redemption.

Strategic Captivity: Paradox, Imprisonment, and the "Odd-thing" of Freedom

I've been emphasizing that antebellum forms of black racism and sexism were not merely bodily or geographic productions but also literary and ideological inventions rooted in the logics of sentimental modes and in discursive subjugations. Material space provides

additional grounds for interpreting the marginality (which is also the criminality) of the black fugitive at the center of the slave narrative genre. In *Incidents*, Jacobs “consciously positions” the garret—her tightly-confined quarters of concealment—as “a border space,” a paradoxical and subversive zone in which concealment, marginalization, and border-crossing, of multiple kinds, play pivotal and emancipatory roles (Green-Barteet 53-54).

Extreme architectures of captivity and concealment, like the garret, the jail cell, Brown’s box, and the dismal belly of the slave ship, are, indeed, dehumanizing and death-like but these spaces never wholly eradicate the human subjects contained within in part because, like all spaces, their meanings, even when hierarchal and harrowing, are always insecure and wavering; their boundaries are never fixed.⁵⁰ In the next section, I will put political and narrative boundaries and their tensions between inside/outside and center/margin into conversation with the various experiential ways of being that offered themselves to Jacobs and Brown both within and outside their spaces of confinement. This analysis will bring to bear the multiform logics that convert the garret and the box from sites of intense captivity into ones of potent freedom.⁵¹ As we will see, the garret, in particular, is simultaneously space and process, one that conflates “oppression and captivity” with “control and agency” (McKittick 39). Its “unique perspective” and “special vantage point” offer a critique of racial-sexual marginalization even as the garret upends these, ensconcing Jacobs at the very center of her narrative and of important U.S. political myths. Moreover, the garret offers a commentary on the nature of freedom in the antebellum United States because Jacobs experiences kinds of autonomy and sovereignty in the “crevices” and “crawlspaces,” in the tightest of confines existing between fixed categories of geography, sociopolitical selfhood, and literary invention.⁵²

Incidents (like Brown's narrative, for reasons we'll see) has an investment in space and in spatial problems that goes beyond the urgency of hiding. Perhaps because Jacobs, as a female slave, is rendered utterly to the margins of the domestic and political realms that fostered free autonomous lives in the United States, she seems keenly aware of the ways space is socially produced. The garret reframes Jacobs's displacement and marginalization, ensconcing the fugitive at the core of a project for full human reclamation. Numerous scholars comment on the garret's "in-between status," on its "interstitiality" and on its paradox (Green-Barteet 54).⁵³ The architecture materializes, in this way, the logics of Jacobs's fugitivity and marginality: neither free nor enslaved, Jacobs, too, is interstitial—in-between—even as she is pushed to the far-boundaries of humanity. Hence, McKittrick writes that Jacobs "is everywhere and nowhere, North and South, unvisibly present" (42).

All spaces shape our understanding of freedom and domination, but interstitial spaces, according to Green-Barteet, spaces like garrets, thresholds, alleyways, and lobbies, possess a particular ability to challenge hardened power dynamics that adhere to spaces (and to bodies) of more singular or fixed public and private purpose: kitchens, parlors, streets, offices, nurseries, or store rooms.⁵⁴ Within the garret, fugitivity, marginality, and in-between-ness are worked to Jacobs's advantage. Her retreat to the garret is "a geographic trick" that is also a protective strategy, one aimed at procuring power—power over her physical body and over her future as well as the bodies and futures of her children (McKittrick 45).⁵⁵ As far as the entire community is concerned, the garret is inconsequential—a pointless, unfinished structure blurring the boundary between private home and public yard. The garret adheres, in this way, to the definition

of interstitial space—it is somewhere betwixt and between, making it (like the woman inside it) powerfully ambiguous. As long as Jacob remains entrapped within the garret, she ostensibly does not exist—not to the community or her children and not to Dr. Flint—because the space she inhabits does not, in their minds, exist. Indeed, it is assumed, for the entirety of her confinement, that the runaway girl has arrived in the north. The paradoxical relation of Jacob’s “alleged absence” and her “actual presence” combine to render her uniquely powerful, especially over her master (Green-Barteet 63).

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Situated in and amongst the violent geographies of slavery, the garret allows Jacobs to witness—to see, hear, and also to speak—not from the margins, not from a sentimentally subordinated position but from the physically and psychologically disabling confines of a radical, harrowing captivity. As McKittrick explains, Jacobs’s “spatial experiences and strategies illustrate how the geographic workings of slavery simultaneously produced spatial boundaries and subject knowledges that [could] subvert the perimeters of bondage” (architectural and also visual) that otherwise worked to objectify Jacobs—a desired female slave and a suffering object of abolitionist sympathy (40). Her rodent and insect infested cell with its “stifling air” and “total darkness” becomes a “loophole of retreat” once Jacobs succeeds (notably without the assistance of her *protectors*) in boring a one inch hole in its side (88).

Confirming the rebellious nature of this spatial reclamation, Dr. Flint is the “first person” Jacobs “sees” from her “peeping-hole” (93). (He *just so happens* to be standing on the street outside her grandmother’s house.) Later, from that same spot, Jacobs hears of Dr. Flint’s excursions north in search of her. With this information, she initiates a ruse

that further advances the garret's subversiveness: She arranges to have letters sent from New York and Boston, letters which confuse Dr. Flint into thinking she's relocated there and permanently impede his pursuit of her.⁵⁷ But this is not all; through the aperture Jacobs hears "many conversations never intended to meet [her] ears," the terrible "plans" of "slave hunters" and the circumstances of many fugitive escapes (137). She learns of and "places" the Free States and listens as her grandmother and children are interrogated by Dr. Flint and Mr. Sands.⁵⁸ Through the narrow "loophole," at once a gap and a form of self-emancipation, Jacobs watches punished bodies, run-away bodies, and the growing up of her daughter Ellen (Louisa Jacobs) and her son Benny (Joseph Jacobs). She witnesses her grandmother's illness, her Aunt Nancy's death, and the final departure of her children.⁵⁹

For the black fugitive slave in the antebellum United States, racial and also visual logics and knowledges affirmed that one's place (socially and geographically) and also one's body, what McKittrick calls one's "seeable body-scale," were naturally subordinate to white patriarchal ownership (40).⁴⁶ Hence, being seeable both within the ultraist discourse of abolition and on the plantation was critical to discursive and actual forms of racial domination. Scenes in which Jacobs gazes out of her extreme garret confinement (extreme in size and in degree) are organized by a visual optics that defies the logics of slavery and, as we will see, of proper attachment. At the moment Jacobs surveys—privately, secretly, surreptitiously—the white body of Dr. Flint (as she does several times later in the narrative with Mr. Sands), the fugitive mullata girl, always-already a tragic and dispossessed figure, takes possession of her master. Paradoxically, he becomes the unwitting vehicle of Jacobs's agentive becoming as she reappropriates the position of

keeping and of watching that he ought to occupy. The impact of the reversal is so severe, so tied to her self-fashioning that it resonates within her body, causing her to “shudder” (136).

What makes this fruition of agency ever more paradoxical and slippery is the way readers (in Jacobs’s time, white woman of principle and right feeling) join her in these scenes of vision and hence step into the shadow cast by masculine brutes of slaveocratic power. In sentimental literature, racial inferiority was imagined by the infliction and constitution of blackness as a sympathetic yet inflicted mark. Visual repetitions and voyeuristic scenes of the mortification of slave flesh were, as previously discussed, part of mapping the visual and psychic differences underwriting fantasies of pure white interior essence. In *Scenes of Subjection*, Hartman argues that figurative violations of slave bodies fashioned through the constant watching and the performance of violent and total domination, the very trope of antislavery literature (of which Brown refused to partake in the second narrative), functioned to establish middle-class, white, gendered superiority at mid-century. Hence, Jacobs’s seizing of the gaze arguably threatens the very concepts, knowledges, and truths of human nature and race culture because it unmoors these from their empirical foundations in visual representation. Jacobs’s transgressive vision might also be interpreted as a provocative invitation to female readers. Her subversive form of seeing might be said to initiate a radical feminist politics, but this would require her white readers to identify (not merely sympathize) with the black subject whose interiority and racial power it was more commonly their want to deny.

To recap, Jacobs manipulates the “crevices of power”—spatial and visual—necessary to her enslavement, recasting the very meaning of captivity within slavery’s “geographic terrain” (McKittrick xxviii). Scenes of gazing from the “loophole” of her garret “retreat” reverse a race-gender politics and a hierarchal logic of visualization that evinces the garret’s operative subversiveness. Moreover, the garret’s interstitiality affords Jacobs “multiple subject positions”: in and amongst the “irrational workings of slavery,” Jacobs is “witness, participant, and fugitive;” she is, as McKittrick contends, “inside and outside,” “captive and free” (42-43). According to McKittrick, Jacobs is freest, which is to say most autonomous and powerful when from the tight disabling extremes of the garret she can view the “terrible lives of other slaves” (43). This conflation of the logics and powers of seeing and of becoming (where becoming means fashioning a free self) is emblemized by the peeping-hole’s dual purpose— to give breath (hence life) and also sight. The combination also illuminates freedom’s uncanny-ness, its evocative links to bondage, and recalls the principles of discipline and rehabilitation in the prison.

...

Gazing out of her peeping-hole, Jacobs is able to see while not being seen. Consequently, Green-Barteet notes that the garret, a physical prison of sorts, is analogous to Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon.⁶⁰ All who pass by it are subject to Jacobs’s constant surveillance. From her concealed, elevated position she is, as McKittrick describes, a “disembodied master-eye,” “seeing from nowhere” (43). The word “garret” highlights the panoptic characteristic of Jacobs’s hiding space: Green-Barteet tells us that “garret” was commonly used until the seventeenth century to refer to a watch-tower; in the nineteenth century, it could still mean a turret projecting from the top of a tall edifice.⁶¹ Jacobs’s

visual position within the garret is akin to the optics of Bentham's prison guards— unverifiable, constant, authoritative. Of course, an obvious dissimilarity exists: unlike the keepers of the Panopticon, Jacobs is imprisoned herself; the garret is simultaneously watch-tower and cell, a site of empowerment and disabling confinement.⁶²

Hence, Jacobs's spatial strategy, her self-captivity evinces "contradictory" forms of "captivity, concealment, and resistance" (McKittrick 42). I've been discussing the ways Jacobs utilizes the garret's spatial and visual logics, its many possibilities to defeat what Chris Freeburg calls "the matrix of physical and ideological forces" against her (108). Still, the seven-year-long confinement is a troubling, painful option to be sure, one that serves, in McKittrick's words, as a "disturbing" if but "meaningful" response to slavery (41). Jacobs engineers her emancipation through the extremes of captivity, her redemption through the rigors of unbelievable imprisonment. Though she insists she is not "enslaved" in the garret, she does concede, repeatedly, that she is "imprisoned" there, calling the tight space a "dismal cell," a "prison" and a "dark hole" (142, 140, 149).⁶³ McKittrick claims that Jacobs "erases herself" by removing to the garret; her confinement within the coffin-like space emblemizes, in this way, the social death of slavery and also of incarceration (43). Southern laws and customs that conferred social death upon slaves by denying marriage, education, privacy, and speech force Jacobs into her grave-like hiding.⁶⁴ This internment, however, contains—at the same time—"the possibility of the opposite" of social death in the reanimation of chattel flesh into a thinking, acting subject.⁶⁵ As Jacobs's slave body dies, a new psychological self is born—private and seeing.⁶⁶

Reanimation, the conversion of death into life—these are the organizing tropes of Brown’s fugitivity too. His mode of escape—its tomb-like conditions—fits within the period’s Romantic conceptions of captivity and redemption. Numerous critics including Wolff, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Richard Newman, and Marcus Wood have focused on the spatial significances and figurations attending Brown’s box.⁶⁷ Wood suggests, much as I’ve done with Jacobs’s garret, that the box evokes the metaphysics of “imprisonment”—the “symbolic entombment” of the “soul” of the slave, but also the moral and spiritual reemergence that prison captivity afforded.⁶⁸ In 1849, Brown’s escape was cast, almost instantly, as a “distinctly religious event” (Ernest, “Traumatic Theology, 19). Brown fostered this interpretation, claiming that God had directed him to “Go and get a box, and put yourself in it” (27). Situating his liberation within the Old Testament history of God’s people, Brown writes, “Certainly the deliverance of Moses... was scarcely more marvelous than was the deliverance of Mr. Henry Box Brown from the horrors of slavery” (44). For abolitionists, the religious deliverance Brown spoke of was also a spiritual conversion, one that transformed the fugitive at the same time as it transported him from south to north. In “delirious enthusiasm,” they pronounced Brown’s conveyance—the box—to be a “coffin” and declared his emergence as a free man, a “resurrection” (Wolff 28). Letters included in the 1851 narrative, those written to and about Brown, document this mode. In one, Miller McKim (founding member of the American Antislavery Society) notes that Brown was “nearly killed,” and calls the slave’s emergence from the box a “resurrection” from the “living tomb” (45-46). Brown’s acquisition of the middle name “Box” corresponds, likewise, with ideas of

Christian conversion that declare one a new creature. We might think of Saul's dramatic rechristening as the Apostle Paul.

By ensconcing Brown's story within a tale of redemption and rebirth, abolitionists might be seen as offering something of the dignity and humanity that Philadelphia represented: the slave—racially marked as sub-human, sinful, and irredeemable—suffers death, is buried (in Brown's case, concealed and hidden), and is finally reborn—pure, agential, and redeemed. Certainly, Brown was befriended, at least initially, traveling with the financial support and requisite authentication of advocates like Stearns and celebrated at anti-slavery gatherings throughout the northeast. Still, the renaming of Brown as “Box” carries ironic resonances of the dehumanization that converted people into chattel within the system of slavery. While embraced by the anti-slavery community, Brown quickly became a commodity—a box—for their cause. Trish Loughran has called Brown “a speaking commodity,” a phrase which takes account of the ways artistic renderings and ghost-written narratives by white abolitionists “obfuscated” the “treacheries” of the fugitive slave experience.⁶⁹ In a host of popular lithographs, Brown is depicted buoyant—singing or smiling—as he rises, redeemed, “into the open hands” of the Philadelphia Vigilance Committee, a symbol of abolitionist success and benevolence. Still, as Dana Nelson warns, such portrayals, repeated so often as to eclipse all other interpretations, reinforce the “ideological interests” of “liberal white gratification” “at the expense” of Brown's “tumultuous trials” and their various belated aftereffects.⁷⁰

Recent scholarship on Brown celebrates, much as the abolitionists did, the “rich symbolism of deliverance” Brown's story affords (Robbins 5).⁷¹ In his forward to the 2002 edition of Brown's narrative, Gates claims its impact rests in the fact that “Brown

made literal” what was “implicit in the symbolism of enslavement” (ix).⁷² By having himself “confined in a virtual casket,” “descend[ing]” in a “hellacious passage”— “sweltering, suffocating, claustrophobic...devoid of light...—” only to be “resurrected twenty-seven hours later,” Brown “names the symbolic relation between death and life” that slavery and its death-processes mandate (Gates x). To be sure, Brown’s experience, much like Jacobs’s, is a kind of physical death, a corporeal and psychic dismantling within the confines of extreme captivity. Inside the box (measuring 3 ft. 1 inch long, 6 inches deep, and 2 ft. wide), Brown “hear[s]” his “neck give a crack” as if it had been “snapped asunder;” his eyes “swell as if they would burst from their sockets;” his veins grown “dreadfully distended.” Covered in a “cold sweat” that “warn[s]” of “death,” Brown loses all “power” to “lift” even his “hand” to his “face.” Eventually, he is “knocked completely insensible” (86).

Similarly, the death processes Jacobs endures—especially before boring the life-affirming peeping-hole—are severe: inside the garret the girl’s limbs atrophy; she “loses the power of speech,” falls “unconscious for sixteen hours,” detaches from her spiritual beliefs, and grows “delirious.” Her “mind” is “fill[ed]” with “dark” and empty thoughts.⁷³ The “dismal” “hole” (cramped as it is with mice, rats, and other “low creatures of the earth”) replicates the dehumanizing state, physical and psychic, that slavery has long subjected Jacobs to as a creature *dead-in-the-law* and outside any moral or civic protections (Freeburg 108). The garret, as Freeburg describes it, is a “microcosmic hell on earth” (reminding us, perhaps, of Gates’s use of the religiously-loaded term) (108). The garret, like the box, seems to oppose, in so many ways, the idea and the possibility of life, liberty, and freedom. And yet, while “symbolically replicating” the extremes of

slavery, Jacobs's captivity (and Brown's too) also "disavows" total domination because, as Freeburg reminds us, Jacobs "chooses" her confinement (107). It is, for Freeburg, the narrative's "deepest irony": Jacobs's "victory," her emancipation derives from her extensive imprisonment (107). The site of her freedom is the site of her captivity.⁷⁴

Conflicting versions of the garret and the box—one crushing, deadly, and dismantling, the other self-disciplining, subversive, and emancipating—might stand for opposing disciplinary ideologies, structures, and practices developed between the late-eighteenth century and the Civil War. This period witnessed the rise of the modern carceral system, a humanitarian endeavor emerging out of a "deeply-held belief in the redeemable private soul" (Smith, *PAI*, 10). In reality, though, excessive violence to the body—whipping, branding, killing—as well as dirty, crowded, disease-ridden lockups were not fading from the disciplinary landscape.⁷⁵ *Incidents* contains numerous descriptions of torturous punishment: ropes tied around men's bodies as they hang suspended from the ground, death by fire and scalding drops of fat, slaves "lacerated with the whip," "chained to logs," "branded with hot irons," and "torn by bloodhounds" (70, 135). Jacobs remembers too how her own life was frequently threatened. At one point, Dr. Flint exclaims, "Do you know I have the right to do as I like with you,—and that I can kill you, if I please?" (64).

As antebellum society became increasingly dependent on plantation slavery and on the racialized distinction between "captive black bodies" and "free white minds," "spectacular violence" directed at white convicts began to shock northerners as an "offense against humanity"—as reproductions of southern excess (Smith 9). In other words, northern institutions of carceral reform—isolated, clean, private, and

regimented—were constructed as a result of and also against the raucous, dingy, violent, and chaotic southern jail system, which remained an extension, really, of the powerful landowning slaveocracy. Jacobs recalls a neighboring plantation with “a jail” and “a whipping post” (70) and how Dr. Flint threatened to use lockup as punishment: “How would you like to be sent to jail for your insolence?” (64).

Crime and its punishments are one of *Incidents*'s most prevalent motifs. Slaves “thronged together,” ready for sale are said to be “waiting like criminals” (40) and constantly slave mothers are shown “begging for [the] pardon” of a slave child to one cold master or another (48). Jacobs recalls “the first time [she is] punished” and later how she is forced to “lay [her] hands” upon the Bible and “to take [an] oath,” to “testify” as regards her “innocence” (58).⁷⁶ Notably, *Incidents* portrays the hopeless slave “chained” in the dingy, crowded southern jail and contrasts this, plainly, with the privileged white convict of the northern penitentiary system. While visiting Benjamin in jail, Jacobs “sobs” to feel his “cold hands” in hers and to hear the “jingle of [his] chains” (46). Clad in “filthy rags,” Benjamin is confined so near the other prisoners that he is soon “covered with vermin” (48). There is no “pardon” or “persuasion,” no “argument” to be made in his defense (48). His release comes only by virtue of his having been “bought” by a new owner, passed, in this way from one nightmarish captivity into another. Clearly Jacobs pities the “apartment” in which young Benny is interned without pining in any way for its space or potentials (48). A few pages later, though, when decrying her fate on Flint’s plantation, Jacobs declares:

The felon’s home in a penitentiary is preferable. He may repent, and turn from the error of his ways, and so find peace; but it is not so with a favorite slave. She is

not allowed to have any pride of character. It is deemed a crime in her to wish to be virtuous. (55)

This passage confirms Jacobs's awareness of the spiritually repentant archetype of the northern reformist narrative, a narrative rooted in Protestant conceptions of religious theology that Jacobs shared.⁷⁷ As I've been intimating all along, *Incidents* has much in common with prison literature, a genre that developed concomitantly with the slave narrative form. Both modes played key roles in advancing the progressive projects in which they were involved, antislavery and penal reform.⁷⁸ As was the case with abolitionist editors and publishers, prison reformers called on inmates of new penitentiary systems to "testify" to their institution's merits and power to rehabilitate and redeem. Still, part of the "subversive power" of prison literature, says Smith, is its "menacing counterpoint," its "deep contradictions" that interrupt, like *Incidents* does, the genre's "official purpose" to "legitimate" and justify a modern, sentimental regime (Smith, "HHF," 254-255).⁷⁹

Like the fugitive in slave literature, the convict of the prison narrative was "endowed" with new kinds of authority and "authenticity," "becoming a figure whose formative experience enabled him to reveal the truth about a hidden, mysterious" way of life (Smith, "HHF," 234).⁸⁰ Having said this, the *in medias res* figures at the center of these genres—enigmatic occupants of the far margins of life, law, and humanity—were not interchangeable. Penitentiaries of the humanitarian system were largely constructed for and populated by white men, a point reflected in Jacobs's switch from the referent "he" (when speaking of the prisoner) to "she" (when speaking of the slave). According to Michele Lise Tarter and Richard Bell, southern political leaders thought it

preposterous to place slaves in a penitentiary because, as chattel, they had “no character worthy of reformation and no freedom to be curtailed” (24).⁸¹ Penal institutions in the lower south tended, rather, to be for poor whites, while planters—in pre-Enlightenment, old-world style—maintained order through brutal vicious corporal punishments and, as we’ve seen, utilized local lock-ups: “insecure,” “undisciplined,” dilapidated structures, better described as “temporary warehouses” (O’Donovan 125).⁸²

Such racial and gender disparities and assumptions existed similarly in the north. This should not surprise considering that the function of a reformed penal system was to produce restored citizens. According to Smith, an 1843 investigation at Philadelphia’s Eastern State Penitentiary led physician Benjamin Coates to conclude that “individuals of African variety” were “racially unfit for the rigors of solitary confinement” (*PAI* 105). Not an unlikely conclusion, really, since repentance was assumed to require, as precondition, the existence of an inviolate, private, autonomous soul—in all respects the essence of white superiority and privilege. As Smith maintains, the period’s “medico-scientific discourse about race and embodied consciousness” largely precluded blacks from experiments in penal reform (*PAI* 105).⁸³

Still, the invitation to forge a conceptual connection between the slave narrative and the prison narrative, generally, and between the garret and the cell, specifically, is born of many rhetorical and historical overlaps. Slavery and prison were and remain “mutually constitutive” ideas and institutions; sometimes “opposed, sometimes overlapping,” they represent the “extremes of captivity” that have “helped to determine meanings of freedom” throughout U.S. history (Smith, *PAI*, 18).⁸⁴ Much critical attention of late has been paid to the historical links between slavery and the present state of U.S.

mass incarceration. We know, for example, that after the Civil War imprisonment took over the functions previously fulfilled by the plantation and the slave code. Michael Meranze and others have argued, however, that the United States became an “incarceration nation” before this—at the moment slavery reached its economic and political fever pitch. Conceptually and practically, both were central, these critics say, to internal and international debates about the nature of freedom in the United States. In other words, the antebellum period saw more than an “intensification” of carceral “practice”; the era was marked equally by an “intensification” of the carceral “imagination” (Meranze xii). Hence, when Jacobs steps into the garret, burying herself in what she calls a “dismal cell,” a tiny “prison,” she draws upon understandings and ideas ripe within the antebellum imaginary (88, 97).⁸⁵

The prison and its literature took shape around the image of the cell—a metaphoric living tomb—which operated as a site of radical rebirth and redemption. Jacobs’s experience of the garret is proximate; hence she uses a similar language when discussing her confinement. Such terms are nowhere to be found in her descriptions of the jails Benny and brother William spend time in. According to the period’s “narrative of prison reform,” the convict—“separated from the world,” condemned to a tomb—“frees himself” through a “righteous discipline of penitence” (Smith, *PAI*, 84). Smith’s description of the innovative cells of New York’s Auburn State Penitentiary is notably similar to the variety and solitary experience of Jacobs’s 9x7x3 garret: “Auburn left the inmates alone and idle for long stretches of time. The cells were oblong boxes about the size of three stacked caskets: seven and a half feet long, three feet eight inches, wide,

seven feet tall. A small vent [a “loophole”] permitted air to circulate...iron grating admitted some little light” (*PAI* 82).

From the early-nineteenth century through the antebellum period, advocates of the penitentiary, people such as Benjamin Rush, Thomas Dunn, and Dorothy Dix, thought of the newly constructed penal institutions as “houses of repentance” and advocated for sometimes lengthy periods of confinement. Prisoners were to be made “subjects” of a “diagnostic and curative process” that accompanied strict regimes of control, ones which “privatized” “vision” and “punishment” (Tarter and Bell 15). We’ve already seen how a private, secretive vision is reappropriated in the garret as part of Jacobs’s reclamation of the selfhood and agency denied her as a slave and as a suffering object of sentimental contemplation. I’m suggesting that, in doing this, Jacobs draws upon the evocative potentials of prison discourse and architecture—her garret is, among many other things, a house of repentance, a tomb from which a righteous, freed, cured being might rise. To the “champions” of penal reform, solitary confinement provided “an architecture of reflection”—the “first step toward repentance” (Smith, *PAI*, 3). Jacobs, as shown, reverses this, turning her self-reflecting eye onto the systems of power that perpetually confine her. However, to understand the full subversive quality of the garret we need to move beyond Jacobs’s reappropriation of the gaze—which, while important, is often the focus of scholarly critiques of the garret’s power—and consider, additionally, the relationship between understandings of solitary confinement in the period and the making of modern citizen-subjectivity. The redeemed convict—lost but found, dead yet alive, occupies, as Smith has argued, the crux of America’s Enlightenment and its Romantic imagination. By stepping into the prison’s narrative of resurrection, Jacobs performs one

of society's founding political myths, revealing its promises—citizen-subjectivity, moral autonomy, inviolate freedom—to be transferable across racial and gender lines and also universally attainable. Hence, Jacobs learns to be “thankful for” and even “to love,” what she calls “my little cell” because it is, in her words, “the price [she] has to pay” for the “redemption of [her] children” and also for “the forgiveness of [her] sins” (142).

Brown pays an equally paradoxical price for his freedom. Folded into the fetal position and tossed about, Brown's dark, cramped, captivity evokes not only the womb—and hence conceptions of rebirth already discussed—but also the watery Middle Passage, an occurrence Brown did not experience first-hand, but which he certainly knew about. It is, according to Newman, the “second major trope” (second to the resurrection narrative) of Brown's trajectory from captivity to freedom, one “transformed to the point reversal” (xxx). In the Middle Passage, African men, women, and children were converted into non-human products, into chattel for the commodity market. The process of making “men-into-merchandise” was emblemized by the cramped confines of the slave ship—humans “pressed into enclosures little more than living tombs” so as to maximize numbers and profits (Wolff 24).

Wolff maintains that Brown understood the “dimensions” of the Middle Passage's many “privations,” the “bitter paradoxes of its transformations” (27). As has been said of Jacobs, Wolff attests that Brown *chooses* his ironic mode of escape with a “keen eye for the economies of space,” literally and figuratively (27). The traffic of human bodies was, indeed, on Brown's mind as he worked on his second narrative. In its preface he writes, “I feel impelled...from the recent experience I have had...to add yet one other testimony of protest against...the traffic in human beings...the cruelties, both bodily and mental, to

which men in the condition of slaves are continually subjected...” (41). Though Brown’s contemporaries as well as present-day scholars such as Wolff interpret Brown’s notable burst into song as a euphoric response to his safe arrival, it is also possible to read the gesture as an ironic reprisal of a joyless transatlantic ceremony called “Dancing the Slaves.” Slave traders along the Middle Passage feared that the cramped, filthy quarters would breed costly physical and psychological diseases such as Scurvy and “fixed melancholy.”⁸⁶ As prevention, a ritual of “‘airing’ of the cargo” was routinely performed. Slaves in various states of rage and profound apathy would be “forced to sing” (Wolff 25).⁸⁷ Wolff describes the scene as tortured: “Briefly released from their unkempt cages, [slaves] raised doleful complaints of hunger, fear, and the anguish of captivity” (25).

Brown’s shipping crate, in its hazards and miseries, is analogous to an African slave vessel. Still, as Wolff has said, Brown converts “shipping” and extreme captivity into its opposite (much like Jacobs does with the garret)—into “a blueprint for freedom” and personhood (27). Legally his master’s property, Brown comes to be “‘portable’ property” and hence shippable (Wolff 27). As a parcel of dry goods, he is free to move from Baltimore to Philadelphia, from slavery to independence. In his discussion of the “ruse of objectification,” Freeburg has argued that masters were always unable to “fully transform humans into objects” (95). No doubt the case, Brown’s epitomization of slavery’s most egregious logic, his finishing of his master’s work, suggests an ironic purchase in captivity and commodification. The language of commodity—of value, price, and merchandise—organizes much of Brown’s second narrative. “Having satisfied myself of the *value* of freedom,” he writes, “I resolved to *purchase* it whatever should be the *price*” (42).

Brown achieves a kind freedom and mobility as an object—as a box—that is denied to him as a man—as the slave, Henry Brown. Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has traced this trope in a number of Atlantic world texts.⁸⁸ Similarly, the black abolitionist William Still included within his 1872 collection, *The Underground Railroad*, sundry tales of slaves performing *thing-ness*, of becoming part and parcel of boxes, trains, plants, or trees.⁸⁹ Forgoing “human-ness” for commodity-agency is troubling, to be sure. Politically, it seems to foreclose the possibility, in Dillon’s words, of “mobilizing justice claims in the name of human rights,” ones central to liberalism (173). However, if we believe Hartman (Smith makes similar suggestions), the recognition of the humanity of the slave, especially within anti-slavery culture, rather than “assuring liberty” and the “endowments of man”—“conscience, sentiment, and reason”—worked, instead, to “tether, bind, and oppress,” to yoke black freedom to new instantiations of racial hierarchy (5). Given this, slaves may well have done better, as Dillon suggests, “transforming themselves into things” (or in Jacobs’s case into a ghostly-convict) as opposed to “seeking” the legal and moral privileges of “officially franchised subjects” (173).

The dividing line between subjects and objects is central to notions of human sovereignty in liberal thought and in the history of Western Enlightenment. By blending the dividing line, by not only using but by becoming a box—by taking on the object’s inconspicuousness and portability—Brown participates in traditions of slave resistance rooted in African rituals, beliefs, and practices, systems like Obi, for example, that center on the slipperiness between animate and inanimate things.⁹⁰ The *boxing* of Brown depicts—at the same time as it subverts—slavery’s routine of objectification, but it also

contains a myriad of other social possibilities including ones that challenge liberal notions of what it means to be human. In emancipating himself by becoming a box, Brown does more than trick powerful people and manipulate newly expanded and highly regarded institutions like the U.S. postal system; he calls into question the concepts of human personhood enabling the distinctions between free and unfree. According to Freeburg, Brown interpreted his master's ability to "sell, purchase, and reorganize," hence to convert, humans into commodity property as "his master's formidable capacity" (108). Brown reappropriates this power when he seizes the ability to merge indiscriminately with an inanimate object. His box represents, then, an "alternative regime of being" that while not sustainable is still transformative and radical (Dillon 173).

In "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," Hortense Spillers conceives of Jacobs's garret as an action, a verb.⁹¹ Her compelling account of "garretting" is like my analysis of "boxing."⁹² For Spillers, Jacobs's life in the garret signals the terrain of black women's histories—which, in Spillers's words, exist in "not-quite spaces"—or, as Jacobs says of her garret, in "the last place they thought of" (475). Garretting, according to Spillers and McKittrick, is what black women "bring to bear" as marked, illegitimate, dominated people on "geographic negations" and on the processes of negotiating full humanity (McKittrick 62). Ultimately, for Spillers, Green-Barteet, and McKittrick, the meaningfulness of the garret (like that of the box) lies in its paradoxical opening up of the "symbolic imaginative" and in its subsequent unleashing of a political spatial force that extends beyond racial captivity and into the heart of white, patriarchal logic and power.⁶² What is more, the garret's contradictory blend of disabling bodily pain

and dismantling psychic confusion and human empowerment, emancipation, and self-fashioning tells a story of freedom's conundrum—especially as this relates to individuals caught at one of freedom's most harrowing junctures. Freedom is tied, these architectures seem to say, to the desperate perimeters and death logics of confounding captivity.

Notes

1. My turn to slave narratives at this point in the project derives from what Merish has called the genre's "emphasis on the discursive scripting of the self" and also the genre's "charting" of "the discursive making...of 'free' subjectivity" (192). There are two versions of Henry "Box" Brown's narrative: the first was published in 1849 and is credited to the authorship of Charles Stearns. The second was published two years later in England (Manchester: Lee and Glynn, 1851). All quoted citations are from the 1851 edition (ed. John Ernest, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).
2. Chaney is drawing here on the work of William L. Andrews (*To Tell a Free Story*. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1988), notably Andrews's method of reading slave narratives. In numerous texts interrogated for my project, "vision"—by which I mean the provocative employment of an imperial or subversive gaze—emerges as an aesthetic representation and psychological means of attaining power and establishing personhood.
3. This chapter, its preoccupations and forms of critical reading, is deeply indebted to the work and interpretive perspective of Hartman, whom I quote in the sentence. In *Scenes of Subjection*, Hartman's analyzes slave literature and writing

for the socially constructed black subject within: resisting, self-making, and re-imagining freedom.

4. I will be drawing from three texts by Smith, see bibliography. For this chapter's in-text citations, and heretofore, I will use the following identifications: *PAI* (Prison and the American Imagination), "HHF" ("Harry Hawser's Fate: Eastern State Penitentiary and the Birth of Prison Literature"), and *Oracle* (*The Oracle and the Curse: A Poetics of Justice from the Revolution to the Civil War*).
5. It is worth noting that Jacobs wrote this narrative between the years 1853 and 1857, when both the Dred Scott Decision and Fugitive Slave Act were decided. For more, see Fleischner, 11.
6. For more on Child's influences as editor, see Fleischner, 18-20.
7. See Chaney, 268.
8. See Nudelman, 941.
9. My claim can be said to respond to the provocative question, raised somewhat rhetorically by Chaney: "What systems of ideological transfer take place when pledges of sympathy and sentiment are balanced against the white female employer's expectation of black female servants?" See 268. See also Merish, 194, for further discussion of Jacobs's "complex" and "ingenious" exploitation of the racial limits of gendered abolitionist sentimentality.
10. I draw here from Smith's work on the imaginative potentials of the prison cell in the antebellum period. See *PAI*, 88.
11. I am borrowing heavily here from Chaney's language and his interpretive approach to an anonymous daguerreotype assumed to be of Jacobs's quadron

daughter, Louisa. The image is part of the personal property of Fanny Fern and is kept with the author's papers at Smith College. Jacobs's garret, in its architectural interstitiality, in its many meanings and possibilities is a material object that lends itself to the ways of seeing Chaney advocates and models in his essay.

12. See Smith, *PAI*, 88. Smith identifies this preoccupation as “the sound and fury of the age.” As regards the term “choosing”: After describing her hiding place in the most grueling of terms—hot, cramped, dark, and rat-infested, Jacobs confesses to “choosing this” over her “lot as a slave.” Green-Barteet argues that Jacobs’s “awareness” of the paradoxical power that inheres to the garret space, its “interstitial qualities” is made evident by the fact of her calling it “The Loophole of Retreat” (63). Freeburg too uses this language, saying Jacobs “chooses it” when speaking of her symbolically powerful “place of enclosure” (107).
13. Smith notes that slaves could neither be “deprived of liberty” nor “restored to citizenship,” being wholly outside the law and the ideological bounds of full humanity (*PAI* 104).
14. My interest in the evocative potentials of the garret space and what this space affords Jacobs vis-à-vis freedom, though rooted in contemporary literary theory, should not be confused with Jacobs’s ideas about freedom and captivity or emancipation and slavery for that matter. Jacobs did not write (nor would she likely have thought) of the garret as a place of freedom. She did not use this language. Freedom meant different things to Jacobs than it does for me in this project. While I am drawing upon her text, language, and spatial experience, I am not assigning this chapter’s conclusions to her.

15. For a full discussion, see Greeson, *Our South*, 115-140. Greeson makes a similar and earlier claim in “Mysteries and Misereries,” 278.
16. Sekora identifies “suit[ing] the purposes of a white group or institution” as one of three “distinguishing characteristics” of the slave narrative genre (510). See also Sekora’s discussion of the policing of language and the development of the racist imaginary, 485, which helps to affirm how institutions (slavery as well as abolition) were kinds of literary affairs. For more discussion, see Greeson (both texts); see also Ernest, “Introduction.”
17. Ernest notes that Brown’s escape was understood immediately and pervasively as a “distinctly religious event.” See “Introduction,” 19.
18. For excerpts of his reviews and treatment in the abolitionist press, see Brown, Appendix B, 123-174.
19. See Alexander, 310. For more on lithograph, see Cutter.
20. In his review of Jeffrey Ruggles’s book, Egerton notes the “vulgar” ways Brown exploited his slave experience as showman (144).
21. Hartman locates forms of racial violence and domination within the genre’s recognition of humanity and in its invocation of rights. See 6. See also Greeson and Sekora. See Ernest, “Introduction,” 22-23.
22. See Sekora, 493.
23. See Smith, *Oracle*, for an expanded view of the networks and “dramas,” legal and discursive, the “infrastructures” that decided, never finally, who had a “right to speak before the people” (xii).

24. For a fuller discussion, see Nudelman, 940. See also Hartman, 107. Green-Bartee notes that the ideologies of true womanhood that excluded Jacobs, the very ones the black author critiqued, also influenced her view of womanhood. For more, see 59.
25. See Greeson, “Mysteries and Miseries,” 277-278. Greeson is interested in the historical moment when sexual degradation becomes an important rhetorical and ideological means by which the liberal north constructs the slave south.
26. See Green-Bartee, 59, for a consideration of black women writers within a discursive tradition that marked them as morally and spiritually inferior. See also Greeson, *Our South*, 207-223, and “Mysteries and Miseries.”
27. Greeson reads Jacobs’s choice to include, as epigraph of *Incidents*, an excerpt from Grimké’s work as an attempt (albeit a failed one) to do just this, to inaugurate such a political alliance. See, *Our South*, 214-215. For further discussion, see also Merish, 208-209.
28. Sekora lists this as the third of the genre’s “distinguishing characteristics;” see 510.
29. See also Sekora, 484. Sekora draws upon Martha K. Cobb to suggest an important function of first person narration in slave writing.
30. Ernest is drawing from the work of Dwight McBride. See “Traumatic Theology,” 19.
31. See Wolff, 30-31. “Redeemed Chattel” was a phrase made common by William Lloyd Garrison—a form of “condescension” that infuriated blacks in the movement.

32. See also Wolff and Ruggles.
33. Smith is writing in this section of his book about a broader public sphere within nineteenth-century law. Smith takes on slavery and its narratives in his evaluation of forms of domination (for him, the “oracle”) and protest (the “curse”).
34. See Smith, *Oracle*, 188.
35. For more discussion of this rhetoric, see Greeson’s work on the convergence of the slave narrative with ultraist discourse of urban reform. See “Mysteries and Miseries” and also *Our South*, 115-140.
36. See Hartman, 101-112. See Nudelman, 950 and 954. See Smith, *Oracle*, 184-194. See Greeson, *Our South*, 104. See “Mysteries and Miseries,” 278 and 280. Greeson traces the trope of the fallen woman from the early 1830’s and the rise of anti-prostitution reform (actually it begins much earlier, in the eighteenth-century epistolary novel) to its reemergence in the “intimately connected” slave narrative and urban gothic forms at mid-century (278).
37. See Nudelman, 954.
38. Nudelman also notes that, having been violated, Jacobs cannot utilize the trope of seduction in its conventional ways. She cannot claim, for example, the full sympathy that is afforded the innocent.
39. See Hartman, 8-9.
40. Hartman contrasts Jacobs’s use of the term “deliberate calculation” with the phrase “free choice,” suggesting the former “illuminates the immeasurability of [true] consent” for those with chattel status. Still, *Incidents* positions, as Hartman agrees, Jacobs’s operation outside of gendered sentimental conventionality (of

which her deliberative calculations with Sands are evidence) as a form of agency, self-decision, and self-determination. For further discussion, see 109-110.

41. For discussion, see Nudelman, 939. I am quoting Nudelman first in this sentence, before turning to Jacobs.
42. Merish is arguing here that Jacobs, through her acknowledgement of a consensual, illicit relationship with Mr. Sands, challenges white female identification with male power as the source of genteel femininity and as a barrier to more radical, interracial female solidarity.
43. I am drawing heavily here from Merish's work on the underlying constitutions of white femininity that allow for sympathy with slave women but not a "radical political identification" (207-208). For further discussion, see also Nudelman and Hartman.
44. Albeit a rhetorical one, a matter of revisionist history and fictional storytelling, highly unlikely to have occurred in the course of her life. See Fleischner, 9-10.
45. Drawing on the work of Ruggles, Robbins claims that in 1849 (only months after his successful escape), Brown declined an offer from his wife's new owner to purchase the slave woman.
46. Brown's visual exhibit titled "Mirror of Slavery" began its tour in the United States in the spring of 1850 before Brown opted to take it (panorama and show) to England. Brown displayed various panoramas in England for twenty-five years. For more, see Cutter.

47. An examination of Brown's performance work in the United States and abroad in the years following his escape is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a discussion, see Cutter.
48. See xxvii. Here McKittrick is speaking specifically about the intersections of physical space, female geography, and the body—namely the way racialized bodies, in particular, inform and delimit the possibilities of space. For more, see McKittrick 44-52. When citing McKittrick in this and other chapters, I refer, unless otherwise indicated, to *Demonic Grounds*.
49. See also Greeson, "Mysteries and Miseries," 279. Greeson troubles the logic of sexual violation further by asking how a writer like Jacobs can even speak of degradation when she is outside the law (unable, for example, to legally marry) and also beyond the pale of moral, rational personhood (assumed as such to be lascivious chattel).
50. For more on the challenges—in narrative and in space—to the hegemonic power of masters over slaves, see Freeburg's chapter "Thwarting the 'Regulated Mind': 'Benito Cereno.'"
51. There is a critical history for thinking of the garret as a paradoxical space—one of intense captivity but also evocative freedoms. For more discussion, see Spillers, Hartman, Green-Barteet, and McKittrick. McKittrick writes that inside the garret, Jacobs is both "captive and free" (42).
52. For a fuller discussion of space and power in Jacobs's narrative, see Green-Barteet, 56-57. Drawing from *The Black Feminist Reader* (Joyce James and T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, eds. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), McKittrick places

Jacobs in a long line (really as forebear) of a black feminist tradition, which manifest thought “in the margins” or “implicitly underpinned” by spatial politics (53-54).

53. See also McKittrick, 41-44. See also Spillers, 487-480.

54. See 56. Green-Barteet is expanding a theory about certain space—about its “interstitial character”—from the work of political scientist Margaret E. Farrar.

55. See also Green-Barteet, 57.

56. For more discussion, see Green-Barteet, 63.

57. See McKittrick, 42.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. I refer to an architectural model for the modern penitentiary designed by English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century. The concept, famously critiqued by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, allowed for the constant surveillance of all prisoners by a single watchman. The prisoners, according to plan, were not able to know when they were being observed, and hence lived as if surveillance was constant.

61. For a Foucaultian reading of the visual optics that inhere to the garret space and which are manipulated by Jacobs, see Green-Barteet, 64. See also Green-Barteet, n57.

62. For more, see Green-Barteet, 64.

63. McKittrick maintains that in seeing the garret as a “loophole of retreat,” as imprisonment instead of as slavery, Jacobs uses the available “landscape” and its

“architectures” to name the complicated and paradoxical natures of black female space. For more, see 41.

64. See Orlando Patterson for a full illumination of the process of “social death” in Western culture. For more recent contextualization, see Hartman, Dillon, Freeburg, and Wolff.

65. For more, see Freeburg, 96-97 and 107-110. I quote here from Freeburg’s discussion of “Benito Cereno,” which I will use again in chapter four. Freeburg extends his analysis of absolute power—of its fantasy and possibility—through his discussions of Melville, Jacobs, Douglass, and “Box” Brown.

66. Later in Jacobs’s life, in her private letters about domestic service work, we find evidence of an unmet need for solitude, quiet, and privacy. In these letters, Jacobs casts privacy as a privilege—one afforded her mistress by Jacobs’s labor. For Jacobs, privacy and solitude are revealed as bound to the fullness of personhood, consciousness, and rationality. She talks of the “dizzying effect” of constant service-work and how perpetual interruption “thwarts self-consciousness.” Jacobs’s letters divulge the way “enclosed scenes” and private moments (those she left behind in the garret) make possible the insularity that modern subjectivity, modern thinking and feeling (especially in a Romantic sense), mandate. See Chaney, 273-274.

67. See Robbins, 5.

68. See Robbins, 6.

69. See Freeburg, 109.

70. Ibid.

71. For a list, see Robbins, 5.
72. Ibid.
73. I am quoting from McKittrick's summary, 40.
74. See also Hartman, 9, who takes note of *Incidents* as highly "instructive" regarding issues of freedom and its bonds to captivity. Incarceration in the garret, though a "space of freedom" as much as it is "a space of captivity" (to quote Hartman, page 9) also demonstrates, perhaps above all, Jacobs's limited range of choices.
75. See Tarter and Bell. See also O'Donovan.
76. For more on the motif of testimony in Jacobs's narrative, see Smith, *Oracle*, 187-188.
77. Fleischner considers Jacobs's Episcopal faith and life in terms of the elitist status of the minority Protestant sect; see 13-14. She claims Jacobs locates "happiness" and "grace" in quiet satisfactions—in the solitude, say, of prayer and reflection. Though markedly different from Baptist and other denominations associated with penal reform, her view of faith—redemptive and personal—fits in this tradition.
78. Recent work on early prison writing has shown that it too managed to subvert and critique the liberal progressive trends it was employed to advance. See Smith, "HHF."
79. Smith's discussion of the relationship between prison-poet Harry Hawser (pseudonym for convict George Rynor) and Editor Joseph Ashead is strikingly analogous to the personal and professional ties that bind Jacobs and Child. See "HHF," 245-255.

80. Concomitant with the inception and emergence of the modern penitentiary was a literature capable of coextending prison's mandates, practices, beliefs, and also subverting and challenging these. See Smith, "HHF." While Smith is speaking narrowly of the prisoner experience and prison writing in his essay, I am extending his analysis to *Incidents* and to the fugitive. Smith's work in *PAI* and *Oracle* invites just such intra-textual readings.

81. See n13.

82. See Tarter and Bell, page 24. I've been describing the southern system of jailing slaves as brutal, inhumane, violent, and dirty—closely aligned, too, with the most egregious displays of southern state power. Still, as O'Donovan has shown, communal jails of the antebellum south afforded slaves unique opportunities for contact and community. Such occasions were "formative," as Tarter and Bell say, providing "conduits" for resistance and empowerment (24). For a fuller discussion, see O'Donovan. Though beyond the scope of this chapter, the garret—as a site of punishment—does indeed share some of these more subversive elements of the southern jail experience.

83. Smith is thinking especially here about early nineteenth-century experiments in solitary confinement. See also Wolff's point about "radical taxonomic distortions," 31.

84. See Smith, *PAI*. See Meranze, xii. See Williams, 1-16. See Tarter and Bell. For a discussion of their contemporary concomitances, see Davis, *APO*. See also Alexander.

85. Actually, by the eve of the Civil War, an important shift toward contractual penal servitude and away from reformatory isolation was underway in the expanding penitentiary system. See Tarter and Bell, 21. Already a failed experiment of sorts, penal reform of the earlier antebellum period and rhetorics still held great cultural currency.
86. See Wolff, 25.
87. See also Rediker, 7.
88. See Dillon, 173.
89. See Ernest, "Introduction," 3-4.
90. For further discussion, see Dillon. See also Cutter on Brown's knowledge and employment of forms of African spirituality and "magic."
91. See McKittrick, 62.
92. See Spillers, 475. For further analysis of Spillers's work, see McKittrick, 61-62.
93. See McKittrick on Spillers, 62.

Chapter Three

“The Things and Thoughts of Time”: Narrative Capture and the Spatiotemporal Dimensions of Freedom in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher”

“It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the Beauty before us—but a wild effort to reach the Beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle, by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of Time, to attain a portion of that Loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain to eternity alone.”¹

—Edgar Allan Poe, “The Poetic Principle”

Thus far, I’ve has considered antebellum writing that foregrounds architectures of extreme captivity, representing these spaces and their enigmatic logics as essential to the imaginative work of freedom and to the construction of liberal personhood. My concerns have been largely sociohistorical: the juxtaposition of freedom and captivity, while never truly binary, framed the antebellum cultural imaginary, organizing its political positions and policies, legal and social statuses, economic possibilities, and geopolitical relations. It has been my claim that the period’s literature does more than provide a diagnostic accounting of this society; rather, literature’s requirements—narrative structure, rhetorical purpose, characterization, and certain conditions of space and time— have important extraliterary correlatives. In chapter one, I considered the problem of constituting a believably autonomous person, an individual with an innate interior to be, for all intense and purpose, the problem of the novel—a fiction dependent upon modern

institutional regimes and practices. In chapter two, I extended this discussion to the slave narrative form, revealing how its pressures and conventions worked to maintain and subvert the boundaries of personhood in the precarious slave-holding republic.

While not abandoning these concerns, this chapter will take a more formalist approach. Treating narrative as a critical site of captivity, it will interrogate the way literature in its complex spatiotemporal dimensions works to negotiate the formal properties of freedom. It will ask how freedom is constituted by time and space, how it is expressed or experienced as a formal aesthetic phenomenon. Matters of space and time figured prominently in the architectures and ideologies of many nineteenth-century institutions, especially those at the crux of this project— the factory, prison, plantation, and home— as well as to developing conceptions of nationhood and citizenship. Edgar Allan Poe, a formalist in his own right, was keenly aware of the psychosocial intersection of time/space/nation/and person that shaped his age. Like many of his Romantic contemporaries, he turned brevity of form into a metaphor for imprisonment, capture, and enclosure. Poe's obsession with the trope of captivity and with architectures of extreme bondage makes him a critical figure in the literary archive I am interpreting.

Poe belonged to a generation of authors preoccupied with conflicting meanings of extreme isolation and with the coextensive formulation of the artist-subject.² Poe's concerns were not only with the textual, material, and affective structures that bind characters (and readers for that matter) but also with those that free them—literally in the form of escape and transcendentally as euphoria or excitement. For Poe, freedom *is* transcendence, the ability of the poetic soul to escape the confines of the world, of the body, and of reality in a dream-like state— and it is, according to Richard Wilbur, the

“fundamental plot” of his oeuvre (103). Inextricably bound to this poetic ambition are persistent formal and thematic motifs, ones which show up in story after story: captivity, enclosure, circumscription, remoteness, solitude.³ As Wilbur points out, when we encounter one of Poe’s characters “in a remote valley or a claustal room, we encounter one in the process of dreaming his way out of the world” (104). Hence, Poe’s aesthetic vision partakes of the Romantic myth of solitude, the offering of freedom to the poetic self in captivity that inspired Emerson, Hawthorne, Dickinson, and Thoreau.⁴

In “The Poetic Principle,” Poe grounds his visionary “excitement” and transcendent sublime—the pursuit of the “elevation of the soul”—in artistic stricture, in the confines of literary form, and in temporal brevity:

I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase, ‘a long poem,’ is simply a flat contradiction in terms. I need scarcely to observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement....That degree of excitement that which would entitle a poem to be so called at all, cannot be sustained through a composition of any great length. 449

Central to Poe’s aesthetic is the mystical power of spatiotemporal limits: limits on the length of a sentence, the length of a composition, the length a reader’s attention span. Poe utilized the temporality of short forms, their concentrated physical nature and reliance on pacing to experiment with temporal disorder—with a tightening and encircling of linear, narrative time—vital, in his view, to the “freeing” of the poetic soul. Returning to the passage that opens this chapter, we see that, for Poe, the artist attains “the Beauty

above”—a fractured and enthusiastic sublime—by conquering “the multiform combinations...of time.” It is no logical, reserved affair, but rather a “wild effort,” a frenzied, instinctive yearning, likened to that of “the moth for the star.” The artist “struggles,” Poe says, against “the things and thoughts of time,” against all rational worldly affairs and logics to attain his singular, intuitive purpose—the “elevation of the soul.” In the process, the artist reconstitutes time and space, transforming reality into an inhabitable dreamscape of his imagination. The “Fall of the House of Usher” is paradigmatic: the images and events in the tale are “related” as events are related in dreams, “impelled,” more or less, by “unconscious” and uncanny “forces” rather than by the more “normal” terms of “order,” “sequence,” space, and time that organize our modern, waking lives (Hanson 26).⁵

Implicated in the claims of this chapter is a theory of modernity and of its impact on time and literature, one that is well-documented and frequently revisited. “Modern time,” as it’s often called, is said to condense opposing temporalities into a single, chronological, measurable, and shared phenomenon. Coextensive with the emergence of market culture, the development of national communication and transportation systems, and hierarchal economic entrenchments, the cultural reorganization of time in the nineteenth century conflated and realigned national identity and individuated life experience with an accelerated tempo and a forward-thrust, “displacing,” as Clayton Marsh says, older, “pre-industrial,” “seasonal,” and “divinely-ordered” models of time (260). This is the standard account, one which arguably holds despite a variety of compelling interventions.

Lloyd Pratt has argued that literature “compounded” as it “documented” the temporal conflicts underpinning this consolidation, particularly as it pertained to US national and racial identity (3). American writers of the nineteenth century began “self-consciously,” Pratt says, to “quest after a future” in which privileged identities could reign supreme (3). Pratt’s foundational reframing of certain literary genres as “complex archival forms” and as “agents” in American modernization overlooks Poe, specifically, and the short story altogether (14). This chapter extends Pratt’s analysis by insisting on Poe’s centrality in the study of the period’s temporal repertoire. The mystical, dream-like pursuit of elevation and excitement running through Poe’s aesthetic practice turns out to be constituted by a multifaceted negotiation of complex and unequal orders of time.⁶

Engaging heavily with vital scholarship of past decades, namely the work of Richard Wilbur and Maurice Beebe, this chapter examines Poe’s aesthetic formalization of free-agency, of the outer bounds of human consciousness, and of the temporal conditions fracturing and delimiting the transcendent dream of his Romantic age. Freedom, as we’ll see, manifests in the tale as spatiotemporal narrative control, as the ability to move in time and at will between and through the language and grammar of real and dream states. The narrator’s mastery and unfettered agency rests in his exceptional ability to transcend spatiotemporal spheres, persevering and surviving encounters with the chaotic extremes of time, space, and form. I will begin with an examination of the clash of spatiotemporal orders in “The Fall of the House of Usher”—one which occurs at the chronotopic level of the text—before turning its attention to a consideration of artistic autonomy and to a paradox of freedom that “Usher” illuminates. Throughout the chapter,

careful consideration will be paid to Poe's utilization of the unique properties that inhere in the short story form as he maps key conditions of his aesthetic ideal.

The Castle and the Road: Keeping time in "Usher"

"The Fall of the House of Usher" provides a concentrated example of the capacity of mutually exclusive temporal arrangements to coexist. What we find in the tale is not the supplanting of one order of time (modern, chronological, logical) for another (circular, episodic, uncanny), but rather the clash and clamor of two profound temporal experiences.⁷ This disorienting experience of time structures much of Poe's work, leading Cindy Weinstein to call the author's simultaneous and continual undercutting of conventional time in narrative "Poe-time" (85). In "The Fall of the House of Usher," temporal descent into chaos, or Poe-time, occurs at the juncture of two historically symbolic figurations, chronotopes, in Western literature: the castle and the road. It is worth invoking the idea of chronotope because Mikhail Bakhtin's model for imagining the space/time nexus in narrative remains one of the most fruitful but also because Bakhtin recognized the castle and the road as crucial, oft-repeated symbols for making time "visible" and "palpable" (250). Like Poe, Bakhtin drew upon properties of mathematics and science to give language and structure to counterintuitive concepts he recognized within artistic forms.⁸ The castle and the road, materializations for Bakhtin of time in space, map onto Poe's gothic tale in compelling ways, acting as literary equivalents of clocks, aesthetic timepieces marking specific and disparate registers.

For Bakhtin, "road" as chronotope signifies modernity: it is associated with "encounter," with modern literary form, and with democratization (243). "On the road,"

Bakhtin writes, “the spatial and temporal paths of the most varied people—representatives of all social classes, estates, religions, nationalities, ages—intersect” (243). The road, Bakhtin explains, fuses time and space; it gives time parameters within which to flow. This flow is fundamentally linear, progressive, advancing. The temporality of the road is one of past, present, future, in which the future is privileged.

The opening sentence of “The Fall of the House of Usher,” with its image of a traveler on horseback “passing” quickly through a “dreary tract of country,” initiates just such an inexorable forward momentum, one which operates as the tale’s principal time signature, marking a steady advancing cadence (397). The tract (which extends to the causeway, becoming the road into and out of the house) is not exactly a road by conventional standards, and yet, arguably, it functions as such. In chronotopic terms, it “emblemizes,” making “visible” and “palpable,” the spatiotemporal markers of modernity Bakhtin recognized. The tract is the site at which readers—an ever-changing, multiplicitous, incessantly contemporary lot—“encounter,” to use Bakhtin’s word, the storyteller, tacitly joining in the narrative ride. A chronotope within a chronotope, the tract can be said to take on the spatiotemporal terms of the sentence in which it, as word and idea, is contained: narrow, chronological, and advancing. The momentum of horse and rider, of narrative progression, of road and tract and causeway persists—urgent, chronological, passing—once inside the house. Readers accompany the narrator through “many solemn hours,” over “several days,” in “rapid increase” of terror and anticipation, roaming “chamber to chamber” with “hurried-step,” “passing” “on the way” with “certain degree” to the “seventh or eighth day,” when the “hours,” “waning and waning away,”

unleash a “rushing gust” of horror—from which we “flee aghast” (405, 404, 399, 410, 412, 400, 411, 416, 417).

The forward-inclining temporal language of the road does much to give a recognizable structure, a route into, through, and out of “Usher’s” alternative reality. It makes occupying the story world possible, for narrator and readers alike. In his theory of space, time, and narrative, Richard Gerrig draws upon the metaphor of transportation, key to modern literature and bound with the logics of the road, to characterize the navigational work fiction requires. With this in mind, the narrator’s preoccupation with marking time, with maintaining his journey’s temporal thrust can be said to indicate the critical task at hand (particularly precarious in his case): to enter and exit, to encounter and part ways, to make it through and “pass beyond” the circling, spiraling, enclosing, uncanny world of the dream.

Nearly every other sentence in “The Fall of the House of Usher” is punctuated by the indices of time. Strung together, the sentences construct a narrative that is thematically and textually about the movement through space in time. Still, the task is a dizzying one; for in Poe’s gothic imaginary one’s relation to time can feel incoherent. Like so many of Poe’s landscapes, the Usher house is removed in space and fixed in what seems to be an unchanging time. The narrative tension arises from the “encounter”—the clash—of modernity, of a one-way history, of the course of an individuated life, with this spatiotemporal netherworld. The physical and psychological impact on the narrator is palpable. He stops dead in his tracks; an “insufferable gloom pervade[s] his spirit” (397). The narrator is “unnerved” by his “contemplation” of the gloomy, sentient, castle-house (397). He “pauses” in time and space in order “to think,” “fall[ing] back,” on

“unsatisfactory conclusions” (397-398). “Falling back” here refers to both a mental process (the narrator struggles to accommodate the fantastic sight of the house with preconceived ideas of his former friend) and to the effect of the collision between road-time and castle-time. It metaphorically knocks him back.

In reality the “desolate” and “terrible” house of Usher is more a “family mansion” than it is a true castle; even so, a correspondence between the two is developed thematically (397-398). The narrator calls the “real aspect” of the “building,” its “principal feature,” “excessive antiquity”—the gothic architecture, vaults and dungeons, protective tarn all work to bring the castle to mind (400). Moreover, the Usher mansion’s mirror within the tale’s embedded poem is a palace (a haunted one) making aristocracy (kings, queens, castles) the tie that binds, that incorporates (in body, mind, and spirit) each captive monarch-figure to his diseased estate. In chronotopic terms, more importantly, the house of Usher encapsulates time and space in a way that is formally constitutive within the tale and much like Bakhtin’s account of castle-time. According to Bakhtin, the castle, as artistic chronotope, is “saturated through and through” with a frozen, recursive, repetitive temporality that stands resolute and starkly opposed to the forward-rush of the road (246). Ahistorical in its specificities, the gothic castle, as literary architecture, permanently orients toward an unchanging and enigmatic past.¹⁰

On the one hand, the tale of Roderick Usher, of embodied “family evil,” of “constitutional” madness, “incoherence,” “inconsistency” of the autumnal, violent rise (the return from the dead) of his buried-alive sister, and of the grandiose fall of their house, is always already a sub-plot, a horror tale within an ostensibly master narrative of flight and futurity (402). Castle-time, a time of circularity, of endless repetitions, of

return, is in this way subsumed by the modern time—ordered, sequential, knowable, passing-away—of the road. Given the fact that the castle is swallowed into the tarn while the narrator escapes in an urgent rush along the road, it might seem that Poe’s tale affirms something of the unequal coeval of temporal orders. And yet, in considering the spatiotemporal logics of the castle—which in their metaphysical relations are nearly one in the same as the family captive within and as the tale itself—we discover a chronotopic force that organizes time and space much like a series of Russian nesting dolls: endless iterations mirroring, capturing, splitting, erupting, and finally collapsing on one another.

“The Fall of the House of Usher” is, in many senses, a trauma narrative. The castle serves as fitting metaphor because the building, as chronotope, exemplifies the arresting, recursive, inescapability of the time of trauma. What Bakhtin thinks of as ahistorical, pre-modern, before-time, contemporary trauma theorists call “the still-present past” of very modern impossibility.¹¹ With this in mind, the storyteller cannot be assumed to have escaped at all; rather, his telling and retelling (ostensibly for perpetuity) signifies the repetitive nature of trauma and the “persistent need to tell” that theorists and clinicians associate with enigmatic suffering (Laub 63).¹² We might think of the narrator as trapped within the tale, forced to relive it again and again, participating in this way in the nightmare’s textual and thematic circularity. A degree of the narrator’s anxiety vis-à-vis storytelling is visible in his self-conscious, spontaneous recall, his incantatory recitation, of Poe’s previously published poem, “The Haunted Palace.”¹³ As lyrical eruption and thematic double, the poem splits (quite literally) and interrupts the sequential, ordered progression of the larger prose story, replicating the disorienting split

in Usher's mind, the split in the soon-to-collapse castle architecture, and the split (psychic, spatial, and temporal) of trauma.

The narrator's push to drive the action forward, to progress through the mystery and flee the trauma, is evident in both form (in the tale's temporal chronology) and content (in its theme of escape). Interrupting this advance to, in, and through the house are "startling," "awe"-producing, and "horrifying" occasions that "arrest attention" (evoking traumatic effect)—and textual disruptions too, uncanny interjections of, for example, the word "now" (401, 402, 405). Recalling his initial reunion with Usher, the narrator exclaims, "The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous luster of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me" (401). "Now," I'd argue, has virtually no function in this sentence but to announce a dislocating, disturbing temporality that presents as spatial marker and as disruptor to the meaning-producing structure of modern narrative time—a time of futurity and progress, of predictable advancement, of a "now" that ought to pass away.¹⁴

Poe's language, his choice of words, connotes distinctive passages of time. What may be less obvious when extracted is that Poe's temporal lexicon frequently elongates sentences. Often his terms serve no other purpose.¹⁵ Repetitions of "at length," "afterward," "of late," "at times," "at intervals," and "now" pose, consequently, a challenge to the brevity that is his aesthetic ideal (397, 412, 399, 411, 403, 398).¹⁶ The passage of time—as an extending, reaching, lengthening force—is revealed, at the textual level, to be an unrelenting and constant threat. In other words, language figures as one battleground upon which castle-time and road-time compete. The text's forward-inclining, anticipatory language of sequential chronology (words operating as

chronotopic mirrors of the road) are challenged by other words—words like “arresting,” “startling,” “pausing” “entombing”—that appear repeatedly, shoring up the tale’s aesthetic architecture, creating a world of extreme physical and psychological captivity (405, 401, 411, 407). William E. Engel traces a similar *castle-linguistic* in Poe’s poem “The Coliseum,” offering as example words that appear in both the prose and poetry of “Usher.”¹⁷ Though Engel’s interest is in the mnemonics of ruin, in Poe’s timeless, ancient architectures, and in his poetic sublime, he links Poe’s language of mournful, never-ending remembrance to the impossibility of forgetfulness, improvement, and triumph.¹⁸ In all of its manifestations (psychological, linguistic, poetic), Poe’s castle-aesthetic negates past, present, and future, troubling the modern project with its aporia—its terrifying, mesmerizing “now” that will not recede or advance—and also with its inevitable futility.

In addition to emblemizing disruptions and splits, repeats and returns, which include endless corporal reincarnations of an unchanging patrimony (in “Usher” we learn of the “undeviating transmission from sire to son” over the “long lapse of centuries”), castle-time is a time of kingly reigns, of architectural ruin, and hence of rise and fall—of a narrative trajectory that forecloses the possibility of futurity as perpetual progress (399). Both “phantasmagoric” castles in “Usher,” the “discolored” fungi-laden gothic edifice that Roderick and Madeline inhabit and the “red-litten,” demon-ridden haunted Palace of the tale’s poem represent denouement as decay and futurity as eventual destruction (400, 407). They oppose, in this way, a one-way advancing history—the logic of the road—that is essential to modernity and its ideological projects. Moreover, they exemplify the

broader meditation on the arc of empires and the “vanity of all human striving” that Engel has identified in Poe’s body of work.¹⁹

Still, Poe’s preoccupation with decay as a physical and temporal condition is related to his artistic ambition—to the “elevation of the soul.”²⁰ “The Fall of the House of Usher,” while nightmarish, is also a “triumphant account,” as a later section will reveal, evidence of the possibility that the artist can break free from the rational physical world and escape—if but briefly—to a “realm of unfettered vision” (Wilbur 100). To understand this, we must recognize the multiplicity of decay in Poe’s fiction. It is more than an indication of melancholia or necrophilia, as critics have sometimes thought.²¹ Rather, it “builds decisively” on the sense of order apt to collapse” that is an operative feature of Edmund Burke’s notion of the sublime.²² The time of the castle as the time of decay disrupts modern progressive time, the order and optimism of the future-oriented road. This disruption registers as shock—temporally (in the clash of linguistic and symbolic registers) and also transcendently: shock, after all, is the affective response most closely associated with sublime encounter. Shock, decay, disruption—the pressure of the castle on the road—is, for Poe, a fundamental condition making possible the “elevation” or “excitement” of the soul.

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Absent thus far from this literary critique of temporality and its material manifestations has been the modern invention of the clock. Numerous scholars have written about the pervasive presence of clocks in Poe’s work, evidence of his larger preoccupation with time: clocks figure as plot device, thematic concern, and literary metaphor.²³ Briefly, time

and clock saturate “The Masque of the Red Death;” there is the “gigantic clock of ebony,” the pendulum, the “monotonous tick-tock,” the “musical striking of the hours” (Weber 85). The narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart,” *recounts* his hours as carefully as his story, conflating time and plot until the whole drama concludes in what Jean-Paul Weber describes as a “climatic crescendo of ticking” (93).

The invention and wide spread use of the mechanical clock reshaped labor and life in the antebellum world. As modern instruments of standardization, clocks signified and reproduced structure, accuracy, movement, and momentum. Not surprisingly, the clock—a virtual phenomenon in its day—interested Poe, a writer emphatic about the predictable workings of form, order, and unity. Still, Poe held that time—increasingly a strict, pressing, inculcating force—was the “struggle,” we recall, from which the artist-soul fought to be freed.²⁴ The effort is made comical in “The Devil and the Belfry” when a stranger tampers with the town clock, “liberating” inhabitants from the rigors of its pounding regularity. In the stranger's hands, time, animated in the form of clock pieces, “take[s] to dancing;” the pendulums begin “frisking and wriggling.”²⁵

“The Fall of the House of Usher” includes no direct allusion to the world of clocks; though Weber reads a correspondence between the story’s characters, setting, and plot and Poe’s proclivity for figuring the devices. Referring to the decaying mansion house as a “clock house,” Weber writes,

The “sentience” of the house due to “the method of collocation of [its] stones” is precisely that of a clock...the symmetry of the house and its reflection in the tarn...is that of the circular dial and of its frame...The intimate and uncanny

relationship between the house and the Ushers parallels that which exists between the clock and the hands that *dwell* in it and are wholly governed by its mechanism. (87)

The symbolic association of the Ushers with clock time and with the modern mechanical world is compelling. The *fall of the Ushers*—Madeline collapsing upon her brother, a violent superimposition of twin corpses (hand upon hand), might signal a midnight deathblow to clock time, an eradication, a swallowing up of modern temporal logic, predictability, and pace in the nocturnal traumatism of Poe’s nightmare.²⁶ In previous chapters, I analyzed the imaginative and literal potentials of extreme captivity, notably its evocative intersections with freedom. This chapter has referred only briefly to the severe, aporetic confinements imprisoning Roderick and Madeline (rooms, mansion, coffins), treating narrative and narrative’s spatiotemporal demands as the tale’s primary site of capture. It is worth recalling, however, that Madeline’s violent rise from her gothic entombment—an act of incredible will and unbelievable strength—does not liberate the diseased, suffering madwoman even though it “frees” her from a deathly imprisonment. As we’ve seen, again and again, Romantic dreams of transcendence that bind captivity as magical crucible and as spatiotemporal portal to freedom treat the artist (always a slippery construct) as privileged inheritor, as a new-world heir of freedom’s promises.

Thus far, I’ve traced a temporal clash at the chronotopic level of Poe’s text—a dialectical conflict between the linear, progressive chronology of the road and the traumatic, circular, arresting time of the castle. To understand its significance, it is important to keep in mind that issues of time and space while abstract and aesthetic are also always historical and political. Hence, Weinstein, quoting the work of Johannes

Fabian, asserts that “geopolitics” have their “ideological foundations in chronopolitics” (82).²⁷ We know from Fabian, Edward Soja, Frederic Jameson, Benedict Anderson, Homi Bhabha and many others that modern time has played a key role in the “imperial/epistemological conquest of space” (Weinstein 81). In other words, time has been “required,” Weinstein reminds us, to “accommodate the schemes” of linear, progressive historicity, of development and modernity, but also of individuated, autonomous citizenship in a nation-state (81-82).²⁸ The conflicting spatiotemporal forms in “The Fall of the House of Usher”—one modern, the other ancient; one advancing, the other fixed; one causal in its teleology, the other collapsing—correspond to the underlying tensions within this modern geopolitical work. Adding space to our discussion of time, the final section will consider the artist’s unique autonomy, the vantage point of narrative control, and examine the conditions, spatial and temporal, that Poe believed fundamental to the artist’s “elevation”—to the transcendent freedom of the poetic soul. Poe’s innovative freedom, as we will see, proves to be anything but liberating. Instead, the narrator (as author double) formalizes his way into a narrative impasse where freedom is a kind of prison of idealized impossibilities.

Art, Autonomy, and the “Heart Divine”

Paradigmatic of Poe’s gothic architecture—enclosed, remote, built of dim and winding passages—the house of Usher encapsulates the spatiotemporal terms of captivity, of the ahistorical, but also of the dream. Waking life, we can assume, is “dominated by reason,” a “day-like faculty,” one which “operates,” as Wilbur contends, “in straight lines,” in the time and space of modernity (111). Bearing this in mind, dream life might manifest (indeed it does in Poe’s story worlds) as circuitous wandering, illogicality, and instability.

Throughout the tale, confusion and disorientation are straightened out, reason is restored, by the narrator's chronological account, by his forward advancement along the narrative road. Still, for storyteller and readers alike, to wander the house of Usher is to travel within (or to be trapped within) an uncanny labyrinth.

Wilbur has linked the space and time of Poe's tottering architecture of captivity with transcendence, with the poetic dream, and hence with "perfect freedom"—freedom from the corporeal self and from the physical world (110). Wilbur writes, "to grope through [the mansion's] passages is to become confused as to place and direction, just as in reverie we begin to lose any sense of locality and to have an infinite freedom in regard to space" (111). As has been said, the linear, chronological time of the road precedes, passes through, and survives the recursive, encapsulating time of the castle. However, at the point of their intersection—when the narrator is inside Usher's house and, as we will consider, his mind—the disparate spatiotemporal logics weave one around the other, unifying the tale in the image and form of the spiral.²⁹ We might say that this temporal clash—emblemized by castle and road—is resolved, is unified through this figure. It is a key image, one which finds materialization in the mansion's winding staircase, in its circuitous passageways, and in the whirlwind of the story's climax.³⁰ The narrative form of the spiral entraps, holding one captive; it "arrests" attention and movement (the term "arrest" is used multiple times in conjunction with the narrator), but it also elevates the fettered, conscious mind, releasing it from the demands of modern, rational life, from "the things and thoughts of time." According to Wilbur, the spiral invariably represents, in this and in many of Poe's tales, a "loss of consciousness," the mind's escape into the liberated world of the dream (100).

Henri Justin's mathematical explanation of the vortex/spiral as literary feature is also useful: "...speed accelerates," the formalist notes, "while the spiral narrows onto its center, and it accelerates in such a way that it tends toward infinity at the center....It boggles the mind, but only the timidly rational mind" (130). The raging, whirling tempest of "Usher's" climax—the storm outside the mansion that mirrors the chaotic violence within— "speeds," "spirals," and "narrows," much like Justin's account and also exemplifies the shape and force of "excitement" and "escape" in the tale. Seated, quite literally, at the "infinite" center of the "impetuous fury" is Roderick Usher (412). The morbid aesthete is nearly catatonic—wholly and fearfully enraptured by the "whirlwind" that "collects its force" all around (412). The "gust" physically "lifts" Usher from his feet, evoking transcendent escape (412). The tempest is all sublime: "wildly singular in its terror and its beauty" (412). Alarmed by the mystery, the "agitated vapors" and "unnatural light," the narrator (who we might say possesses Justin's "timidly rational mind") holds fast to reason: "These appearances," he explains, "are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon" (412-413). His attempt to bring calm with a "favorite romance," signifies the affective grounding he finds in narrative orders and predictable story (413). Usher is not mollified; instead he infuses with the whirlwind, becoming part and parcel of the spiraling vortex. His physical body registers the mystical motions: he "rocks" "side to side" in "gentle," "constant," "uniform sway" (415). Terrified, yearning to flee, the narrator's movements are quick and advancing: he "leaps" to his feet and "rushes" forward (415). But, Usher's "measured rock[ing] movement" remains "undisturbed" as man and motion and madness spiral into the full "potency" of the ecstatic "spell"—the "work of the rushing gust" (415-416).

In the end, what constitutes transcendent freedom in “Usher,” what enables it, is an aesthetic practice oriented toward the strictures of captivity and the illogicality of the dream—it is a mesmerizing narrative form, one which winds time and space ever more tightly around an entrapped, maddening artist-subject. As Maurice Beebe notes, there is “a close analogy” between Poe’s theories of the artist and of transcendence and his theory of the short story (122). In Poe’s mind “the perfect plot,” also referred to as “the plot of God,” is like the universe; every element is unified and dependent upon one another (122). “The Fall of the House of Usher” in its totality, unity, and brevity is “a near flawless illustration,” Beebe suggests, of this creative ideal (123). The house is like the universe, out of time and in its own complete space. Everything is related—self, structure, storm— but also kept tight and delimited. Occupying “Usher’s” creative center, embodying its ruling, timeless energy is the God-like figure of Roderick Usher.

Sadly, the “perfect plot” is, as Poe realized, fleeting, impracticable, and unattainable because it obliterates, paradoxically, the causal relation of events that is the cornerstone of linear, rational, narrative time. As the time of the castle and that of the road spiral around one another, things begin to echo and mirror instead of affect and change.³¹ Time, once causal, logical, and straight, occupies a different shape and space. Poe discusses the annihilation of causality as narrative ideal in *Eureka*: “In the construction of plot...we should aim [aim being the operative word] at so arranging incidents that we shall not be able to determine, of any one of them, whether it depends from any one other or upholds it” (89). In the end, Poe must concede that only “the plots of God are perfect” (89). Here on earth, fettered to “the things and thoughts of time,” to modes of rationality and chronology, such time-altering perfection is finally maddening.

Having said this, Poe clearly equated, as did many Romantics, the creator of the universe, the “Heart Divine” (as he refers to it in *Eureka*), with the artist, particularly the poet (103).³² As the universe is the manifestation of God, a substance indistinct from its agent, so too is Roderick inseparable from the uncanny, dreamlike castle-home he inhabits.³³ Consequently, the name “House of Usher” signifies both the mansion and the family (399). The building’s sentience and its fate express this inextricable correspondence: its “eye-like windows” and “ponderous ebony jaws” are Roderick’s (397, 416). The “minute fungi...hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves” is likened to the sovereign’s hair with its “web-like softness” (400, 401). The ominous crack zigzagging through the house’s center corresponds with Roderick’s struggle against insanity, his effort to maintain *composure* (psychological, material, and narrative)—to inhabit what Beebe calls his “kingdom of inorganization,” the sublime spatiotemporal chaos of the spiraling dream, to be overcome but not destroyed by it.³⁴

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Up to this point, I’ve treated Poe’s narrator and Roderick Usher as distinct characters, which is common to do. However, a tradition exists for collapsing the two, or rather for thinking of Roderick as an allegorical figure representing the narrator’s surreal consciousness.³⁵ If we follow Wilbur’s logic, “The Fall of the House of Usher” might be thought of as a “journey inward” (into the depths of the self, like the depths of the house) but also upward: the narrator transcends his waking life, the logic of the material world, and is transfigured as his “spiritual self,” Roderick Usher. The narrator reaches this self by “reverie” but also by way of “imagination.” The narrator is the artist; Roderick is his visionary, “elevated” soul (Wilbur 108).

Following the invitation to read “Usher’s” storyteller and title character as one, we might say that the narrator is most heroic, most exultant when he is circumscribed in the dreamlike netherworld, physical and psychological, of Usher. The story locates isolation, enclosure, and capture—capture in the house, in the mind, and in the story world—as the source of the narrator’s transcendence, of the poetic soul’s escape from the world of time, reason, and physical fact into the visionary reverie of the dream, into the pure freedom that is the artist’s exclusive privilege. Stricture, tightness, spiral, these become the formal mechanisms of conversion in “The Fall of the House of Usher” from the rational to the sublime, from this world to the otherworldly. Roderick’s power to create a captive and captivating universe, as artist-God personified and as author/double, is also his power to destroy. Beebe suggests that Roderick is most triumphant in the final act that obliterates his suffering, his contaminated and earth-bound physical nature.³⁶ Recalling earlier discussions of decay, we might say that the dematerialization of the house of Usher and of Roderick—so extreme as to approach “the atmospheric”—is a sign, as Wilbur contends, that the narrator, in reaching that state of mind and imaginative height which he calls Roderick Usher, has very nearly “dreamt himself free” (Wilbur 110).

And yet, as Roderick’s precarious insanity portends, the spirit must return to the body; ideal freedom, the “elevation of the soul” from “the things and thoughts of time,” from the rational, causal realm is eventually “morbid,” a term used to describe Roderick’s ailment, his artistic “acuteness of the senses” (403). Rationalism and materialism, though symptoms and sources of corruption, are also inextricable from human personhood. Hence, Poe concedes in *Eureka* that all transcendence is fleeting, perfect unity

impossible.³⁷ The house of Usher splits, in form and content; the spiral unravels. Time, in all its modern specificities, is restored and the narrator is released to tell his story.

Whether Usher's burial, his committal within the tarn is his definitive transcendence or his final doom, the tale affirms that his type of heightened sensitivity and his extreme cultivation of all things mystical is terrifying. Consequently, Usher is besieged throughout the tale by "the grim phantasm FEAR" (408). Conflating freedom with terror, transcendence with madness,³⁸ "The Fall of the House of Usher" reiterates a frequent theme David Galloway locates in Poe's work: The attempt to reach an "ideal state of perception," to "retreat from the world," from the "things and thoughts of time" ends at last, Galloway says, in "despair"—in the "insane laugh without a smile" figured in the conclusion to the "The Haunted Palace":³⁹

And travelers now within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows, see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody;
While, like a rapid gastly river,
Through the Pale door,
A hideous throng rush out forever,
And laugh—but smile no more.

Still, a more optimistic possibility for transcendence—for the generative, inspiring freedom of the soul from the body and for the autonomy of the artist—exists if

we imagine that the storyteller achieves, through mental derangement (within the e/state of Usher) and spatiotemporal rearrangement (represented in the narrative form of the spiral) an exceptional human experience and survives to tell his story. Jonathan Elmer has identified three aesthetic modalities, technical developments toward the sublime in Poe's work. According to Elmer, Poe "frames" and "captures," but also "splits" and "transfigures" space and time such that each tale signifies and maps a journey (taken typically by nameless narrators) from the realm of captivity through the frenzied freedom of release and then onward to what Elmer calls "the passage beyond."⁴⁰ Elmer's description of "the passage beyond" returns us to Poe's aesthetic ideal: perfect, timeless, fixed. Hence, "the passage beyond" finds its only possible substantiation in art.

As mastermind of the story and central inhabitant of its logics, the narrator alone inspires and also moves at will through the aesthetic modalities Elmer recognizes and toward Poe's transcendent sublime. Inextricable from the tale, he embodies what Poe calls the poem *per se*, a Romantic ideal signifying the autonomy of art, its existence beyond time and without historical specificity.⁴¹ For Poe, captivity and capture (spatial, psychological, formal) provide a portal to alterity, to a timeless, elevated world that is able to materialize only in glimpses and in the nightlight of reverie. I have said that the narrator flees the remote, maddening, uncanny house of Usher, and indeed he does, but his telling of the tale also undoes, on another level, the very meaning of fleeing, the finality of obliteration.

In the end, the spatiotemporal properties of freedom—as escape, as transcendence, as aesthetic abstraction—are revealed in this text to be paradoxical. The "ecstatic" pursuit of freedom—the "wild effort" to escape the confines of time, space,

and body—is posited as narrative control. As such, freedom is “trapped” within the meaning producing structures, the formal systems that organize narrative. Moreover, freedom is fixed in the abstracted realm of art. The storyteller’s autonomy derives from his narrative control, from the mastery he possesses over the characters within the tale and the readers without. The specter of the captive haunts Poe’s transcendent aesthetic. Even the narrator—as art personified, as poem *per se*—is trapped, fixed really, in a repetitive feedback loop, one of distinct and tight narrative space(s) and time(s).

David Herman speaks about “the cognitive reorientation” required by readers to take up imaginary residence in fictional worlds (129-130). Poe was keenly mindful of this process: its shape and its power relations. Not surprisingly, he locates mastery in the unique and mystical properties of short forms. In his review of Hawthorne’s *Twice Told Tales*, he writes that the “fullness of [an author’s] intention”—to secure the “the soul of the reader” such that it is “at the writer’s control”—is carried out precisely through the rigors and poeticisms of “the brief tale” (395-396). Poe’s famous storytellers are the imaginary, disembodied, often maniacal substantiations, in fictional form, of the true mesmerizing agent—the author himself. Poe entraps, takes control, subverts the will of the reader through a magical mesmeric process that is aesthetic and formulaic, that finds its power—its power to elevate the poetic soul—in tightness of construction, brevity of form, and in the fracturing of space and time. It is a “distinctly modern” conception of the creative process—one which blends Romanticism with a “concept of the mind” as the “controlling force” in composition (Galloway xxv).

Poe’s literary art does more than present a radical rearrangement of time and space; rather, it seeks to draw upon the power of such experimentations to disengage the

embodied poetic spirit from its earthbound reality, from “the things and thoughts of time,” propelling it toward an ideal. Story becomes art when it can “elevate the soul,” when it can fulfill the artist’s “wild effort to reach the Beauty above.” This is the transcendent dream, a literary inheritance of Poe’s European forebears: of Schlegel, Coleridge, De Quincey and also Keats and Shelley.⁴² At the level of theme, character, and form, “The Fall of the House of Usher” is arguably Poe’s grandest apotheosis, in achievement and in representation, of this Romantic aesthetic. And yet, the tale orchestrates—at the same time—its brilliant *fall*. The formal romantic features upon which the house and tale are constructed dematerialize. Transcendent escape and effusive mysticism render freedom impractical, a real world impossibility—a *dream* incompatible with the logics of space and time that order and organize a rational, sustainable earthbound life.

Notes

1. See, 455-456.
2. For a full discussion of the trope of captivity within the antebellum imagination, see Smith, *PAI*, 15. Poe’s magical thinking vis-à-vis solitude, captivity, and artistic genius bears much in common with my discussions of Hawthorne’s ideas in chapter one.
3. Wilbur notes that “circumscription” is Poe’s term, claiming also that Poe’s enclosures create an operative circularity in the text.
4. For fuller discussion, see Smith, *PAI*, 81-112.
5. See Hanson, 26. Hanson is advancing a theory of the short story, namely its relation to modern/postmodern time. Her collection of critical writing

demonstrates a tradition for thinking about this association in ways that are related to how I am suggesting Poe used the form. See also Pickering.

6. Recent work on Poe offers historicist interpretations of the author's evaluation of temporal modernity. Notable examples include Marsh's work on Poe's relation to the period's "culture of speed" (260) and Weinstein's consideration of Poe's "aesthetics of temporality" (82), which she claims disrupts the time of imperialism, of a stable past and present. Space and time also figure prominently in the work of Elmer, Engel, and McGhee, each of who consider Poe's philosophical and linguistic contributions to theories of the sublime. This chapter contributes to both critical conversations by setting a formalist Bakhtian analysis of spatiotemporality in "Usher" against the broader subject of Poe's modern artistic sensibility.
7. This chapter contributes in this way to recent work on Poe and time including Marsh's new historical chapter and Weinstein's reader response critique. See Weinstein, 81-107.
8. From Albert Einstein's notion of space/time, Bakhtin conceived of the chronotope—a metaphoric accounting within literary genre of the inseparability of space and time.
9. See Herman, 123-136.
10. For more, see Bakhtin, 243-244.
11. Bakhtin thinks of castle-time as engendering return such that "traces of centuries and generations" are "arranged" and "visible" in the literary architecture. See 216. See also LaCapra, xxi, for a discussion of the traumatic phenomenon of a "still-

present past.” LaCapra describes this as an emotional repeating or “acting out” of trauma that results from confusion between past and present.

12. For more on trauma and speaking-out, see Laub. See also Caruth.

13. For further discussion, see Engel, 29.

14. Weinstein argues that the question of “When is now?” is at the heart of Poe’s disorientation of time. For more, see Weinstein, 89.

15. Ibid., 91. Weinstein makes this point in her reading of *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.

16. Page numbers refer to first appearance of respective word or phrase in text.

17. See Engel, 43-44.

18. Having said this, Engel claims poetry offers a measure of recuperation—not practically speaking, but rather through its offering of the sublime. See 9.

19. See Engel, 41.

20. Engel argues that Poe’s treatment of abandoned ruins and gothic architecture, notably in “Usher,” is bound “eerily” to the poetic soul’s rise. See 43.

21. See Wilbur, 110.

22. See Engel, 33.

23. For a full discussion, see Weber. For a more recent treatment of the theme, see Marsh.

24. See Marsh, 260. Marsh argues that a new “culture of speed” engendered by the proliferation of clocks and watches threatened the very individuality, the inner humanity and compassion of modern persons.

25. For more discussion of the clock theme in the texts mentioned in this section, see Weber, 79-82, 85-87, 87-89, and 92-94. I draw here, in part, from his close readings.
26. For further analysis, see Weber.
27. Weinstein is drawing from the work of Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia UP, 1983), 144.
28. Ibid.
29. I am drawing heavily here from Wilbur's spatial (namely geometrical) reading of Poe's literary form. See 100 and 110-111.
30. See Wilbur, 100.
31. Beebe writes that the narrative "unity" of the house of Usher is comprised of mirrored or echo-like correspondences. See 124.
32. For further discussion of *Eureka* as it pertains to "Usher," see Beebe. Beebe claims that *Eureka's* "direct exposition" can clear up some "baffling" "symbolic drama" of the tale (121). For further discussion of God as poet in a Romantic context, see Wilbur, 101.
33. Wilbur writes "The House of Usher is, in allegorical fact, the physical body of Roderick Usher, and its dim interior is in fact Roderick" (107).
34. I am drawing here from Beebe's readings of the correspondences between Roderick and the Usher House. See 125.
35. See Wilbur, 108.

36. See Wilbur, 110. Wilbur also uses the term “triumphant” to think about the climax of the tale. He locates that victory in the “poetic soul’s” “shaking off” of the “temporal, rational, and physical world.” See also Beebe, 133.
37. See Beebe, 122.
38. See Galloway, li. Galloway maintains that Poe’s “outsiders” lose their sanity as a result of their expanding consciousness.
39. For further discussion, see Galloway, lii-liii.
40. I am quoting directly for Elmer’s unpublished talk and with his permission. See bibliography for all pertinent information.
41. See Poe, “The Poetic Principle,” 183.
42. See Galloway, xx.

Chapter Four

The Ship Imagined: Vision, Violence, and the Maritime Theater of Capitalism's Regulated Publics

“The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship.... These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror...”¹

—Olaudah Equiano, 1789

The ship is the quintessential architecture of the modern world, a metonymy of its social relations, its technologies, and its traumas. The vessel that inspired terror and awe in young Equiano, after a treacherous forced-march from the dense African inland, was very likely a snow called *Ogden*—a sixty to seventy foot craft with a mainmast of sixty feet, eight loaded cannons, and a crew of thirty-two.² Generally speaking, slave ships were variants of the European deep-sea vessel, massive machines of technological advancement and specialization. These were the historic vessels, the vehicles, ushering in global capitalism—an unprecedented system of social and economic relations that remade (as it continues to do, even in its late stage) nearly every part of the world.³

Francis Bacon signaled the importance of oceanic networks in “forging global modernity” when he named the nautical compass as one of three technologies that changed the “face and state of things” (Cohen 657). Maritime modernity, what Margaret Cohen calls “the working age of global sail,” encompasses four centuries, beginning with the transoceanic voyages of European explorers in the sixteenth century and culminating in the nineteenth century with America’s Atlantic-seafaring empire (659). The antebellum age, in particular, witnessed an “unprecedented proliferation” of commercial,

military, and scientific maritime activity (Berger 2). Expanding merchant-marine infrastructure was central to the development of port cities and commercial industries, most memorably (though not exclusively) whaling.⁴

Of course, one cannot speak of the ship as a singular concept; rather, ships varied widely in functional and symbolic significance. In the first half of the nineteenth century, slave ships, convict ships, navy ships, privateering ships, whaling ships, merchant ships, and pirate ships, to name only a few, crisscrossed oceans and charged imaginations. In their material and emblematic forms, ships brought disparate historical legacies and expressive traditions together invoking mutually dependent categories such as freedom and captivity. Dreams of freedom—economic, political, and social—link nearly all performers—merchants, owners, captains, laborers, and slaves—mediated upon throughout the Atlantic world. American sailor writing, as Hester Blum observes, “came into being” when U.S. encountered Barbary pirates in the decades following the Revolutionary War (8). Sea writing was also utilized, as in the case of Equiano’s *Interesting Narrative*, to decry the monstrous conditions of the slave trade and by sailors when denouncing impressment.⁵ From their origins and in their essence, sea narratives are inherently captivity narratives. All bodies—from the decorated captain to the fettered slave—are incarcerated by the same commanding oceanic expanse.

Ships and their capitalistic courses map the “ties and tensions” between “material and ideological dominations and oppositional spatial practices” (McKittrick xi).⁶ The ship, as Cohen has said, brings “aspects of modernity’s ideology to the fore” (660).⁷ More than engines of capitalism, ships were *theaters of human action*, stages upon which modern racialized forms of nationalism were configured, bound, and performed, making

hierarchy of persons into “critical categories of social and spatial struggle” (McKittrick xv).⁸ The ship encompasses nearly all the architectures of captivity, the powerful human institutions of control, enclosure, and ownership this project considers.⁹ Through each phase in the genealogy of Atlantic capitalism, ships and their narratives consolidated and institutionalized conquest and subjection, superimposing, as Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have said, the logics of the ship with those of the prison, the plantation, and the factory.¹⁰

Over oceans as well as continents, the ruling economic and political class built its order, one of “conquest and expropriation,” of “gallows and executioners”—all of this against (or rather entwined with) the spirits and promises of burgeoning and better ideas—of democracy, liberalism, and enlightenment (Linebaugh and Rediker 6). This chapter will start by exploring how ships function as metaphor and microcosm of a host of carceral institutions integral to the making of free markets, free nations, and free people in the nineteenth century before turning, in its second and third sections, to two canonical works of antebellum sea literature, Richard Henry Dana Jr.’s *Two Years Before the Mast* and Herman Melville’s *Benito Cereno*. In this process, the chapter will briefly consider a late eighteenth-century foundational text in American letters, Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur’s *Letters from an American Farmer*. Recalling Crèvecoeur helps to establish the national origins of a precarious slippage, a psychosocial kinship between racialized forms of captivity and freedom that informed the nineteenth-century literary imaginary, notably romantic narratives of sea adventure. Like maritime fiction more generally, *Two Years Before the Mast* and *Benito Cereno* can be conceived of as nationalist narratives in that they interrogate the logics and loci—severe, violent, and

psychosocial—that organized the construction of race, class, and nation in the period.¹¹ Superimposing multiple forms of captivity, these texts theorized how liberal agency was constructed beyond the nation’s borders and through the logics of the ship and its global networks of exchange. Specifically, this chapter will interrogate the way ship captivity—its unique experiences and potentials—begets a vision of freedom, one underwriting the privileged, liberal selfhood of a rapidly modernizing world. My investigation is inspired by Christopher Connery’s evocative question: “What was happening...when western modern capitalism married itself to the sea?” (668). Connery sees the ocean’s “elemental character”—its “inability to be categorized by time and space, its unboundedness”—as “fundamentally incompatible” with a range of “land-based thinking”—of terra-centric, nationalistic importations like domination and hierarchy—that inhere to the ship (687). It has been the claim of this dissertation all along, however, that the historical contingencies of extreme captivity and of hegemony operated partly as the means by which privileged, powerful, citizens of the emerging U.S. nation-state imagined themselves and their lives to be free.

...

The unique “genius” and “horror” of the well-armed, deep-sea ship was, according to Rediker, “something *sui generis*”: rooted in its simultaneous function as factory and as prison (44).¹² Often permanently anchored, the decks of slave ships, as one example, could be converted into fixed sites of intercontinental business and exchange. Seaman James Field Stanfield observed in 1774 that the British slave ship *Eagle* was to be “left on the coast as a floating factory” (Rediker 144). Oceanic vessels were factories in the earliest meaning of the term (Rediker traces “factory” to the sixteenth century

understanding of “merchant”) and in the term’s more modern employment, as the engine of mass production.¹³ The slave ship, in particular, marshaled the labor force that animated global production. In producing the workers for new world plantations, this “ship-factory,” as Rediker calls it, also produced—in mass—the very concept of race.¹⁴ The multiethnic assemblage of African people representing disparate tribes, language communities, and cultural heritages became, Rediker explains, members of a homogeneous “negro race” by the time the ship reached its terminus.¹⁵ Equiano’s narrative records this exchange of an Igbo-self for a broader African identity, one he took upon contact with white Americans and Europeans.

Ships were more than factories for the manufacture and circulation of goods, ideas, and human “types;” they were also warehouses of unceasing labor. The “floating industry of the ship,” to use Blum’s phrase, required every worker, all hands on deck, operating in “synchronicity” (112).¹⁶ Dana recounts how sailors were forced to chant the “decidedly unromantic” *Philadelphia Catechism* (“Six days shalt thou labor and do all thou art able, And on the seventh—holy stone the decks and scrape the cable”) as they pounded the anchors in uniform repetition.¹⁷ Seemingly menial or useless tasks assured that potentially rowdy, rebellious energies would be suppressed and redirected. This common managerial technique is advocated by Captain Amaso Delano in *Benito Cereno* when he orders his men, about to board the *San Dominick*, to engage in constant duties “no matter what happens to the ship” (179-180). It seems Delano would rather see the Spanish vessel destroyed—“mats, men, and all”—than allow order to be unsettled by an energetic, rested crew.¹⁸

Shipboard time, like factory time, was assiduously “marked and managed”; Bryan Sinche writes of its systems of bells and watches (383). Earlier chapters explored the way modern institutions and regimes regularized modern life, replacing former, seasonal and pre-industrial rhythms. So intense is the management of time and body on the merchant-ship *Pilgrim*, that Dana compares it, not to a factory, but to a prison: “In no state prison,” he writes, “are convicts more regularly set to work and more closely watched” (52). The conflation of ship and prison in the American imagination was hardly new when Dana published his landmark text. British sea-ships had functioned, Judith Madera tells us, as “the deadliest prisons in early America” (175).¹⁹ “Taking to the sea” long served a certain scallywag-class as an option for averting debtor’s prison—an exchange, really, of one confinement for another.²⁰ Moreover, by Dana’s time, anti-slavery advocates had popularized gothic imagery of the Middle Passage revealing it to be an occasion of destitute incarceration; scenes of Africans compressed and stowed in “floating dungeons” were popularized in portraits like that of the slave ship *Brooks* (Rediker 154).²¹ Such imagery animates the rhetoric of *Two Years*, which seems almost lifted in places from Equiano’s account.²²

Common seamen’s roles vacillated as the ship took its various and often conflicting aporetic forms: factory, prison, and plantation. Sailors could be regimented, disciplined automatons,²³ kept in a constant state of labor, or they could be converted, sometimes suddenly, into “watchers,” guard-like overseers” of slaves, prisoners, and potential mutineers (Rediker 155).²⁴ Writing of the ways sailors were controlled and also conscripted into violence (specifically flogging), Dana asks, “What is there for sailors to do? If they resist, it’s mutiny; and if they succeed, and take the vessel, it is piracy. If they

ever yield again, their punishment must come; and if they do not yield, they are pirates for life. If a sailor resist his commander, he resists the law” (153).²⁵

Violence was the mainstay of ship life, and its employments were notably hierarchal. As Linebaugh and Rediker, James, and McKittrick each assert, spatial binaries underscored racial and class domination. All bodies were placed within an ideological order—at the top and typically off shore, the dominant class of planters, merchants, and politicians financed expeditions and underwrote commands from mansions and halls of parliament.²⁶ Aboard the ship, captains—“canonized kings,” as James calls them—ate and slept in private “triangular oaken vaults” away from the night-watch of the forecastle and far above the deep belly where “millions of slaves” in their “nakedness” “crouched” (James 30; Rediker 14).²⁷ Command at sea was absolute and extreme terror the norm; the human seascape and its arrangements reified the hierarchal difference and draconian power of modern carceral regimes. Melville drew upon this rigid spatial regulation in *Benito Cereno*. The placement of the elder African oakum pickers—high above the *San Dominick* ship floor and its human theatrics—signals, to the most astute readers, that conventional regimes have been overturned.²⁸

In general, maritime production and order mandated brutal discipline; spectacular often staged events of autocratic power evoked the torturous pageantries done in the name of old-world Sovereigns.²⁹ The same “work, cooperation, and discipline” that made the ship a “prototype of the factory,” in Linebaugh and Rediker’s words, also makes it paradigmatic of the large-scale estate plantation, which employed, as we saw in chapter two, similar disciplinary practices (149-150). While the three modes of production organized and exploited labor in captive spheres of circulation, geographic isolation and

state complicity combined to render the ship captain and the slave master especially and supremely powerful. Captain Delano brags to Don Benito Cereno of keeping utter control of his sailors by ordering “instant punishments” that quell any hint of insurrection or mutiny.³¹ Likewise, the famous slave ship captain turned abolitionist, John Newton, speaks in a letter to his wife Mary of being “as absolute in my small dominions... as any potentate in Europe.”³²

So tyrannical the ship captain, so punishing the maritime labor, that Blum has suggested the factory is an inadequate analogue for maritime life. Instead she points to the connections sailors routinely made between themselves—as victims of habitual abuse, overwork, and corporal punishment—and slaves and also to the connections drawn between their captains and slave masters.³³ Malicious captains whose names were popularized in the cultural imaginary—autocrats such as James D’Wolf and Richard Jackson—turned their ships into “floating hells” and utilized notorious instruments of violence (cat-o’-nine-tails, thumbscrews, the *speculum oris*, pistols, and even sharks) to control everyone on board (Rediker 348).³⁴ According to Rediker, “white slaves” and “black slaves,” as one captain referred to his crew, were often indistinguishable: there was not, in this despot’s view, “a shade of difference between them, save their respective complexions” (348). While this “shade of difference” is rhetorical alone, it was widely employed. Dana recounts how the *Pilgrim’s* vicious and fanatical captain called his sailors “negro slaves” and identified himself as their “driver” (156). All this notwithstanding, we know that a record of resistance permeates this same repressive history—coups, escapes, and mutinies offer striking contradictions and respatializations, literal *uprisings*. Jeffrey Hole has shown how Melville’s novella dramatizes the way

rebellion is “produced” by the same “regimes of domination” that “justify and expand” the capitalist and nationalist “strategies of enforcement” which contain it (48). This chapter will consider slave revolt in its final section; for now it is worth noting that the *San Dominick’s* history, as a slave vessel, is so violent—its rule (both before and after the insurrection) so severe and traumatic— that the ship disrupts all forms of epistemology. Delano encounters it as something “unreal,” as a “shadowy tableau,” as emerging unmarked and unreadable out of an enigmatic “deep” (166). Hence, Christopher Freeburg says the *San Dominick* is “metaphorized,” much like the plantation, as “a hell of its own” (118).

American literature’s most notorious embodiment of the self-serving, all-powerful, maritime master class is not the Captains Delano or Cereno but rather the monomaniacal Ahab of *Moby-Dick’s* *Pequod*. James calls this “true son of the nineteenth century” the most “dangerous and destructive social type that has ever appeared” (7, 5). Key to understanding Ahab, for C. L. R. James, is to see that the ocean-sovereign is also wholly acted upon. Not unlike Equiano, Ahab is a product of the sea (as are Delano and Cereno for reasons we’ll see), of its “usages of command,” which “all tend toward creating a dictatorship”—a feudal system of brutal autocracy and fixed human types (James 14). Elevating its author to something of a soothsayer, James calls the *Pequod* Melville’s vision of how “masses of men would sooner or later behave” in a quickly modernizing civilization (11).

Ships, factories, prisons, and plantations—as interconnected systems of captivity—were bound within a larger historical event, what Rediker calls “the rise and movement of global imperial capitalism” (352). Each concept and its structural

containments were linked within a transatlantic chain that produced wealth for a relative few (elites in Europe, America, and Africa)³⁵ and states of captivity for millions of expropriated others. Emma Christopher, Cassandra Pybus, and Marcus Rediker have identified multiple “middle passages”—correlated experiences of captivity and forced migration involving slaves, indentured servants, transport convicts, and coerced immigrants and migrants that began in the sixteenth century and continues in scope and scale today.³⁶

In the nineteenth century, managerial practices and concepts—those associated with free markets and reformist projects as well as those allied with slavery and tyranny—had become central to U.S. institutions and to “the expansion and intensification” of U.S. influence over the globe (Hole 233). As the nation matured and expanded at home and overseas, it racialized, developing an exceptionalist doctrine that James attributes to “every single national state”: the American race, the American stock, the American blood (white, patriarchal, and free) was uniquely superior to all other races, stocks, and bloods. Life upon the seas aided in the production and conscription of these class-based human “types;” large masses of people—penniless workers, “deserters, cripples, rebels, and dropouts,”³⁷ and also convicts and slaves were organized and synchronized, in mechanical fashion and under harsh discipline, by merchant capitalists. Few managed to stand apart, to survive as recognizably autonomous, self-reflecting agents.³⁸ Ahab betrays this formulation, referring to his cosmopolitan, motley crew as “manufactured men” (192).³⁹

By mid-century, racial superiority and class dominion were the political foundations of a new world power—the U.S. capitalist nation-state. Manufacture, which

reached an unprecedented scale, grew commensurate with the rise of human and environmental waste and degradation.⁴⁰ Melville gives “ironic credence” to the piratical power of the United States upon the global seas (Strong 290). Tracy Strong notes that in calling Delano’s ship *Bachelor’s Delight*, Melville evokes a notorious seventeenth-century pirate, James Kelley, who sailed a ship identically named. More direct is Melville in *Israel Potter*: “Intrepid, unprincipled, reckless, predatory, with boundless ambition, civilized in externals but a savage at heart, America is, or may yet be, the Paul Jones of nations” (159).⁴¹ The horrible crises and catastrophes of global modernity, of its destructive personalities and natures, is arguably the subject of much of Melville’s oeuvre. Melville was hardly alone, however, in interrogating modern capitalism’s conditions of trauma, possibility, and survival. Rather, American sea narratives, more broadly, participated in the conception and construction of U.S. power in a changing political and economic world.⁴²

The transnational turn of the past two decades (one in which oceanic studies is entrenched) might have succeeded, as Philip Gould has said, in “dislodging” American studies from its “grounding” in strictly “nationalist assumptions” and methods—in shifting the “where” of American literature so that to read the canon now is to engage “along borders, across borders, and without borders” (1225). But it should not be assumed, as it sometimes is, that such trends are necessarily democratizing, liberating, or anti-hierarchal—or that they are altogether new, artistically or critically. Nineteenth-century writers of sea literature remapped and reclaimed the global too, subsuming it (in evocatively familiar ways) within an ever-expanding American frame, helping to inaugurate what would eventually become the nation’s world dominance. The problem

posed by the sea in this literature (both as tangible watery body and as metaphor) is the very threat of fluidity—the fluidity of nationhood and its race, class, gender prerogatives: it is the problem of destabilizing flux, of deterritorialization, of the limits and powers of national law, of hybridity, mobility, and of freedom.⁴³

•••

Published in 1840 by Harper & Brothers, Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* records this tension between romantic conceptions of the sea—as a place of adventure, self-determination, and liberty—and of the brutal, conscripting realities of ship life. The critically acclaimed book initiated a “new literary rage,” an enthusiasm for first-person, realistic depictions of sea travel from the perspective of the common laborer (Lucid 243).⁴⁴ The originality of Dana's self-described “unromantic” account “changed the face,” Thomas Philbrick says, of maritime fiction, leaving a certain and provable influence on writers like Cooper and Melville (23).⁴⁵ The author's famously plain style, the straightforward manner in which he sought to represent ship life situates the text within the period's growing (sometimes contradictory) trends of literary realism and reform.⁴⁶ For the most part, reviewers from the nineteenth century onward regarded the narrative as a work of advocacy, as an urgent call to improve the lives of mariners in the merchant service.⁴⁷ From William Cullen Bryant to Hester Blum, critics have pointed to the text's condemnation of flogging, for example—this despite Dana's conservatism on the subject of corporeal punishment.⁴⁸ The tendency to interpret the text as a reformist project, as sharing in its culture's more liberal sympathetic imperatives was nearly immediate. Writing in *The Dial*, Emerson celebrated *Two Years* and its author (his former

student),⁴⁹ noting that the text would “serve to hasten the day of reckoning between society and the sailor.”⁵⁰

Still, as Philbrick avers, Dana’s intentions were not “propagandistic” nor is there any evidence to suggest that *Two Years* changed—in any tangible way—the reality of life at sea for the merchant sailor (21).⁵¹ The lasting and significant impacts of Dana’s work are arguably literary, born of the book’s complex tonal ambiguities (a tension between its purported realism and its lyrical romanticism), its temporal complexities, and its experimentation with two popular forms: the initiation story and the captivity narrative.⁵⁷ As said, Dana’s stylistic choices, especially his much-touted realism, appealed to the dictates of an urban literary market and helped substantiate the author’s knowledge of and standing with common laborers.⁵³ Having said this, Sinche maintains that Dana’s “choice of forms”—thematic and temporal—involve “fairly significant falsehoods”; the book is not so much “untrue,” in Sinche’s analysis, but rather “other than it purports to be” (388).⁵⁴ The inconsistencies to which Sinche points result, in part, from the competing autobiographical forms that structure the book and from what Bryce Conrad calls Dana’s “private investment,” his effort to achieve a “perspective of self” in the face of grave existential questions and draconian displays of autocracy (295).

According to Thomas Philbrick, the greatest claim to be made for the influence of Dana’s book rests not in its advocacy for reform, but rather in that it “initiated” “more...than any other single work” the historically-contingent genre of journey, of self-making through quest that played, in Philbrick’s mind, a “central role” in the literature of the American Renaissance (23).⁵⁵ Essential to the form is a “green” and inexperienced protagonist who, through scenes of suffering and ordeal, transforms into a new being.

The ships that bookend Dana's narrative signal this thematic arc: Dana embarks "bewildered" and "naïve," literally weak-eyed, on the brig *Pilgrim* and returns aboard the *Alert* a competent sailor—a man who, in Sinche's words, is "full-grown," with "perfect vision and strong resolution," ready to re-enter the privileged social world waiting for him (377).⁵⁶

Initiation, as it's described here, especially as it intersects with the rigors of captivity, fits neatly within the Protestant religious and republican political tropes discussed in chapter one, the ones Hawthorne drew upon in producing his new world Adam, Holgrave. Like Holgrave, Dana emerges from the harshest of captive architectures, from its "den of horrors," to quote one nineteenth-century reviewer, ready to seize the political and economic promises his birth-right ensures.⁵⁷ Additionally, Dana's narrative of physical renewal and personal change contains a distinct and stark rejection of conversion, a stylistic and psychological maintenance of fixity and difference akin to Holgrave's inviolability.⁵⁸ Though Dana's sympathy with the tribulations of common seamen is beyond question, it is equally the case that the author's motive is not to move toward them, not to become like the working class, but rather to maintain an identity wholly separate from them.⁵⁹ In this way, *Two Years* allies itself, as Philbrick has said, to another (often called original) Anglo-American literary form, the Indian captivity narrative—a form revitalized in the early nineteenth century by westward expansion and by narratives produced during the Barbary crisis.⁶⁰

Dana may have been part of the common *Pilgrim* crew, but he was hardly a usual sailor. His atypical downward trajectory from Harvard classroom to ship fore-castle is impossible to overstate;⁶¹ hence Dana experiences his swap of the "tight dress coat, silk

cap, and kid gloves” of his school uniform for the “loose duck trowsers, checked shirt, and tarpaulin hat of a sailor” as a kind of “transformation” (40). Having said this, Dana’s change of clothing, of circumstance, and of location never severs the Massachusetts-born Brahmin-son, not permanently anyway, from the intercession of formidable family and friends.⁶² Instead, his donning of the sailor fashion is represented as “passing” (evocative of racial “deception”): “I supposed that I should pass very well for a jack tar. But it is impossible to deceive the practiced eye....I was, no doubt, known for a landsman by everyone on board as soon as I hove in sight” (40).

Dana set sail on August 15, 1834, motivated, perhaps, by a naive and restless spirit, a foreboding sense of boredom with the inevitabilities of an advantaged upbringing. His expressed reason was a “determination” to “cure if possible” a hereditary “weakness of the eyes” through “a long absence from books” (40).⁶³ Once confined and coerced into the brutalities of ship life—as far from the world of books and leisure as possible—the terms of Dana’s unceasing labor and the psychological stakes of ship life sink in:

I supposed that we were getting the vessel into sea trim, and that it would soon be over, and we should have nothing to do but to sail the ship; but I found that it continued for two years, and at the end of the two years there was as much to be done as ever. 54

However much I was affected by the beauty of the sea...I could not but remember that I was separating myself from all the social and intellectual

enjoyments of life...I did then afterwards take in these reflections, hoping by them to prevent my becoming insensible to the value of what I was leaving. 44

Within the captivity narrative genre—in tales of Colonial or Barbary crisis and slave and prison narratives—writing is analogous to self-mastery, to the upholding of an inner, inviolable voice, which is why so many slave narratives in particular turn on the point of literacy and why writing in these texts often precedes or becomes its own form of emancipation. Conrad interprets Dana’s decision to write *Two Years* (by which he likely means the journals that ostensibly become the narrative) as a realization that, in Dana’s words, “it would not do to *cut* Boston society” (302). According to Conrad, Dana’s “voice from the fore-castle” is a kind of “public mask”—one that works not as Philbrick suggests, to protect the virtue and integrity of the upper-class bourgeois captive-hero, but rather to protect the nineteen-year-old youth from his own “most private anxieties,” from the terrifying instability of identity itself (301-302).

The resonances of captivity in Dana’s text exceed the book’s generic “bondage to freedom” plotline with its cliché description of the final trip down the California coast as “one link after another” being “struck from my chain of servitude” (362).⁶⁴ Captivity, its dangers and potentials, extend to the cultural and class dichotomies on the ship, the ones that threaten the sophisticated Bostonian’s stature and selfhood. Dana claims to board the ship for the benefit of his eye; yet as Conrad astutely notes, “I” and “eye” conflate (we might say they *blur*) in *Two Years*.⁶⁵ What begins as a journey to improve a young man’s vision becomes a test, really, of what he is willing and able to see.⁶⁶ A crisis point in the maintenance of Dana’s privileged “I”—his autonomous, rational, learned self—becomes a province of vision in the moment of a black sailor’s flogging, the same one critics

frequently point to as evidence of the text's reformist credentials. Though likely unintentional, the episode is a virtual rewriting of a key foundational scene in American letters.

Hector St. John De Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (largely ignored throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) contains the late eighteenth century's most unambiguous declaration of American exceptionalism (an irony considering the book was penned by a French native and anti-revolutionary). Through his narrating subject, Farmer James, Crèvecoeur writes over the English imperial planter with a new American ideal—one expressive of the fated contrast between the new and old worlds: of birth vs. decay, labor vs. idleness, self-sufficiency vs. dependency, property vs. debt.⁶⁷ The text's most celebrated chapter "What is an American?" is credited with generating the nation's iconic self-defining image of the melting pot.⁶⁸ For his "enlightened European" correspondent, Farmer James clarifies,

What, then, is the American, this new man? He is either an European or the descendant of an European; hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country....He is an American, who, leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds...Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigor, and industry which began long since in the East; they will finish the great circle. 69

Crèvecoeur's image of a "strange mixture of blood," of a bold and hearty "race of men," of geopolitical expansion as civilizing errand returns in the capitalistic seafaring age I'm discussing and on Dana's evocatively named *Pilgrim* ship.⁶⁹ Crèvecoeur's conception of the "new American man," notably a farmer not a seaman, linked political and economic attainment with a certain kind of person. Harkening back to Columbus, Crèvecoeur participates in a tradition of New World writing that posits America as the new Eden. His "new man" is not merely a transported one (from Europe to America); he is a transplanted one. Geographic and philosophical changes—the "leaving behind" of "ancient prejudices and manners," the "embracing" of a republican moral ground between lord and peasant, between master and slave. The aftereffects of this idea are plain in Holgrave, who Hawthorne carefully positions between the despotic Judge Pyncheon and the meek, vacuous, dispossessed Clifford. Dana's descent from privilege to the ranks of the working class performs a related moralizing ritual, one rooted in the New England ethic of self-making through righteous labor.

I turn to *Letters of an American Farmer* not only for its foundational value in establishing certain American myths and its depiction of an early and provincial new-world sea community, but more importantly for its unique treatment of slavery, the shameful institution underwriting America's republican experiment—the one "haunting" Hawthorne's New England origin stories and also much of the expansionist literature, of land and sea, leading up to the Civil War. It is impossible to exaggerate the point: the fantasy of the free, white, autonomous individual—one privileged to cast his lot, make his fortune, seize his destiny—depended upon the conscripted and enslaved black chattel body. According to Jennifer Rae Greeson, northern republicanism attempted

to settle this ethical paradox by aiming for a moral middle ground, one evoked by Crèvecoeur's use of "rank" and by Dana's promise in *Two Years* to "present," in "the life of the common sailor," the "light and dark together" (38). Northern liberal reformists conceived of developing a commercial nation-state (always located ideologically in the north) as industrious, virtuous, and free by denying its complicity in slavery. This was increasingly easy to do after northern states abolished slavery and the peculiar institution became "buried" (like a dirty secret) in the southern, colonial-like periphery.⁷⁰

Greeson's book considers the rhetorical choices American writers made as they grappled with the fact of the nation's paradoxical binaries. The precarious slippage, the psychosocial kinship between white freedom and black enslavement informs the superimposition between slavery, the middle passage, and the plantation and the period's romantic narratives of domesticity, sea adventure, and gothic suspense, which we find in antebellum texts like *Two Years* and *Benito Cereno*. Farmer James's encounter with an encaged, dying slave provides an early and profound literary example of the way free people became implicated in the plight of the unfree, one that returns in *Two Years*.

En route to a house at which he was expected to dine, Farmer James stumbles upon "a Negro, suspended in [a] cage and left there to expire!" (178). The scene is one of "horror" and overwhelming affliction: the slave's body is "covered with a multitude of wounds." Insects "swarm," "eager to feed" on "mangled flesh." The slave's face is marked by bloody, "hollow sockets," from which the birds had "picked out his eyes" (178). Farmer James recounts the effect of this episode in traumatic terms:

I found myself suddenly arrested by the power of affright and terror; my nerves were convulsed; I trembled; I stood motionless, involuntarily contemplating the fate of this Negro in all its dismal latitude. (179)

Farmer James's decision to abandon the slave (which he promptly does) has everything to do with a desire to free himself (over and above the slave) from the "power of affright and terror" that holds him "motionless." He writes, "Oppressed with the reflections which this shocking spectacle afforded me, I mustered strength enough to walk away" (180). An analogous confrontation occurs aboard the *Pilgrim* when "a pretty good sailor" named Sam, a "large heavy-moulded" free black man from "the middle states," is "made into a slave" by the ship captain—a tyrannical, irrational leader whose grip on power is interchangeable with his precarious grip on self (151-152). The crew aids their captain-master in Sam's needless flogging; the "preparations" make Dana "feel sick and almost faint." Dana's "first" nearly "uncontrollable impulse" (though he indeed controls it) is "resistance" (153). Evident in Dana's thought process, in his pity, is a parting of his own self (a person with inalienable rights) from Sam (one vulnerable to dehumanization). Dana's choice of words demonstrates profound sympathy, to be sure, but it also betrays—at the level of the sentence—the conversion of the man, Sam, into a beast: "A man—a human being, made in God's likeness—fastened up and flogged like a beast!" (153).⁷¹ Dana may have been unable to aid Sam (we recall his point, "if a sailor resists his commander, he resists the law"); still, the easy way Dana comes to terms with his ineffectualness betrays a callous acceptance of racial brutality: "Bad as it was, it must be borne. It is what a sailor ships for" (154). The latter phrase with its ambiguous suggestion of desire is particularly noteworthy. We know the captain orders the flogging to

“teach...all who is master” (152). It follows directly from Sam’s brazen assertion that he is “no negro slave” (152). In other words, the captain “makes [Sam] a slave” (by way of the flogging) in order that he can be “master” (152). Dana not only witnesses this violent, dialectical self-fashioning; he names it as “what a sailor ships for” (154).

In her critique of Farmer James, Greeson observes that his failure to liberate the captive slave is a case in which *will not* and *cannot* are confused.⁷² The well and vital mind of Farmer James cannot endure the slave’s disfigured and tormented body. Farmer James is rendered powerless by the figure of the slave. The powerlessness results from the trauma of his complicity, from the discovery that there is no moral middle ground: where slavery exists, one is either master or free. Farmer James reclaims mastery of his white mind—he frees it from the disquiet immobility of trauma—by turning away from the suffering black slave’s body.

Worse, perhaps, though related in psychological purpose, Dana earnestly watches Sam’s flogging. He describes the event in detail, recalling the exact number of times (nine in all) that the heavy rope is brought down upon the black man’s back. It is only when the captain flogs the white Swede John (for questioning the fairness of Sam’s attack) that Dana can “look no longer” (155). “Disgusted, sick, and horror-struck,” he “turns away”—gazing “down into the water” (155). It is a mythic gesture, associated with reflection (especially of the self); not surprisingly “rapid thoughts of my own situation” (not of John’s) fill the seaman’s mind (156). Breaking Dana from this reverie are the rage-filled, terrorizing words of his master:

You see your condition! You see where I've got you all, and you know what to expect!—You've been mistaken in me—you didn't know what I was! Now you know what I am—I'll make you toe the mark, every soul of you, or I'll flog you all, fore and aft, from the boy up—You've got a driver over you! Yes, *slave-driver*—a *negro-driver*! I'll see who'll tell me he isn't a negro slave! (156)

Dana's italics perform the impact of the words "*slave-driver*" and "*negro-driver*" in the narrative of his mind: each stand outside comprehension. From this moment on, Dana's resolve is twofold: to "obtain justice and satisfaction" for "these poor men" and to clearly distinguish himself, if not in situation than in person, from their ranks (157). His vow to "redress the grievances and relieve the sufferings of that poor class of beings, of whom I then was one" evinces this latter project (157). The comma literally splits the sentence, which might have denoted unity, into separate phrases and destinies. Careful insertion of the word "then" affirms the temporal limits of Dana's vulnerability; he is not one to whom oppression and bondage can permanently adhere.

Throughout *Two Years*, readers witness Dana confronting the very existential crisis that unravels the Spanish captain, Cereno, in Melville's novella. It is the horrifying reality that the self is not fixed or inviolable; it is not absolute or individuated, but rather it is formed in tense, co-morbid rituals of violent dispossession— scenes that link vision and voyeurism, captivity and freedom.⁷³ Each time Dana is confronted by scenes of this fact, the schoolboy turned sailorman asserts the familiars of privileged identity in their full ideological force. In the chaos that follows racialized and working-class men being stripped down and made into beasts "before [Dana's] 'eye,'" the self-narrating voyeur claims a distinct, protected "I" (Conrad, 304). It is the "I" of liberal agency, of class,

gender, and race protection, and of personal freedom.⁷⁴ Protective refusals to recognize the complex ontological underpinnings of injustice are, as we'll see in the next section, interrogated as a feature of North and South in *Benito Cereno*.⁷⁵ The novella's ships—the American *Bachelor's Delight* and the Spanish *San Dominick*—serve as metaphors of “the ship as a symbol of the state” and also stages for performing and disrupting the logics that sustain domination and freedom in *Two Years*.

•••

The metaphor of the ship and its crew for the “polity”—privileged and powerful as well as bound and in bondage— was, as Strong has argued, “especially prominent” in the nineteenth century (281). Maritime fantasies of all sorts had significant political import, for they “emerged,” Jason Berger tells us, to “organize, condition, and respond” to the many “antagonisms” of capitalist modernity (4). We've seen how ships functioned— as laboratories of excess and violence— in the accumulation of property, the enlargement of U.S. power, and the production and exchange of people and practices of domination. Through the forces acting between and upon its captains, crews, and slaves, *Benito Cereno* raises important and resultant questions about national and personal sovereignty, racial identity, and the scope and range of U.S. power. Like so many of the texts examined in this project, it links vision with mastery and selfhood (of the free, supreme, autonomous variety) and these with mutually dependent processes of captivity and dehumanization.

First appearing in 1855 in installments of *Putnam's Monthly*, Melville's novella arrived to an era rife with contentious geopolitical conflicts recently incited by passage of

the Fugitive Slave Act (1850) and the Kansas Nebraska Act (1854). These laws joined earlier international treaties and domestic codes in protecting masters' rights to recover fugitive property. As Hole notes, by mid-century slaves could not escape "by law or by principle" anywhere in the US or around the world (223).⁷⁶ Melville recognized the global reach of slavery, setting his tale of North South antagonism, liberal prejudice, and the existential master/slave dialectic in international waters off the Cuban coast. For this and other reasons, Eric Sundquist places author and text in a tradition (linking David Walker, Martin Delany, and W.E.B. Dubois) of shared perspective that finds its "fullest literary response" and "fullest political critique" of African American slavery in the embracing of several cultures and nations (139).⁷⁷ Melville's astute contemporaries took notice: one critic, writing in William Cullen Bryant's *New York Evening Post*, interpreted the tale's climax, in which Delano and his crew subdue the rebellion, as Delano's enforcing of "a sort of fugitive slave law on so grand a scale and in so bloody a manner."⁷⁸

Slavery—its cultural entrenchment and reach—overlapped politically and ideologically with notions of Anglo American errand and providential domination of the hemisphere. Delano's use of the rhetoric of charity⁷⁹ as the grounds upon which his sailors are ordered to overtake the *San Dominick* as well as his attempt, at a later point in the tale, to purchase the slave Babo, positions the congenial, Massachusetts captain, says Allan Moore Emery, as "standard bearer" of the racist, imperialist views of many in the liberal north and of the magazine (55).⁸⁰ (*Putnam's* advocated expansionist doctrine while maintaining, however ironically, its antislavery credentials.)⁸¹ Emery calls *Benito Cereno* Melville's "most serious engagement" with the concept of manifest destiny and

with individuals across the political spectrum who “fancied themselves citizens”—free ones, especially—of an elect nation destined to govern and capture the globe and its indigenous, subaltern inhabitants (49).⁸²

To true believers of doctrines like manifest destiny, national providence, and American exceptionalism, the nation’s future was ever prosperous and hopeful. To read Melville, though, is to encounter a very different sense of human history and its inevitable courses, one far less “pleasantly progressive” than we might find in *Two Years* (Emery 67).⁸³ Elements of *Benito Cereno* invite a comparison between the “jovial,” spirited, commanding American, Delano, and the “slovenly,” “undemonstrative,” ailing Spaniard, Cereno—comparisons evocative of the legacies of earlier nationalist discourse like Crèvecoeur (169-169). Melville’s contemporaries, like the fictional Delano, could bask in a perceived moral and physical superiority over Old-World Popish rivals,⁸⁴ but Melville, according to Emery, recognizes in both captain-imperialists a “single” ominous “destiny,” grimly circuitous (63).⁸⁵

Benito Cereno follows the seaman, Delano (a fictionalized version of the eighteenth-century real-life adventurer) as he boards the beleaguered *San Dominick* with promises of aid and supply, unaware that the ship has come through a deadly slave insurrection. Though he is discomfited by the Spanish captain’s incapacities and anxieties, by the crew’s uncanny movements and whisperings, and by the atypical interactions between the white sailors and black slaves, Delano refuses to yield to suspicion, and instead trusts, until the final climatic scene, the explanation first offered of the ship’s obvious tribulations: Cereno, upon welcoming Delano, recounts a tale of rough weather, rampant disease, and inadequate provisions.

Freeburg reads *Benito Cereno* as a “crucial intertext” of slave narratives, taking note, as I’ve done, of the superimposition of sea literature (namely Melville’s) with plantation regimes (112). As in *Incidents*, when Jacobs’s outwitting of Dr. Flint exhausts and infuriates the master, the slaves aboard the *San Dominick* “make mischief in master’s minds” by threatening the ideological assumption constructed to keep slaves—as chattel property—in check and under control (112). For the Spanish captain, his loss of command becomes a lack of “self-command”: he grows chronically “passive,” “dreary,” “spiritless,” is always fainting, leaning, too weary to stand (167). Delano equates Cereno’s constitutional long-suffering with the ship’s “misrule,” with “prominent breaches” of discipline and with the absence of “subordinate deck officers” to “police” the “populace” (169, 172). Though reached accidentally, Delano’s conclusion is correct: Cereno’s “sickness”—his physical and psychic decay—results from the collapse of hierarchal structures that produce the master class. Delano calls Cereno a “paper captain”—a derogatory assessment of the Spaniard’s perceived disciplinary style—but ontologically the charge gets at the weakness, the thinness of the human constructs (both of master and slave) on which the story and its examinations of race, capitalism, and imperialism depend (179). Though he survives the insurrection in body, Cereno unravels in mind because the fact of uprising, the very possibility of race/class reversal obliterates his entire epistemological reality.⁸⁶

All three masters—Aranda, Delano, and Cereno—believe in the fantasy of absolute class and race power, of captains over seamen and of masters over slaves.⁸⁷ We learn that Don Alexandro Aranda (the executed owner of the *San Dominick*’s mutinous slaves) kept his human cargo “unfettered” aboard the ship, so sure he was of his supreme

authority (). Delano, too, is susceptible to racist nearsightedness. Jean Fagan Yellin writes that Delano portrays “the stock Yankee traveler” of plantation fiction, a character charmed by patriarchal bonds between submissive, child-like blacks and idle, aging masters. In this role, the American captain provides yet another example of the eerie plantation imaginary that lays over the *San Dominick*.⁸⁸ Aranda, Delano, and Cereno “exemplify the strictures,” Freeburg says, that sustains the thinking of total mastery as a prerequisite of total freedom (98). That the lives of these men intersect aboard a ship is not inconsequential. The fullness of nation-state machinery and the uses of state craft—all that is “symbolized,” Leslie and Stuckey say, “by the ship” in nineteenth-century literature—is that which undergirds their ideas and makes possible the legal and political ramifications of these (298).

Equally consequential is the fact that Babo cannot realize his freedom dreams—he cannot sail the ship back to Africa— even after he’s gained control of the white crew. Babo’s continued need for Cereno’s technological and navigational skill symbolizes the limits of black power—even violent, radical, insurgent power—in a period that cast blackness wholly outside the nation’s citizenry, always on the vulnerable fringes or in the desperate throes of political structures and legal codes that *steered* freedom elsewhere.⁸⁹ Much work on the literary topic of slave rebellion tends to assume what Hole calls “the liberatory potential of insurrection”—an “emancipative outcome” that exists within a grand teleological narrative of the enlargements of liberal subjectivity and its claims: citizenship, autonomy, legal and protective status, freedom (222). More complex is the recent attention to antebellum literary figures, free and enslaved, who pass between jurisdictions and boundaries,⁹⁰ ones who move, in Jeannine DeLombard’s words, “in and

out of various states of captivity, rebellion and fugitiveness” never quite bringing to fruition the material, political and legal effects of freedom.⁹¹ Babo may evince Frederick Douglass’s assertion that slavery cannot “entirely kill the elastic spirit of the bondman”⁹² (surely, his cunning and force embody the antiracist sentiments of the text, especially when juxtaposed with Aranda’s and Delano’s foolish stereotyping); still Babo’s agency falls tragically short of yielding emancipation for himself and his compatriots. Rather, as Freeburg notes, the “thoroughgoing irresolvable conflict” produced between Cereno and Babo produces only paralysis and opposition, making the extrapolation of “democratic hope” or even “glimpses of freedom” impossible (95).⁹³

Critical opinions of Melville’s engagement with slavery, especially as regards *Benito Cereno*, are in fact mixed. Scholars such as Freeburg, departing from the likes of Sundquist and James, maintain that Melville “emphatically resists any coherent or verifiable position” on his era’s most decisive political issue, however sympathetic his story is of the *San Dominick* slaves (and even this is hardly decided upon) (129).⁹⁴ According to Freeburg, Melville eschews politics (at least the partisan type) for a more philosophical analysis of the ontological underpinnings of America’s racial paradox.⁹⁵ Leslie and Stuckey agree, writing that *Benito Cereno* dramatizes, in “stunning” terms, the material and psychic “crutch” that slavery is for the master class (298).⁹⁶ The novella provides, in this way, one of literature’s most provocative representations of the Hegelian position on this problematic.⁹⁷ In Hegel’s classic allegorical struggle, master and slave “risk their lives” in the battle for “self-consciousness, recognition, and... absolute knowledge” (Freeburg 130). The dialectic is uniquely and ironically suited for the theater of the ship⁹⁸ considering the frequency of death at sea, but more importantly, for the fact

that death—and death alone—was understood to be the “great social leveler,” affecting whites and blacks, captains, seaman, and slaves alike.⁹⁹

The simple Hegelian conflict of oppressor/oppressed collapses in *Benito Cereno*, a text more about the psychological consequences of “the fact of domination” than it is about the specification of U.S. chattel slavery (Strong 289-290). Freeburg sees the “power of blackness”—that which is manifest in the revolting slaves—as the ultimate form of destruction in the novella, as obliterating the “viable connections,” “social reality,” and “cultural knowledge” that “constitutes” “mastership” and hence political order in liberal capitalism (93). The mini-apocalypse dramatized in the trauma,¹⁰⁰ silence,¹⁰¹ and unraveling of Cereno and of Babo, whose power is unsustainable and whose life is taken, is one through which capital, death, and personhood are rendered coextensive equivalents, bound partners. The relationship between the captain and slave, their inextricability, articulates the impossibility for freedom (in its present historical articulation) to be distinguishable or separated from captivity, oppression, and bondage. Hence, Strong concludes that Cereno and Babo (both masters and slaves) are “inseparable” (Babo is called Cereno’s constant and “private” companion—denoting intimacy but also interiority, as in conflated selves), “irreconcilable” (Cereno cannot face Babo at trial without fainting) and “interchangeable” (Days after they cross the plaza, moving in identical directions, both men meet similarly enigmatic and “voiceless” ends).¹⁰²

The *San Dominick’s* insurrection upends established orders on the ship, thrusting the craft and its peoples into displacement and bewilderment, into a delocalized, de-specified oceanic space that is terrorizing and strange. This strangeness is exemplified by

Delano's encounter (which is the reader's encounter) of the revolt *in medias res* and also by the effect of the foreign ship's "enchantment":

Always upon first boarding a large and populous ship at sea, especially a foreign one, with a nondescript crew such as Lascars or Manilla men, the impression varies in a peculiar way from that produced by first entering a strange house with strange inmates in a strange land. Both house and ship—the one by its walls and blinds, the other by its high bulwarks like ramparts—hoard from view their interiors till the last moment: but in the case of the ship there is this addition; that the living spectacle it contains, upon its sudden and complete disclosure, has, in contrast with the blank ocean which zones it, something of the effect of enchantment. The ship seems unreal; these strange costumes, gestures, and faces, but a shadowy tableau just emerged from the deep, which directly must receive back what it gave. 166

The "house" with which the ship is compared—a "strange house with strange inmates in a strange land"—is not at all strange to this dissertation; rather, it calls to mind the Pyncheon mansion with its odd, aging inmates and also the dilapidated, remote Usher house and its crazed "potentate" (a word used also in connection with Cereno).¹⁰³ Like the ominous, old-world mansions of Hawthorne and Poe, the *San Dominick* is "a principal relic of faded grandeur"—"in sad repair," "battered and mouldy" (164). Joining his Romantic contemporaries, Melville sets his commentary on nineteenth-century human relations, severe captivity, and hoped-for freedom in a particular buildingscape of bondage—a decaying, ancient architecture with an aristocratic "master" sitting "seriously affected," "frightened," and death-like (169).

Much like Poe's narrator, who we recall is stilled at the sight of Usher's uncanny estate rising dreamlike out of a dreary terrain, Delano is "enchanted" (in this moment as "always") by the ship's "living spectacle"—its theatrics of extreme command and captivity set so radically against the vast, boundless, ahistorical "blank" of oceanic expanse. Delano misreads the power structure on the *San Dominick* precisely because of his "enchantment" with the fantasy of proper race-class relations—the "spectacle" of "unreal" (meaning unnatural) domination, dehumanization, and autocratic power that manages the movements, postures, and peoples (the "costumes," "gestures," and "faces") of interpolated seafaring subjects. The terracentric codes of human organization which excite and "enchant" Delano are indeed "strange"—set, as they are, against the ocean's sublime freedom— but only in that they are grossly perverted, utterly "peculiar," much like the system of chattel slavery with which the ship's purposes are wed.

Recalling the many and evocative associations between seeing and possessing, between vision and mastery, Delano's "failure to see" the true dynamics aboard the *San Dominick* renders metaphoric the actual usurpation of authority that has taken place. A motif of seeing organizes much of the narrative. Drawing upon it, Cereno tells Delano, with bitter irony, "I am owner of all you see" (180). What Delano "sees" in the Spanish captain's "suffering," in the "unruly" conduct of the crew, and in the "confusing" human relations poses a "repeated challenge," readers are told, to his "eye," an eye called "inexperienced" and "blunt-thinking"—always straining to fix its gaze amidst a constant "haze," "grayness," and "fog." (172, 175, 176). Again and again in the texts examined for this project, vision is tied to power, privilege, and freedom: the ability to see is the ability to call forth, to name, to exist, and to possess. Babo uses the sight line to his

advantage, to assert his command: early in the tale, Cereno “drops his eyes to the deck,” meeting the gaze of his “kneeling servant,” who’d been engaged in “adjusting a loose shoe buckle” (188). The cliché pose—towering master, bowing servant—persuades Delano that a proper command structure exists, but Cereno, in actuality, is receiving orders from the black face, “turned openly up,” and proceeds henceforth with “guilty” caution in his conversation with Delano. (188). Readers can only assume that Babo must have “read”—with great skill, indeed—the habits, routines, assumptions, and practices of his white captors in ways that allowed him to turn so masterfully upon them.¹⁰⁴

It is in the infamous shaving scene, however, that the link between right vision and freedom is most explicitly drawn. Here, Delano’s failure to see properly is cited as evidence of his own captivity and lack of autonomy—what Melville (presaging Foucault) calls “the regulated mind” (214). Witnessing Babo leaning ominously over the “nervously shuddering” Cereno—the latter’s “usual ghastliness intensified” in “contrast” with the “sooty” body of the “negro”—Delano opens, but for the “vanishing breath” of a moment, to the possibility that “in the black he saw a headsman, and in the white a man at the block” (214). The moment is as fleeting as it is sudden; Delano cannot accommodate the fact of race reversal within the scope of the rational, so antithetical it is to the logics that govern his social world. Delano—a member of the powerful social elite—is, even so, not “free” from the formal relations that order the state. Rather, he is “regulated”—in “mind,” as in rank, class, gender, and status—by the dictates of this membership. Hence, the novella warns: “the best regulated mind is not always free” (214). *Benito Cereno* reveals freedom’s impossibility to be the ontological reality of psychic violence, of self-making through dialectics of domination, which organize the

making of citizens within the imperialist nation-state.¹⁰⁵ The text insists, as Strong has argued, that where human oppression exists, full freedom survives for no one.¹⁰⁶

In another scene, Delano attempts to alleviate his sense of foreboding by speaking with a Spanish sailor engaged in tying knots. The sailor declines, aware that the rebellion leader, Atufal (Babo's co-conspirator), is "standing quietly" and vigilantly behind (202). Rising and removing to the forward part of the ship, the sailor passes Delano his "extraordinarily elaborate combination of knots": "Double—bowline—knot, treble—crown—knot, backhanded—well-knot, knot-in-and-out-knot, and jamming knot" (202). Leslie and Stuckey interpret the gesture as a subtle attempt on the part of the Spaniard to convey to Delano the vexed entanglements aboard the *San Dominick*.¹⁰⁷ If so, the sailor vastly overestimates Delano's interpretive powers and figurative imagination. Still, the knots are crucial; they serve as a key symbol of misreading—the kind that props up Delano's fantastical thinking—and also of unraveling, the inevitable outcome of the collapse of that thinking and of the structures it maintains.

It is easy to disparage Delano; unfortunately so, perhaps, since his essential failure—that of the imagination—remains very much our own troubling and ubiquitous one. The novella's assault on comprehension and identification—one developed through its thematics of trauma, paralysis, and silence¹⁰⁸—is "hardly a new motif" in critical history (Toal 39). Rather, Delano's snares and stupidities, which operate as *Benito Cereno's* most prominent perspective,¹⁰⁹ help to achieve what Catherine Toal identifies as a key objective of the text: the dismantling of fictional form. Toal focuses specifically on Aranda's ostensibly cannibalized skeletal remains and the "non-representation" of the act that produced it (39-40). These sensationalisms operate in tandem, as the critic notes,

with other evocative “absences”—all of which point to a traumatic void in perspective and affiliation. In the end, the novella’s plot, with its “interminable” “locks, knots, masks, and tableaux”¹¹⁰ proves to be— like the fantasy of white racial identification—a threatened, incomprehensible fiction.¹¹¹

To Freeburg, this “hovering sense of impasse” is what “sustains” the novella from beginning to end (95). Mediating this paralysis is Babo: he keeps Delano in ignorance and Cereno captive to terrifying reenactments. Still, Babo is his own enigma: the leader possesses no accessible or recognizable interiority; rather, he dissolves into a kind of black and “silent sign”—an embodiment of the aporia *dead-in-the-law*.¹¹² Readers are left to perceive him only as the “shadow” cast across the eviscerated Cereno.¹¹³ In the deadlocked suspension of paralyzed commanding authority, *Benito Cereno* depicts a world without the prospect of progress, justice, or persuasion.¹¹⁴ In place of these, Delano’s exercise of force and the restoration of state-law and criminal discipline reestablishes normative, hierarchal race-class logics—ones Melville found to be concurrent with U.S. power—and also a commitment to forgetting the past and its catastrophes.¹¹⁵

Memory, in this novella, returns us to the sea and to the demands posed on humankind. At the story’s end, Delano cajoles the forlorn Cereno to “Forget it.” “See, yon bright sun has forgotten it all,” says Delano, “and the blue sea, and the blue sky; and these have turned over new leaves” (257). In response, Cereno “dejectedly” but astutely insists, “Because they have no memory...because they are not human” (257). By refusing to forget, by locating forgetting outside of human possibility, Cereno’s final speech is a

rejection of life within the death space of modernity—the populated, protective, abstracted social world of the heavily regulated and endlessly captive mind.

Notes

1. See Equiano, 64.
2. The snow was a square rigged, two mast vessel; its name derives from the Dutch. Popularized in the eighteenth century, it was employed across the globe. I take this description from Rediker's account of Equiano's most likely form of travel. See Rediker, 116-177.
3. For more discussion of the ship within global capitalism, See Rediker, Blum, Linebaugh and Rediker, Bales and Trodd, Connery, and DeLoughrey.
4. See Berger, 2. See also Rozwadowski. Rozwadowski's book about the development of marine science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries offers a view of oceanic history in the broadest sense, combining scientific ambitions and discovery with literary and artistic achievement.
5. See also Blum, 8. See also Linebaugh and Rediker, 157.
6. McKittrick is thinking specifically here about racist constructions of black subjectivity within the geographic terrain of the diaspora. Slave ships but also other geopolitical and commercial vessels figure prominently in this history.
7. Cohen's evaluation of the ship draws upon Bakhtin in ways similar to my consideration of the castle and the road in chapter two. See Cohen, 660. Developing a similar theory as Cohen and much like my interpretation of captivity in Poe, Sundquist refers to Melville's ship in *Benito Cereno* as "a perfect chronotope" (143).

8. For further discussion, see Cohen. See also Connery, 688, and Rediker. As regards *Benito Cereno*, see Sundquist, 137-138, 149, 154. See also Strong, 284, and Leslie and Stuckey, 292. The phrase “theaters of human action” comes from Cohen, see 658. Cohen is situation maritime studies in a broader Romantic construct and understanding of nature. As regards space and struggle, I am drawing from McKittrick’s discussion of geography and domination, one in which geopolitical global activities play a crucial role.
9. See McKittrick, 12; see also Connery, 668.
10. See Linebaugh and Rediker, 6-7. The authors, through their concept of the hydra, explore partly how the ruling classes built and order of discipline and conquest through global seafaring movements and human contact and connection.
11. While the field of oceanic studies involves non-nationalistic, deterritorialized readings of sea literature, I am interested in the ways these two texts, and maritime fiction generally, interrogate nationalist ideologies and structures beyond national borders.
12. Rediker is speaking specifically of the slave ship, but his work with Linebaugh in *The Many Headed Hydra* extends such findings and analysis to include ships more broadly. See also Connery, 688.
13. See Rediker, 144.
14. See Rediker, 10. For more on the origins of race in an early American and Atlantic world context, see Gustafson. See also McKittrick, xi.
15. See Rediker, 10.

16. Cohen and James also write of the crew in Melville's *Moby-Dick* as offering an image of factory labor. James, however, romanticizes this, seeing a kind of "heroism" in the "everyday doing" of their work. Regardless, the members of the Pequod are arguably automated by capitalist service, made into labor machines (30). See James, 22 and 30.
17. See Berger, 3. I quote his text first in the sentence.
18. For a discussion, see Hole, 233.
19. Neither vehicles of reform nor discipline, the prison-ships existed to remove soldiers from the Revolutionary effort. As Madera reports, fewer than half interned aboard survived. See 176.
20. See Rediker, 225-226.
21. For more on the abolitionist campaign, especially its powerful visual rhetorics, see Rediker's discussion of the infamous *Brooks*, 308-342.
22. Dana's depiction of the Pilgrim's hold echoes, in style, tone, and language, Equiano's famous account of the middle passage. Dana writes, "Yet anything was better than the horrible state of things below...that inexpressible sickening smell.... I remember very well going to the hatchway and putting my head down when I was oppressed by nausea" (46). Allusions, like these, to the middle passage were not lost on Dana's reviewers. Edward Tyrell Channing, using cliché terminology culled from ultraist abolitionist discourse, noted that Dana seemed "a slave of the worst kind" and his ship "a den of horrors" (Philbrick, 19).
23. In making this point, I draw from the work of Berger, Rediker, Linebaugh and Rediker, Schell, and Sinche. Blum has written about the solitary, even leisure time

aboard the ship as part of her argument about the robust and under-considered literary lives of mariners. While interesting, I do not find Blum's depictions of sea life echoed in the work of other scholars I read for this project or in the nineteenth-century narratives I considered. Furthermore, Blum's hellish descriptions of violence, trauma, and autocracy seems to belie the generative self-reflection and creative meditation seafaring ostensibly could and did afford.

24. Again, Rediker is writing specifically of the slave ship, but the roles he interrogates were not reserved for the slave vessel alone.
25. This passages evokes Jacobs's claim in *Incidents* that the law binds black female slaves to immorality by forcing complicity and cooperation with vicious, licentious, immodest masters.
26. See Rediker, 14, for a spatial mapping of power relations across the Atlantic, one that relates in ways to the ship's structure.
27. See James, 3, for a discussion of the pageantry within space that became part of the means by which captains maintained discipline.
28. From their elevated seats, these "masters" of "authority" restrain the excited blacks and give orders to the crew of whites (Leslie and Stuckey, 292).
29. It is worth noting that a somewhat more cooperative, egalitarian spirit existed on merchant ships, especially on whaling vessels. For more discussion, see Schell and also Linebaugh and Rediker, 100.
30. For a fuller discussion of the historical concomitances between modes of captive labor, see Rediker. See also Kopacz.

31. See Hole, 233. Of course, Delano is not a tyrant. In fact, as Hole discusses, his penchant for decency serves Melville's broader critique of management regimes as part of the shared and linked influences of U.S. power and liberal ideology.
32. See Rediker, 157.
33. See Blum, 4 and 9. By the antebellum period, conditions for working class seaman had improved, somewhat, do to reformist initiatives of the kind that Dana's text engaged with. Nonetheless, the seaman remained a marginal and highly vulnerable figure. For further discussion of the lives whalemens, in particular, and of their unique function in the cultural imaginary, see Schell 43. See Schell, 9, for a discussion of antebellum whaling narratives (J. Ross Browne's *Etchings of a Whaling Cruise*, Ben-Ezra Stiles Ely's *There She Blows*, Daniel Weston Hall's *Arctic Roving*, and George Fox Tucker's *A Quaker Home*) that employ the metaphor of slavery.
34. For pictures and descriptions of these disciplinary apparatuses, see Rediker, image insert.
35. See Brown, 29-30.
36. See 2. See also Bales and Trodd for a discussion of modern accounts of slavery and the enduring, evocative binds between forced migration and modernity.
37. See Rediker, 164, 227, and 326. Quoted passage comes from page 326, Rediker's descriptions of Thomas Clarkson's observations.
38. I draw, here, from the work of Rediker and Linebaugh and Rediker. In doing so, I depart, most notably, from Blum's depictions of sailor consciousness and of a rich maritime literary life.

39. See James, 15
40. See James, 112. For more discussion, see Katz.
41. See Strong, 290.
42. See Berger, 4. See also Cohen 657, 659. See Connery, 689. See DeLoughrey, 704-705.
43. See Gould. I would add to this that it is possible to read the modern deep-sea vessel, its logics and conditions, as a critical response to the sublime, limitless potential that oceans represent—as a material architecture, in other words for restricting and binding the terrifying impossibility of pure freedom. Berger, in a related point, invites us to conceive the ship as the spatial/political signifier—the nomos—of conceptual and juridical orders necessary for carving out free territories, notion, identities, and spaces in the modern world. See 14.
44. For a history of the book's reception and its literary realism, see Philbrick, 18-21. See also Lucid, 243, and Blum, 86.
45. See Blum, 86-87 and 71-72. See Philbrick, 23. See also Lucid, 245, and Sinche, 404.
46. See Blum, 86-87. See also Philbrick.
47. Philbrick suggests this is too narrow a reading of the text, see 21. See also Blum, 10.
48. See Philbrick.
49. See Philbrick, 9.
50. See Philbrick, 21. Another of Dana's teachers, Harvard's Edward Tyrell Channing, reviewed *Two Years* in a style that betrays reform's easy slippage into

rhetorical excess: “What a dreadful doom is this of the common mariner, trained as he must be to habits which he can never hope to change...reduced to a degradation...[to] this den of horrors.” See Philbrick, 19. See also Greeson for a discussion of the language and style of reform. Indeed, Dana’s tantalizing confession that much “wickedness” was omitted—by moral “necessity”—from his autobiographical sketch evokes common provocations of ultraist and abolitionist discourse. We recall similar sentiments and tensions in *Incidents*; see chapter two.

51. Philbrick, drawing on the research of Lucid, claims that “no improvement in the economic or legal status of seamen can be traced directly” to the publication of Dana’s book. Having said this, Blum and others confirm the importance and popularity of Dana’s text and also the many improvements and beneficial impacts of charitable societies and maritime labor reform efforts generally on the conditions of sea life over the course of the antebellum decades.
52. See Philbrick, 21.
53. See Sinche, 388.
54. Focusing specifically on *Two Years* as a retrospective text, Sinche identifies a temporal push-pull (as well as some factual inconsistencies) that betrays the “special unity across time” one associates with realism and life writing (388).
55. See Philbrick’s definition of genre and connection to European tradition, 23-24.
56. See also Philbrick, 25.
57. See Channing’s review of Dana in Philbrick, 19.

58. See Conrad who considers the notion of Dana as a man who came “down from heights” to “learn truths” in the forecabin to be an invention of Dana’s audience, one propagated by Dana’s own awareness of how he would be seen by that audience (295). See also Philbrick, 25-26.
59. See Sinche for a description of “sailors for life,” 377.
60. See Baepler, introduction.
61. Rediker writes of an eighteenth-century figure, James Stanfield, who might be thought of as an historical kin of Dana’s. For more discussion, see Rediker, 134.
62. See Sinche, 382.
63. This decision follows Dana’s bout with measles that ostensibly caused the complications with his vision. See Conrad for a discussion of heredity.
64. See Conrad, 296.
65. See Conrad, 293.
66. See Conrad, 291. An amazing ironic use of Dana’s text has been in its employment, so Conrad says, in optometrist’s office for vision tests.
67. See Greeson on Crèvecoeur, 21-22, 24-32, and 44. See also Sundquist, whose analysis of *Benito Cereno* draws upon the legacy of these same early nationalist distinctions. Relatedly, Emery has argued that Melville was concerned with mid-century arguments for American intervention in Cuba—arguments rooted in notions of new world and old world contrast. Melville’s critique of nationalist rhetoric equating Americans with “energy,” “libertarianism” and “efficiency” and Europeans with “weakness,” “despotism,” and “disorderliness” plays out in the relationship between Delano and Cereno. The ironic dichotomies drawn between

these characters also observes another Spanish-American parallel: anti-Catholic sentiment, which peaked in the 1850's. As Emery explains, Protestant Americans (Delano's people) would have been "appalled" by any comparison between themselves and the Spanish. See Emery, 50 and 50-57.

68. See Greeson, 21-22, 24-32, and 44.

69. As Philbrick notes, the men of the *Pilgrim* are "a mixed lot," paradigmatic of the cosmopolitan "motley crews" Rediker, James, and Jennifer Schell each describe. They indeed "carry along with them" the capitalist and geopolitical imperatives that prompted U.S. merchant fleets. Heroic portraits of American seamen, especially whalers, occupy five chapters of Crèvecoeur's book. The "bold" and "active" work of mariners aided the French native in advancing an idea of American exceptionalism. See Schell, 2.

70. See n68.

71. See Conrad, 303.

72. See n68.

73. See Conrad, 294. Conrad makes this point in considering Dana's experiences in California.

74. See Conrad, 302-302. For a related but broader and also highly compelling discussion of the "sea eye" in maritime literature, see Blum 109-132.

75. See Strong. See also Sundquist, 148.

76. Hole is quoting Richardson and considering international treaties like the Treaty of Paris (1783) and the Treaty of Ghent (1814).

77. See also Hole, 222, for a discussion of the international as within the domestic problematic in *Benito Cereno*.
78. See Hole, 219.
79. See Hole, 232, for a discussion of this pretext in *Benito Cereno*, notably as regards broader regimes for forcefully organizing populations in space.
80. See Leslie and Stuckey on northern romantic racist thought.
81. For more on the ideology of the magazine, see Emery, 54-55. See also Strong, 283.
82. For more on the theme of manifest destiny in *Benito Cereno*, see Strong, 289-290.
83. See Sundquist, 139.
84. For a discussion of anti-Catholic sentiment in the text, see also Emery, 63.
85. Sundquist has shown how the skeletal remains of the executed slave master Alexandro Aranda conjoin past, present, and future in the story, linking and emblemizing centuries of seafaring devastation: exploration, conquest, slavery, infestation, and genocide.
86. See Freeburg, 90-129.
87. See Freeburg, 96. This is the very premise of Freeburg's provocative treatment of "blackness" in this text.
88. See Sundquist, 148, for a discussion of Yellin. I am quoting from Sundquist's text.
89. Freeburg concludes that the insurgents do not expose any "revolutionary ideal" rather represent a failure of absolute mastery (95-96).
90. See McKittrick and Hole on fugitivity.

91. See Hole, 222. I am quoting here from his use of DeLombard's work.
92. See Freeburg, 103.
93. This despite the critical penchant to read the text otherwise. For further discussion, see Freeburg, 97. See also Hole, who speaks of asymmetric relations in the text that foreclose the possibility of emancipation, 221-222.
94. With regard to Sundquist's historicist reading, for example, Freeburg charges the critic with insufficiently attending to the existential aspects of that history. See Freeburg, 119.
95. See Freeburg's chapter "Thwarting the 'Regulated Mind.'" See also Strong, 288, who offers the more explicit statement on this subject.
96. See 298. In Melville's text, Babo is called "an ever present crutch" for Cereno.
97. See Freeburg, 130-131. For more discussion of this dialectic at work in *Benito Cereno*, see Leslie and Stuckey.
98. Melville sets his tale on one of the most notoriously "ghastly" stages of human theater—the slave ship. Strong compares the *San Dominick* to the classical three-stage Elizabethan stage. For more, see Strong, 286. Others note the tale's theatricality; see Leslie and Stuckey, 292. See also Sundquist, 154.
99. See Brown, 2-3 and 4, who notes that more than sixty percent of European newcomers to West Africa and the Americas died within a year; only one in ten lived more than three years docked to semi-permanent port communities. Rampant disease (namely scurvy, cholera, typhus, and yellow fever) malnutrition, overwork, overcrowding, accidents, storms, coercive brutality, execution, and suicide led to markedly high mortality rates on vastly differently ships and

courses. A common theme of melancholic sailor-tales and work songs observe the eeriness of life aboard these floating death chambers, recording experiences with lingering, foreboding spectral presences; see Brown, 4. For further discussion of the deadly nature of maritime work, see Blum. See also Christopher, Pybus, and Rediker, 11.

100. See Sundquist, who reads the crisis aboard the San Dominick in traumatic terms: as circular displacements and frozen confrontations, 150.
101. See Freeburg, 97-104.
102. For textual examples, see 169 and 258. For further discussion, see Strong, 297. Strong is drawing here on the work of Joyce Adler (“Benito Cereno, Slavery, and Violence in the Americas.” *Critical Essays on Herman Melville’s Benito Cereno*. Edited by Robert Berkholder. New York: GK Hall, 1992: 82-83.)
103. See 169.
104. See Rediker on the three phases of uprising, 293.
105. See Freeburg, 96. In this chapter, Freeburg shows “blackness” vis-à-vis Benito Cereno to be the “cruel ontological reality” underlying vulnerable existential selves and social structures (18).
106. See 290, 298.
107. See 294. For more on this theme, see Hole 234.
108. See Freeburg, 95-97, 104,125-126. See also DeLoughrey, 705, Sundquist, 150, and Toal, 39-40.
109. For more on Delano’s third person point of view, see Strong, 285.
110. See Toal’s discussion of Maurice Lee’s work, 47-48.

111. See Hole, 234, who reads the narrative style and plot in *Benito Cereno* as representing conflict as a kind of knotting.
112. See Freeburg, 104, 128.
113. See Hole, 239-240. Hole thinks of this shadow in the context of a commitment to forgetting, on that bolsters forms of violence and domination.
114. See Hole, 227.
115. See Hole, 239-240.

Chapter Five

From the Mill Girl to the Korl Woman: Wage Slavery and Market Freedom in the Literatures of Emerging U.S. Capitalism

“To the working class...the system of profit...is, and will continue to be, as long as it continues at all, an iron chain of bondage.”¹

This project has attempted to account for the weight of captivity upon imaginative and actual iterations of freedom in the decades leading up to the Civil War. It began with Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables*, a novel suggestive of “leveling democracy,” of a “course of history” witness to greater personal freedom through economic and class restructuring.² Set, as its main tale is, in the rapidly urbanizing decade of the 1840’s, *Seven Gables* is a kind of “diagnosis,” to use Henry James’s term, of the “transition” from one society (pre-industrial, aristocratic, and diseased) to another (urban, democratic, and self-inventive).³ Lloyd Pratt notes how the market economy infiltrates the antiquated Pyncheon mansion—seamlessly, almost as if by magic—in Phoebe’s profitable cent-shop.⁴ Still, Phoebe’s arrival, however restorative, evokes an industrial-age theme of upheaval and displacement, one writ large over the entire book. The economic depression of rural New England that brings Phoebe to Salem is the same one that fills the mills of neighboring Lowell.⁵

The spread of market relations and capitalist systems of production and discipline in the antebellum era had a profound impact on the concept of freedom—political, personal, and economic. The relocation of economic production from the home to the factory accompanied a set of social innovations—in transportation, communication, and

technology—that was recognized in its own moment as “a complete revolution of domestic life and manners.”⁶ While the spread of market systems did not mean immediate industrialization of all trades and crafts or of every region of the country, even in sectors of the economy where industrialization moved more slowly, a reordering of social relations linked to an expanding capitalist infrastructure took shape and produced new configurations. The historic revolution in American industrial manufacturing encompasses, roughly, the period of 1830-1880. It is one marked by shifts in the site of production (from the artisan shop to the full-scale factory), in labor (from highly skilled to largely unskilled workers), and in automation (from hand to machine production).⁷ This revolution was inherently dehumanizing: as the labor force became less skilled and machinery more expensive and specialized, people were supplanted by raw capital—a phenomenon economists call “capital deepening.” Jeremy Atack, Fred Bateman, and Robert Margo note that capital-labor ratios in U.S. manufacturing increased by at least 75 percent between 1850 and 1880.⁸ Moreover, capital and labor, once yoked in “intimate” ways, was by 1850 “linked” more “indifferently” and anonymously as “cash, contract, and commodity” (Tuchinsky 7).

If the darker aspects of free market enterprise vanish in *The House of the Seven Gables*, in the domestic creed that sentimentalizes the passage of one economic order to another,⁹ the circumstances and conditions of industrial labor and the discipline and surveillance of the factory materialize in a range of literature—novels, essays, reform tracts, broadsides, penny presses, trade magazines, and ladies journals—so much so that Adam Tuchinsky has called the “labor question” the essential problem of the nineteenth-century (1). Industrial labor fueled an unprecedented contestation over the meaning and

possibilities of freedom in disparate social economies—free and slave, urban and rural—one remarkably relevant and instructive even as we contemplate capitalism at this late stage. This chapter will draw upon a range of experiences and writing, from socialist critiques of the free market to liberal democratic defenses, from a working-class embrace of factory life to a bourgeois disavowal. It will reveal a literature and social discourse vastly unsettled as regards the terms and possibilities of *homo œconomicus*—the autonomous, moneyed subject-dream of the liberal world.¹⁰

From the 1830's through the 1850's, wage labor—as opposed to individual ownership of productive property—increasingly became the economic basis of survival for a burgeoning U.S. population.¹¹ This posed a radical challenge to an underlying and founding ethos of American freedom, one embodied in the figure of the self-made independent man. How wage earning, as a practice, could be folded into the liberal idea of self-reliance popularized by Enlightenment and Romantic thinkers from Locke to Emerson was a subject of great seriousness. Protests over low wages, long hours, and poor working conditions were present in the earliest calls for labor reform; however, more concerning to an array of social thinkers was the very fact of wage work and its incompatibility with freedom.¹² Writers as diverse in ideology and vision as socialist Orestes Brownson and slave apologist George Fitzhugh could agree on many of capitalism's most furtive fictions such as the prospect of economic mobility and the voluntarism of the contractual agreement.¹³ Still others from Adam Smith to Emerson were able to reconcile free market excesses, even entrenched class divisions, with New World ideals of prosperity, industry, and self-culture.

Images of captivity animated both pro- and anti-capitalist rhetoric, as a generation of thinkers and writers contended with the economic terms and conditions of what would become the world's largest free market economy. Central to the period's industrial momentum and discursive preoccupation was the rise of the factory. Edward Everett spoke favorably in 1830 of a "factory fever" sweeping his formerly bucolic New England.¹⁴ Like other prominent, conservative proponents of industrialization, Everett considered the future economic fate of the nation, its investments in factory manufacture, as tied to its self-sufficiency and independence of foreign manufactured imports.¹⁵ Everett's vision of the factory—one manifest in early industrial novels and mill writing—posits the feminine urban work space as a natural extension of the domestic realm of virtue, a place of self-improvement, industry, and familial and national duty.¹⁶ For reasons we'll see, this fantasy of factory life and gendered industrial living disintegrated as competition grew, wages fell, and strikes began. The first planned industrial city of Lowell, Massachusetts—one internationally acclaimed for its relatively high wages and its innovative methods of regimentation—collapsed, decrepit and unprofitable, by mid-century.¹⁷ Over the course of the 1850's, lower paid, lower skilled foreign laborers of mixed ages and genders replaced the mill girls in northern factories. Subsequently, boarding houses and company dormitories—as well as improvement clubs, Sabbath schools, reading rooms, and Lyceum events—gave way to full scale poverty, disease, illiteracy, child labor, and tenement slums. Such is the transition this chapter will trace from its examination of early nineteenth-century industrial literature written by and about mill girls to its closing consideration of Rebecca Harding Davis's 1861 tale "Life in the Iron Mills."

As a whole, this chapter aims to take account of the literary representation of a changing laboring reality, notably captivity's impacts (physical, discursive, and ideological) on negotiations of freedom. In its first section, the chapter will analyze the comprehensive debate over wage labor that preoccupied antebellum intellectuals, writers, and reformers across political and geographic terrains and that helped shape contestations and understandings of an expanding free market. In its second section, the chapter will consider the literary and artistic productions emanating from factory life, noting their engagement with the class, gender, and racial possibilities shaping a new, capitalist proletariat. What emerges from this analysis is a paradox of freedom, one evinced in part by the way factory hands reverted to work as a mode of expression. What we find in this literature is both an assertion of independence and a tacit concession of subjugation to an industrial "machine," one never quite able to govern workers as a totalizing force.

...

Capitalism has its roots in liberalism, a paradoxical yet foundational intellectual discourse of modernity. Key to "every version" of liberalism, argues Nikhil Pal Singh, is an "insistent quasi-naturalistic link between human and market freedom" (140). Popularized in the eighteenth-century socioeconomic theories of Adam Smith, "market liberalism" imagines the individual as "naturally coordinated" but also "regulated" through systems of competitive exchange.¹⁸ Within the liberal free market, individuals, private companies, and corporations can "make decisions" about "consumption and production" in with little government interference. (Ruccio 33).¹⁹ Of course, freedom as the freedom of unfettered economic activity or freedom as a set of inexplicable forces that bind people to market systems has been difficult to reconcile with other meanings of freedom within

liberalism, namely freedom as a “tendency toward political equality” and the Lockean idea of freedom as personal autonomy (Singh 141). The contemporary conception of the liberal-democratic, free-market nation-state consolidates these “tensions and ambiguities”; it is, perhaps, the apotheosis of what Singh identifies as requisite “innovative thought experiments and institutional arrangements” cohering liberalism’s contradictory and unstable elements (139, 141).

In antebellum America, with the nation-state emerging and market relations spreading rapidly, the continuing commercial growth and geographic expansion of slavery became a standard against which to judge the experience of economic freedom in the democracy.²⁰ As a totalizing form of captivity, slavery was the “master metaphor,” to use Eric Foner’s phrase, for describing nearly all obstacles to self-determination (58). Slavery emerged in many rhetorics of reform: early feminists spoke of “the slavery of the sex”; temperance advocates decried “chains of intoxication” (evoking slavery’s ubiquitous symbol of bondage). There was “political slavery,” “debt slavery”; Catholics were slaves to the Pope and men without sexual or other self-restraints were “slaves to oneself.”²¹ As we’ll see, “wage slavery” and its counterpart “factory slavery” served to critique the incompatibility of capitalism and freedom, most notably in the writing and activist positions of prominent socialists, utopians, and labor reformers in the U.S. and abroad such as Brownson, Marx, Robert Dale Owen, and Charles Fourier. Importantly, though, analogies between free labor and slave labor troubled some in the abolitionist community, particularly Frederick Douglass and William Lloyd Garrison. Foner equates their insistence upon the ideological and practical distinctions of free and slave labor with helping to legitimize the concept of working for pay.²² Finding employment in New

Bedford, Massachusetts—the “reward of which was to be entirely [his] own”—Douglass writes in his 1845 narrative, “I was now my own master” (90).²³

The ability to obtain the *fruit of one’s labor*, to advance—financially and managerially— within industrial institutions helped to solidify conceptions of economic self-determination at a time when rapid political democratization was eroding earlier aristocratic elitisms. As Foner explains, American economists generally reconciled growing, intractable class divisions and the problematics of wage labor by insisting that U.S. laborers—notoriously “industrious” and “frugal”—could “save money, purchase their own homes, acquire a farm or shop,” and hence join the propertied, ownership class (65).²⁴ Salutary views of wage labor were common in the antebellum north among industrialists, economic theorists, reformers, intellectuals, and workers too. New powers of consumption prompted by wages and by urban living were experienced by workers, particularly transplants from isolated rural communities as a new found freedom. Henry C. Clay (the prominent economist, not the famed Kentucky politician) explained the calculus as follows: “When individuals compete to purchase a commodity, its owner becomes a free man.”²⁵ Indeed, by mid-century, the right to participate and succeed in the competitive marketplace had become, in Foner’s words, “a touchstone of American freedom” (55).

Still, in the earliest industrial literature (that which dates back well before the antebellum industrial surge) the product of factory work had less to do with material goods or gain—a theme, for example, of many essays in *The Lowell Offering*— and more to do with the development of a diligent, active, and virtuous self.²⁶ Sarah Savage’s *The Factory Girl*, acknowledged as the first novel about factory work written in America,

anticipates Everett's 1830 defense of a feminized industrialization.²⁷ In the novel, young Mary Burnham takes employment "reeling cotton" in a "distant town" in order that her benevolent grandmother and irksome aunt (eventually also her aunt's four grandchildren) can remain in their country home (6). Her stint in the mill is neither "difficult nor laborious," a point which has led critics like Eric Shocket to censure the book as a "labor novel without labor" (6).²⁸ Instead, the cotton mill is represented as a space of feminine mission; it increases Mary's righteous impacts.²⁹ Moved by the plight of impoverished and uneducated children working in the mill, Mary operates a successful Sunday School.³⁰ Her "diligence and uniform pleasantness" as well as her piety and self-sacrifice are exemplary, and she "gains the good opinion" and affects the conduct of her employer, Mr. Crawford, and many companions (8). *The Factory Girl* represents a constant "harmony," as Thomas Lovell points out, "between factory and hearth" (3). Still, it is a harmony that operates in mutual dependence. Mary's domesticity incorporates her employment in the cotton mill; equally, though, the workplace subsumes the affective realm outside it.³¹ Wage labor comes to provide, Lovell says, the "rational basis" for determining Mary's moral responsibilities, even the ultimate position of wifedom (3). That Mary marries the widowed and "superiorly cultivated" farmer Mr. Danforth at the story's end, leaving the mill for a life of mothering his two boys, might seem to suggest that factory work, much like the more traditional occupation of teaching, provides an appropriate interlude between girlhood and womanhood, as opposed to its obstacle as Melville's much later story "The Tartus of Maids" would suggest (28). Even so, this novel plot is by no means the classic marriage plot. The terms of Mary's marriage to Danforth could hardly be less romantic, nor is the reader (let alone Mary) prepared for the

proposal. In their calculations, neither Mary nor Danforth is cold or mercenary; rather, Mary's judgment in accepting Danforth's offer "depends upon a view," Lowell has argued, "defined by wage labor" (17). Weighing the various losses and gains, the "costs and profits" of accepting his offer, Mary considers—in a kind but "frank" way—the "value" she "sets" on his "heart" (28). Mary's mind continues, even after moving with her new husband to Greenwich, its "rational" consideration of the conversion from self to wedded partner in economic (and increasingly ambiguous) terms as "an exchange" rather than "an accumulation of blessings" (29).³²

Wage labor becomes the metaphor and the model for labor generally in the novel because in Savage's view—one typical of her New England rearing—all meaningful, active labor (be it of hand or machine, domestic or industrial) enhances moral self-development. If the novel is progressive or feminist in any way it is only in its proposal that women ought to participate in and shape the nascent market expansions Savage witnessed.³³ For Savage as for Everett, wage work in the industrial setting, much like its antecedents on the farm or artisan shop, "allows people to become more human."³⁴ This mode of early industrial discourse, derived from the anti-Calvinist and Unitarian backgrounds of Savage and Everett, respectively,³⁵ helped shape the antebellum wage debate across the spectrum of political thought. To account for the full contestation—including the voices of radical socialists, free labor Republicans, and pro-slavery feudalists—it is worth considering the writing of such influential and divergent literary figures as Emerson, Melville, Orestes Brownson, and George Fitzhugh.

Poet, philosopher, and intellectual Ralph Waldo Emerson was from the same region and shared a similar religious upbringing as Savage and Everett; though his view

on industrial wage work has been shown to be more paradoxical and complicated. As Sophia Forster notes, Emerson's unique position contains elements of disparate and important influences—Transcendentalism, abolition, free labor, and liberal philosophy—ultimately departing, in Emersonian fashion, from each. From abolitionists and free labor advocates, Emerson accepted the idea that northern capitalism provided a cheaper, safer, and more efficient form of labor. Still, Emerson departed from late-stage free labor ideology, that closest to the Republican Party line, which stressed the extrinsic material and economic rewards of labor, thinking that led, ultimately, to the devaluing of manual labor.³⁶ For Emerson, the purest value of labor (in all of its forms) lay in labor's promotion of the expansion of the individual self. Work, for Emerson, was essentially ontological.³⁷ He urges in "Self-Reliance," "Do your work, and I shall know you. Do your work and you shall reinforce yourself" (181).³⁸

Emerson's justification of capitalism's class and labor differentiations is consistent, Forster proposes, with his notions of individuation and self-culture. His defense, it should be noted, also incorporates a Protestant concept of individual talents and the transcendental idea of natural correspondence. He writes in "The American Scholar," "Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier. In the divided or social state these functions are parceled out to individuals, each of whom aims to do his stint of the joint work" (84). Though Emerson would continue in the essay to theorize (and arguably privilege) the labor of "*man thinking*," of the scholar in America, evident here is a view of productivity that imparts value to all forms of labor, showing each to be part and parcel of the working-self and of its divine talents. Continuing this idea, notably the

connection between self-discovery and work, Emerson writes in “Self-Reliance,” “The power which resides in him is new in nature, and none but he knows what that is which he can do, nor does he know until he has tried” (176).

Emerson’s capitalist rationalizations, including, as Forster points out, his defense of a differential wage system,³⁹ assert the primacy of disparate faculties, divine gifts, and natural correspondences—concepts oddly aligned with notions of natural hierarchy that emerge in the pro-slavery writing of George Fitzhugh. Still, for Emerson the condition of possibility that makes labor free and opposed in every way to bound, chattel labor is the voluntarism of the capitalist labor contract. Emerson’s recapitulation of the liberal concept of autonomous self-ownership owes much to anti-slavery defenses of free labor, which are less about owning the means of production and more about being free to cultivate the self through work.⁴⁰ And yet, for most of the working class (men so unlike Emerson in education, experience, and thought) the expansion of capitalism over the course of the antebellum period was not experienced as an enhancement of personal liberty or self-knowledge, but rather, as Foner explains, as a “loss of control over...individual lives” (59). As the number of wage earners exceeded the number of slaves (a tipping point reached by midcentury),⁴¹ full-fledged critiques of capitalism served to unravel (or at least deconstruct) the false dichotomy between slavery and freedom underwriting the free labor agenda Emerson and many others found compelling.⁴²

The antebellum celebration of free labor across political parties and social thought obscured (then and now) the complexity of the labor question and of the multifaceted anxieties over market capitalism that existed in the period. Free labor ideology evolved,

as Tuchinsky has said, to become the “lynchpin” of the Republican Party—a “fragile political coalition” held together by a shared belief that free society produced wealth and prosperity for individuals and for the nation and that slavery, inherently corrupt and backward, stunted growth and development (12).⁴³ The idea that a permanent class of wage laborers bore striking resemblances to slavery, though objectionable to many abolitionists and staunch Republicans, was increasingly felt by labor radicals, socialists, intellectuals, Jacksonian Democrats, and even slave apologists, especially as industrialization and urbanization seemed increasingly difficult to distinguish from automatization, displacement, and systems of extreme discipline and surveillance. Wage slavery, as a rhetorical conflation, has its origins in the theories of Karl Marx, who frequently evoked slavery in his critiques of the factory regime. Writing in *Capital* about the severe power dynamic on industrial floors, to give but one example, Marx compared the factory overseer’s “book of penalties” to the “slaver driver’s lash” (549-550).

Aspects of the ironic overlap between white wage work and black slavery was underscored by experiments in the use of slave labor in antebellum southern textile mills. Textile manufacturing in the south varied in operation and location between the 1830’s and 1850’s. Generally speaking, mill owners were former planters who ran their factories as extensions of the plantation system. Historians have debated whether slave labor in southern factories was an intensification of bondage or a relief from the most egregious forms of field work. Early southern advocates of the use of slave labor in textile mills noted that it increased the market value of their human chattel (slaves acquired new technological skills in the factory). Industrial slave labor also proved useful in extending profitability over the course of the human lifespan: very young and also elderly slaves,

those too small or weak for field work, could be employed in the factory.⁴⁴ Noting the “dull, draining, and dangerous” conditions of factory work in the nineteenth century—circumstances which “worsened steadily” over the antebellum period as machines became more efficient—historian Randall Miller insists that the rigors and toils of the cotton field were “scarcely improved” inside the southern textile mill (472).

As extensions of the plantation system, southern mill operations provide a real-world translation of the metaphorical comparisons charging northern anti-industrial rhetoric. Most fascinating, perhaps, are the points of comparison southern textile mill owners reported between slaves and New Englanders in contrast to slaves and southern whites. Miller explains that poor, southern laborers, though available for textile work, were not conditioned to the “clock-time rhythms” of the factories nor had they “internalized” the “Yankee values” of their northern laboring counterparts: sobriety, celebrity, industry and frugality (479). Slaves, on the other hand, used to steady regimens of monotonous work and constant disciplinary oversight were better suited to factory labor. For this reason, southern mill owners generally preferred to “hire out” or utilize slave labor over the available force of free and poor southern whites.⁴⁵ The extent to which southern whites—as free people—were not “naturally conditioned” for factory labor speaks to the slavish conditions of textile mills but also, oddly, to Fitzhugh’s point, which this section will later take up, about the innateness of black servitude. The preferences of southern mill owners also raises suspicions about the moral strictures and disciplinary constitutions—legacies of an austere Puritan ancestry—that Hawthorne (among others) was want to loathe in himself and his New England neighbors.

The intersecting worlds of working-class labor—free and slave—form a broader understanding of captivity within the spectrum of antebellum economic institutions. As discussed in chapter four, slavery was evoked in multiple seafaring contexts to underscore the grueling labor of the ship and also the conditions of autocratic power, typically violent, under which seaman worked. The factory, as I argued, joins the ship and the plantation to form an “illustrative triad”— all three sites and situations of laboring captivity were economic drivers of the antebellum economy and rich occasions for working through the problematics of U.S. freedom (Kopacz 83). Just as mariners drew upon the language of slavery to protest flogging and forms of severe toil and deprivations, mill girls—even in their earliest, most roseate accounts of factory life—borrowed from the language of abolition, as seen in the lyrics of this Lowell protest song:

Oh! Isn't it a pity, such a pretty girl as I—
Should be sent to the factory to pine away and die?
Oh! I cannot be a slave,
I will not be a slave,
For I'm so fond of liberty
That I cannot be a slave.⁴⁶

Herman Melville's opposition to slavery, which he dramatizes in philosophical and ontological terms aboard the fictional *San Dominick*, is, according to Paula Kopacz, grounded in a deep empathy for all common laborers, including mill hands like the anonymous girl cited above. Despite the collectivism leftist Marxist critics such as C. L. R. James recognize in Melville's sea literature, in the laboring routines of the *Pequod*, for example, Melville's concern, as an arch-Romantic, was for the individual. As such, he found abhorrent all laboring practices that, in Kopacz's words, “defeat, demean, and

devalue” human dignity and potential (75). As the author’s famous story “Bartleby” proves, it was not merely onerous physical labor that Melville considered dehumanizing, but also mind-numbing, menial labor and the monotonous daily rhythms of modernity—of the ship, office, and factory—which were unnatural, immutable, and determined by authority. According to Kopacz, Melville recognized what Emerson, apparently, did not: that the perceived voluntarism of the contractual system, that which put greenhorn girls in mills and boys aboard ships provided no viable alternatives to facilitate change, no independence within work-a-day lives.⁴⁷ For Melville, both the mill girl and the sailor, like the southern slave, “lose their autonomy and free will the moment they enter the factory or board the ship” (Kopacz 84).

Melville’s most blatant condemnation of exploitative practices within the New England factory system occurs in the latter section of his short tale “The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids.” Recalling the impenetrable, wan “ghostliness” of Bartleby, the lifeless, silent girls of the paper mill—who “breathe” not a “syllable”—are nearly indistinguishable from the “iron animal” they “feed” and from its product which they fold: “At rows of blank-looking counters sat rows of blank-looking girls, with blank, white folders in their blank hands, all blankly folding blank paper” (277). That the girls are employed willingly, that they are receiving compensation in the form of wages has no effect, no saving grace, no recuperative force within the tale. Instead Melville’s imagined mill girls—utter slaves to the machine that “overrules” them—morph into beast-like automatons, their “human voice[s]” “banished.” (277). Machine manufacture does not simply replace hand manufacture in “The Tartarus of Maids,” it supplants the human, so that the girls become “mere cogs to the wheels” (278), “steadily” laboring “twelve hours

to the day, day after day, through the three hundred and sixty five days..." (286).

"Tartarus of Maids," like "Bartleby," joins critiques of capitalist labor with prison discourse, representing strong differentials of power and draconian monotony—that which exists in the captive spaces of the prison, ship, plantation, and factory—as able to annihilate autonomy and humanity. Comparisons between the deadly catacombs of prison and the halls of the "inscrutable" factory are captured in the narrator's reflections:

I see it now; turned outward; and each erected sword is so borne, edge-outward before each girl. If my reading fails me not, just so, of old, condemned state-prisoners went from the hall of judgment to their doom: an officer before, bearing a sword, its edge turned outward, in significance of their fatal sentence. So, through consumptive pallors of this blank, raggy life go these white girls to death. (280)

The "consumptive pallors" to which the narrator refers are explained earlier as "fine poisonous particles" that fill the air and the lungs of the mill girls as they ceaselessly tear strips of white-washed rags, converting the tatters to lint (279). Toxicity is a major theme of industrial literature; throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, lethal air and water quality in and around factories provided tangible, bodily evidence of the destructive forces—destructive to mind, spirit, and body—that excessive, droning, industrial labor brought.⁴⁸ In this passage, the narrator draws a comparison between the violence of orderly execution and the violence of executing ceaseless, mechanical work. Moreover, the passage evokes the ship and the factory where capital punishment endured. The real horror for Melville is the fact of unyielding power—power over workers, over their lives and deaths. In the factory setting, Melville saw the machine as supervening

upon the ship captain, the plantation overseer, and the prison executioner in its authority and absoluteness. This is what the narrator, a visitor to the factory, finds “specially terrible”—the “autocratic cunning of the machine” (285).

Fellow New Englander Orestes Brownson shared Melville’s censure of industrial labor practices but not exactly his view of history or his Romantic veneration of the individual. For Brownson, steeped in European philosophy and socialism, capitalist market revolutions forced a struggle between social classes. An abundantly active writer throughout much of his life, Brownson gained the ire of the New England economic and political establishment by attacking propertied elitism and championing the many causes of the poor. Though allied with Emerson and his coterie, Brownson—a Unitarian minister and later Catholic convert—did not share Emerson’s Transcendental optimism or his conflation of societal evolution with individual spiritual progress. Rather, for Brownson, as for Christian socialists generally, spiritual progress necessitated an overturning of power, a victory of the laboring masses over industrial operatives.⁴⁹

Published in 1840, in his own *Boston Quarterly Review*, Brownson’s two part essay “The Laboring Classes” reviewed and also revised Thomas Carlyle’s manifesto *Chartism*. A major point of departure between Brownson and Carlyle—one which signifies “The Laboring Classes” as a particularly American example of socialist, anti-industrial writing—is Brownson’s condemnation of the middle class, of a rising and morally complacent consumer culture, which he blamed for the exploitation of industrial wage workers: “The old war between the kings and the Barons is well-nigh ended, and so is that between the Barons and the Merchants and Manufacturers—landed capital and commercial capital. The business man has become the peer of my Lord. And now

commences a new struggle between the operative and his employer, between wealth and labor” (437). Likening factory labor to slave labor, much as Melville did, Brownson goes further than his contemporary—calling for a complete overthrow of the market system. “But the evil we speak of,” Brownson writes, “is inherent in our social arrangements”—arrangements which propose that wages and contracts connote economic independence—“and cannot be cured,” he continues, “without radical change of those arrangements” (439). Calling out free labor advocates and their false promises of economic mobility, Brownson concludes that the “prospect” of those laboring under capitalist systems, the “prospect” that they might ever “become owners of a sufficient portion of the funds of production,” is more than bleak; it is impossible (438).

Brownson’s diatribe is stunningly bold and also eerily prophetic; its warnings anticipate the grievances levied at late stage capitalism: environmental degradation, unregulated financial speculation, and gross income inequality.⁵⁰ At the crux of Brownson’s indignation is a recognition of the malevolent logic that commodifies the worker and converts the agency of ownership into passivity of wages—a logic and a system that Brownson insists is inherently “evil” and “at war with” the “rights and interests” of workers (441). “The Laboring Classes” escalates into dramatic predictions of class warfare, but not before moralizing the concept of natural, inalienable freedom in particularly Transcendental terms: “Man must be free...to develop his lofty and deathless nature and prove himself a child of God” (445). Emerson reconciled this spiritual freedom and its necessities with capitalist possibilities. Melville, never so optimistic, decried antebellum labor conditions—the autocratic power and dehumanizing, habitual practices that disparate occasions of laboring captivity shared, showing these to be

incompatible with human autonomy, regardless of benefit, voluntarism, or recompense. Still Melville, more a thinker than a radical, more inclined to diagnosis than prescribe refrained from advocating, as Brownson did, that the “huge system of accumulated wrongs”—the capitalist free market— be “overthrown” so that a “new and better system,” might emerge, one that permitted the masses (as opposed to merely the middle class, the “nouveaux riches, parvenus”) to attain the *true* freedom that is their human “destiny” (445).

As Brownson’s review of Caryle evinces, nineteenth-century labor reform (like nearly all social reforms) was a transatlantic affair. It also enveloped bourgeois culture, despite Brownson’s more radical censures of his own class. Socialism, which began in the proletarian movements sweeping Europe, shaped not only radical ideas and utopian experimentations in America but also a mainstream discomfort—across the political spectrum—with the hardening prospect of a permanent wage earning class. In *Horace Greeley’s New York Tribune*, Tuchinsky investigates how that seminal daily paper—first representative of “reform Whigs” and later “Radical Republicans”—became the “intellectual origin” of various kinds of labor reform all rooted in liberal socialism (x). Though never “explicitly anti-capitalistic”—in the way of Brownson and other far-left voices—the *Tribune*, in Tuchinsky’s words, publicized the way the free market ultimately amassed “wealth, capital, power” and most importantly “freedom” into the hands of a privileged few (x). Hence, the paper—broad in its reach and appeal—helped establish the link between social equality and true participatory democracy.

Launched in 1841, the *Tribune* provided a space for intellectuals and reformers to debate the essential question of how labor should be organized in an ostensibly free

economy.⁵¹ That individual liberty and human freedom are threatened by “untrammelled forces” binding people, like captives, to market demands and logics was, as Tuchinsky says, “a vital part of the *Tribune*’s worldview” throughout the 1850’s and 60’s (xi). In this way, the *Tribune* echoed similar anxieties in the Jacksonian labor movement, namely that the wage earner, dependent upon the managerial and ownership class, could never be fully free.⁵² Having said this, social democratic liberalism, whether it leans Republican or Democratic, was never a discourse with clear boundaries or fixed ideological positions, as evident in the variety of writers who contributed to the *Tribune* in its antebellum decades: Margaret Fuller, George Ripley, Charles Dana, Albert Brisbane, Henry James Sr., John Campbell, George Foster, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, Bayard Taylor, James Pike as well as European thinkers such as Marx, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and Louis Blanc.⁵³ Nevertheless, as Tuchinsky notes, the socialist and labor forces allied with the *Tribune*— and also with Republican Free Labor, Jacksonian democracy, abolition, Transcendentalism, and more—represented a “crucial development in the history of liberalism” (15). By the 1840’s, the U.S. liberal political economy, capitalist in its orientations, had diverged into two streams of political thought, which remain with us today: one “social democratic,” the other “individualistic” (Tuchinsky 15). At the crux of the split lay differences in the conceptions of market natures, of relationships between capital and labor, and of how operations and conditions within markets could extend or deny human freedom.⁵⁴

If northerners were highly conflicted about what free labor actually meant, the pro-slavery south was perhaps more united at least in its disavowal of the capitalist market ethos. Lawyer, plantation owner, and staunch slave apologist George Fitzhugh’s

collections of speeches, essays, and editorials provide a compelling example of the kind of capitalist critique emanating from a pro-slavery intelligentsia. His work, moreover, signaled a new phase in the national conversation on slavery, one precipitated by an urbanizing market-driven modernity.⁵⁵ According to Melba Jenson, what “distinguishes” Fitzhugh’s writing, what should be “teased out” of his more conventional paternalistic representations of a benevolent, protective slave society is his economic critique of northern capitalism and its exploitation of laborers (129). Jennifer Rae Greeson agrees, noting that the best critiques of northern capitalism indeed come from the now disqualified discourses of slavery’s apologia.⁵⁶ While Fitzhugh’s position on the virtues of chattel slavery offends our contemporary ethics, as it did the ethics of antebellum free labor advocates and abolitionists, the social critic identified a problem that northern capitalists of his era failed to address: wages were increasingly impoverishing and poverty was enslaving.

Fitzhugh’s chief claim, advanced in his 1854 collection *Sociology for the South; or, The Failure of Free Society* and in his 1857 text *Cannibals All! or, Slaves Without Masters*, is that hierarchy and hegemony are natural to human social systems. Reaching back to the scientific philosophies of Aristotle, Fitzhugh writes, “There is no such thing as *natural human liberty*, because it is unnatural of man to live alone and without the pale and government of society. Birds and beasts of prey, who are not gregarious, are naturally free. Bees and herds are naturally subject or slaves of society” (*Sociology* 138). Calling “free society” a “recent” and flawed “invention,” Fitzhugh points to the laboring classes of England and America, “white slaves,” in his words, as evidence that freedom is

folly and that market systems of exploitation are crueler (*Sociology* 139, 136). As Fitzhugh writes:

The free laborer must work or starve. He is more of a slave than a negro because he works longer and harder for less allowance than the slave, and has not holiday because the cares of life with him begin when its labors end. He has no liberty and not a single right. (*Cannibals All!* 137)

While perhaps hyperbolic, the main laments of this passage—long hours, slavish conditions, endless unease— were, of course, argued by socialists occupying the farthest end of the opposing political spectrum and by writers as dissimilar (for reasons we'll see) as Melville and Rebecca Harding Davis. Fitzhugh's rhetorical move to yoke black slaves and white workers is essentially lifted from socialist and other critiques of wage slavery, those which recognized the dependence of workers on employers as the most despotic element of the factory regime.⁵⁷ Throughout his life, Fitzhugh would argue that the expansion of geopolitical slavery into new states and into regions where slavery once flourished would ultimately free white laborers from captive conditions.

Fitzhugh's defense of the slave system exposes both the dire circumstances of much urban industrial labor and also a theory of racial construction and race privilege that this project has considered in its previous chapters. For Fitzhugh, capitalism's worst crime was that it enslaved white people. Hence, he concluded that the "character of American slavery"—its conditions of racial definition and division—was "necessary to protect the white man" (*Sociology* 135). It is an economic recasting of the central philosophical and ontological theme of *Benito Cereno*, though without Melville's anguish

or irony. Presaging President Lincoln's famous words at the 1858 Illinois Republican State Convention, "A house divided cannot stand against itself," Fitzhugh writes in *Sociology*, "One set of ideas will govern and control, after a while, the civilized world. Slavery will everywhere be abolished, or everywhere be reinstated" (135). Classifying both systems as essentially without pure freedom, Fitzhugh lauded slavery for its protections of servile black subjects and also for its maintenance of white supremacy.

From Everett to Fitzhugh, proponents and opponents of capitalist industrialization utilized the image of the factory hand—typically white, young, and female—to illustrate their rhetorical positions. She was the industrious, faithful, daughter supporting family and farm in her years before marriage or the overburdened, dislocated, victim of free market wage slavery. Neither depiction, in truth, captures the variety and experience of factory labor, especially in the early years of the antebellum market revolution. When gathered together, the personal narratives of industrial textile workers produce an archive of over four hundred texts, articulating an identity and a cultural position quite unlike that which is touted in the texts of most pro- and anti-industrial literature.⁵⁸ As the next section will consider, the literature of America's first fully mechanized textile mill reveals occasions of self-fashioning and political expression—of optimism, community, and proletarian pride—through material consumption and literary production. Still, literary and artistic expression could take on quasi-spiritual aspects of survival as, over the course of decades, the U.S. industrial factory dissolved from a celebrated achievement of the noble free market to a dystopian capitalist nightmare.

...

Industrialism's most iconic architecture and the focal point of so much of its praise and censure was the large-scale factory. Factories, of a kind, existed in New England as early as 1787, in cities like Beverly, Massachusetts and Pawtucket, Rhode Island.⁵⁹ Though initially slow to develop and only partially mechanized, the textile industry, in particular, expanded significantly in the 1830's, employing 56,000 men and 76,000 women by 1845.⁶⁰ Variations in factory regimes existed across America and Europe, but all factories accommodated what Michael Burawoy describes as "the formal subsumption of labor to capital": workers were brought together under one roof, where they were "transformed," as many have argued, from autonomous subjects to objective elements of production—much like the silent, mechanical girls of Melville's paper mill (252).

The first total production U.S. cotton mill, owned by Francis Cabot Lowell and his Boston Manufacturing Company, began operating in the 1820's.⁶¹ Utilizing the Waltham-Lowell system, the factory incorporated all stages of textile production. Much has been written about the orderly management and disciplinary practices of factory life.⁶² Like so many institutions and architectures of captivity considered for this project, power within the factory setting, even at Lowell, was hierarchal and absolute.⁶³ Employers could dismiss mill workers without warning. As the economic cycles of supply and demand fluctuated, girls experienced unanticipated and taxing speed-ups, stretch-outs, and rate cuts; those who broke contract were blacklisted from employment elsewhere.⁶⁴

The mills at Lowell lured unmarried New England country girls, maidens like Mary Burnham, to its bustling, urbanizing center with prospects of new freedoms and much-needed income.⁶⁵ While there, the girls lived in company boardinghouses, unique

feminine spaces supervised, exactingly, by matrons.⁶⁶ Surveillance was constant: by day, overseers ensured steady regimens of weaving and spinning, twelve to fourteen hours, six days a week.⁶⁷ By night, boardinghouse keepers, beholden to mill operatives, supervised the moral and physical conduct of girls, regulating everything from curfews to candles to visits. Not surprisingly, church attendance was compulsory.⁶⁸ America's first planned industrial city was something of a Foucaultian nightmare. Unlike the plantation and the ship, where physical violence commonly enforced habits and conditions of labor and adherence to authority, the mill system relied almost solely on subtler, perhaps even more effective tactics to regulate the minds and bodies of its girls. The daily rhythms of work, sleep, and diet—all kept in perfect time by the factory bell—became the natural biorhythms and biology of chronic young weavers and spinners, especially when we consider that the girls took meals at certain times and of a particular substance established by the corporation and filled their lungs with the polluted waste of industrial labor.⁶⁹

And yet, as David Rosen and Aaron Santesso remind us, no Foucaultian fantasy is ever absolute nor is human subjugation complete.⁷⁰ Despite the draconian and menial regularity of unrelenting textile work, historians, archivists, and literary scholars including Sophia Jenkins Cook, Benita Eisler, Judith Ranta, and Katja Kanzler have shown that an array of possibilities and opportunities for re-creation, self-fashioning, and even feminist resistance afforded itself to the textile workers of Lowell.⁷¹ Self-improvement was, after all, an ethos shared by mill girls and their overseers—both descendents, in most cases, of the New England value system or “Yankee ingenuity” that was intended to provide a “moral tariff against” the evils and failures of the British factory system (Eisler 19). Mill girls were encouraged to attend evening schools based on

a high-school curriculum, but would often “pool pennies,” Eisler tells us, to engage higher instruction in German, music, or botany (29). Attendance at Lyceum events was common as was the availability of Sabbath Schools and circulating libraries.⁷² The literary life of the Lowell community is well documented; as early as 1840 at least seven Mutual Self-Improvement Clubs—essentially writing groups for mill girls—were established in the city.⁷³ Considering the scarceness of leisure moments, the rich archive of writing produced by textile workers throughout the nineteenth century—poetry, songs, stories, novels, drama, personal narratives, and children’s literature—remains a stunning testament to their poetic spirit and literary will.⁷⁴

That the Lowell girls were ardent readers is evident in the various injunctions forbidding reading on factory floors.⁷⁵ Still, reading was hardly their only pleasure nor were books their single coveted commodity. The ready supply of female labor streaming into Lowell was met by shopkeepers and entrepreneurs—bakers, grocers, jewelry makers, and clothiers—eager to supply the city’s new commercial class. The young women who lived in confining boardinghouses and who toiled under stifling and dangerous conditions were, as Cook and others have documented, enthusiastic for the material and experiential pleasures their hard-earned wages afforded—magazines, watches, hats, sweetmeats.⁷⁶ As evidenced in their personal narratives, the “attraction of money”—not merely its dire necessity, as Mary Burnham’s situation might suggest—inspired country girls to leave rural lives in favor of urban factory work (Cook 243). As Cook explains, the role of the consumer offered mill girls “a rare and sanctioned space” to explore economic autonomy but also “desire and pleasure” in unfamiliar and exciting ways (558). Not surprisingly, it “immediately provoked,” as Cook says, an inculcating, “disciplinary framework” and a

set of dialectical messages, some indulgent others restrictive, that policed (both from outside and from within) the choices and imaginations of a new feminized proletarian class.

Chief among the tools of such inculcation and yet able to register opposing cultural and class trends and tensions was the literary periodical *The Lowell Offering*. This organ of textile worker voices was, from its inception in 1842, daring and grassroots.⁷⁷ Co-edited by Harriet F. Farley and Harriott Curtis—two experienced mill girls from impoverished beginnings—the magazine boasted claims of authenticity and femininity. Indeed, *The Lowell Offering* stood out amongst other factory magazines of its day, those edited by and written for male owners or operatives.⁷⁸ In its disparate and often anonymous collections of essays, editorials, stories, poems, advertisements, and published correspondence, *The Offering* broadcast themes common in factory literature more generally: geographic displacement, nostalgia for home, class divisions, sexual dangers, occupational hazards but also self discovery, education, independence, and feminine community.⁷⁹

The Lowell Offering, in its didacticism and pedagogical force, provided the kind of disciplinary structure that, on the surface, comported with the values and priorities of mill management and was, consequently, well received. The magazine figured as a kind “curiosity,” Kanzler notes, and attracted the attention of notable elites (556). Literary celebrities on both sides of the Atlantic—Greeley, William Ellery Channing, Elizabeth Peabody, John Greenleaf Whittier as well as Harriet Martineau and George Sand—expressed great enthusiasm and in certain cases extended crucial support.⁸⁰ Middle-class New England women, many of whom had few opportunities for the type of independence

explored in the journal's pages, formed a faithful readership. Studied as a kind of sociological artifact, *The Offering* also found attention at elite colleges and universities: in his correspondence with the president of Harvard College, Philarète Charles, professor of comparative literature at the Collège of France, noted that he had given a lecture on it.⁸¹

Despite this, *The Lowell Offering* was ignored by scholars over much of the twentieth century. Those that did deal critically with the magazine tended to characterize it as “a company-owned periodical,” noting its lack of resistance to worsening factory conditions.⁸² (During the time of *The Offering*'s publication, the Lowell factory week was extended, holidays were cut, and wages for piecework steadily declined.)⁸³ Yet, as more recent attention has revealed, *The Lowell Offering* provided a critical space for female textile workers to contribute to the sometimes polemical “factory controversy” captivating their nation. Cook and Kanzler have shown that the magazine's contributors were aware of their “unprecedented situation” and also of the way their identities and fates had been constructed within sentimental novels, reformist tracts, and through more blatant forms of class discrimination (Cook 228). To the chagrin of many labor reformers, then and now, *The Offering* claimed the mill experience as formative, as “initiating a kind of gendered experience” that could challenge the dominant domestic ideology of the age and also prominent critiques of industrial life (Kanzler 562).⁸⁴ In other words, the female operatives of Lowell used *The Offering* to push against a bourgeois persuasion to read the workingwoman in singular terms, be that sympathetic or reproachful.⁸⁵ In its varying perspectives, the magazine asserted the importance,

function, and permanence of the textile worker within the nation's increasingly market-driven culture.

The shockingly assertive and explicitly controversial essay "Factory Girls," published in the first series of *The Lowell Offering*, provides a telling example of how mill girls used the magazine to control the narrative of their experience and to articulate their unique place in an evolving, capitalist society. It opens, with stunning irreverence, by naming Brownson a "slanderer" for publishing the declaration: "SHE HAS WORKED IN A FACTORY," *is sufficient to damn to infamy the most worthy and virtuous girl*" (187).⁸⁶ Juxtaposing the authority of her personal experience with Brownson's "prejudice," the author disputes anti-industrial, hyperbolic claims of what she calls "our condition"—notably associations of wage work with subjugation—in the language of free market individualism, insisting that to labor "under restraints...voluntarily assumed" is to "love independence," to be "at liberty" in the modernizing world (189). Taking note of the cultural changes wrought by the market revolution, the essayist mocks an anti-wage, anti-industrial "spirit of independence" as being "averse to social life itself," as belonging "beyond the Rocky Mountains" (or the PAIe of civilization) and with the "Untamed Indian" and "wild beast of the forest" (189).

Recognizing that "real injustice of Capitalists against operatives" exists, the writer of "Factory Girls" admonishes Brownson's ultraist rhetoric, ordering the literary elite to "keep truth and common sense upon his side" (189). In response to his one-dimensional claims of degraded, wasted, ruined female lives—accounts reminiscent of Melville's "The Tartarus of Maids" and of Fitzhugh's anti-capitalist harangues—the author enumerates a plethora of educative and religious opportunities available to factory girls,

who being “eight thousand” in number were subsequently diverse in intelligence and virtue (189). Taking account of the disparate personalities and backgrounds of mill girls and also the manifold ways female operatives made use of their wages, the author bears witness to the genuine experiences and preoccupations of factory women.

“Factory Girls” is paradigmatic of the way *The Offering* mirrored traditional gender assumptions and discourse while also challenging class-based prejudice and genteel privilege. In reminding Brownson that the “class of girls” he “slanders” is to be the “mothers of quite a portion of our future republicans,” the author places the mill experience within a conventional trajectory of female maturation (189). At the same time, however, her openly confrontational tone violates gender expectation.⁸⁷ Moreover, the essay signals a forthright desire for money (which in later essays becomes unabashed consumerism) that could offend the readers of more polite lady’s magazines.⁸⁸ Calling factory work “the most lucrative female employment,” the writer sets it above traditional gendered vocations, notably the work of “domestics, seamstresses, and school-teachers,” insisting that these (the latter, lower paid occupations) are more exploitative and less empowering (189). Hence the essay departs from its predecessors, including Savage’s novel of a similar name, and from the moral calculus of self-culture that purported to value laboring opportunities equally.

Mounting class consciousness and prejudice brought on by industrialization was a prominent theme of *The Lowell Offering*. “Factory Girls” was not the only essay to confront this by openly addressing a member of the New England literary elite nor was it unique in betraying, through its sophistication, the talent of certain mill girls. Published in the magazine’s second volume, “Gold Watches” responds to Editor Sarah Josepha Hale’s

lament about class emulation, namely a comment made in her *Godey's Lady Book*: “Oh dear! How those factory girls do rig up! We cannot get anything but they will imitate us!”⁸⁹ Clever in tone and argument, “Gold Watches” highlights the vulnerability of bourgeois superiority and the precariousness of the class markers it relies upon: “Those who do not labor for their living,” writes its author, “have more time for the improvement of their minds... if, with these advantages, they still need richer dress to distinguish them from *us*, the fault must be their own” (186). In addition to its burlesque of class elitism, “Gold Watches” speaks to anxieties over consumerism in the emerging market culture. Noting that “extravagance” should offend the taste and values of proper New Englanders generally, its author asks, “Why is the idea so prevalent that dress appears more objectionable in the factory girl than in any other female?” (184). As Cook has argued, “Gold Watches” accords fully with the stance of *The Offering's* editors—mill girls turned literary agents—in that it exposes as fantasy hardened divisions between “dirty working girls and stylish ladies, between factory hands and bluestockings, between self-centered materialists and public-spirited idealists” (238). In the 1840's, few figures could embody the cultural threat of such blurred distinctions more than the knowledgeable, well-mannered, wage-earning factory operatives of Lowell.

The volumes of poetry, tales, and sketches, which circulated through charity organizations, community broadsides, penny papers, and in publications like *The Lowell Offering*, aid against an ideologically monolithic view of the factory experience in America and across Europe.⁹⁰ Even so, Judith Rosen reminds us to consider this corpus of literature as “works in translation,” an idea evocative of the linkages between mill writing and slave narratives (208). As with *The Lowell Offering*—where editorial

independence has been called “cloudy” at best⁹¹—industrial literatures were often mediated texts. Testimonials, especially those that made their way into middle-class publications, required sponsors and interceding prefaces.⁹² Like with slave narratives, autobiographies and personal sketches of textile workers—such as the popular works of Scottish poet and power-loom weaver Ellen Johnston—depicted the working girl as an “object of sympathy,” as “worthy of patronage” but not as an “active shaper of public discourse” (Rosen 212). Despite this, many essays in and beyond *The Lowell Offering* contain ironic social critiques of class, gender, and literary elitisms and weigh in on a host of political and social subjects (from wage labor to temperance reform) affecting the working classes.

Having said this, the writing produced by factory girls in this period, even when snarky or provocative, does in fact challenge what Rosen calls the “still common insistence” on “radical resistance” as “the key component” of working class subjectivity (207). No doubt, the absence of real rebellion in these texts is due in part to pressures facing mill girls; readers of radical newspapers, for example, could be dismissed immediately and also blacklisted across New England.⁹³ Still, historians debate the extent to which conflict and opposition serve as cardinal terms of early industrial working-class identity, suggesting that these are perhaps “impositions of posterity” (Rosen 218).⁹⁴ We know that the female operatives of Lowell organized: there were turnouts in 1836 and 1837, and thousands of girls signed petitions circulated by activists with the Ten Hour Movement.⁹⁵ Still, little of this energy found its way into *The Lowell Offering*, a publication expressly disengaged from “wages” and “board.”⁹⁶

In “The Laboring Classes,” Brownson moves from identifying the misery, internment, and mistreatment of factory operatives—the increasing hours, diminishing pay, and chronic illness that plagued the weavers and spinners of Lowell—to anticipating working-class radicalization and revolt of a kind that remains largely absent from the archive of early mill writing in his time. It is a “dialectical sleight of hand” of the kind that Burawoy argues cannot be dismissed (248). Addressing a similar theoretical paradox in Marx, namely that capitalist production is both “an arena of undisputed domination of capital over labor” and at the same time “the spring of class struggle,” Burawoy openly wonders how exactly the working classes are supposed to rise up against an all-encompassing, dictatorial, oppressive logic such as free market capitalism (248). If Lowell is paradigmatic, the steady deterioration of physical structures, of the environment, and of labor practices finally drove the girls to abandon their industrial city—in Eisler’s words, “their only effective form of protest” (38). Hardly foretelling a socialist revolution, the first generation of eager Yankee farm girls was also “the last WASP labor force in the America” (Eisler 29). Their departure signaled only worsening circumstances as immigrants—hungry, transplanted, poorly skilled, and disempowered—stood in line to take the girls’ places.

...

Not many even of the inhabitants of a manufacturing town know the vast machinery of system by which the bodies of workmen are governed, that goes on unceasingly from year to year. The hands of each mill are divided into watches that relieve each other as regularly as the sentinels of an army. By night and day the work goes on, the unsleeping engines groan and shriek the fiery pools of metal

boil and surge. Only for a day in the week, in half-courtesy to public censure, the fires are partially veiled; but as soon as the clock strikes midnight, the great furnaces break forth with renewed fury, the clamor begins with fresh, breathless vigor, the engines sob and shriek like “gods in pain.” 5-6

Published in 1861, in James T. Fields’s *Atlantic Monthly*, Davis’s “Life in the Iron-Mills; or The Korl Woman” dramatizes, in scathing terms, market capitalism’s full victory—at least ostensibly—over the industrial worker. The laborers of Davis’s story, mill workers in a dreary mining town of lower Virginia, are indiscriminate slaves, brutish animals, and gaunt-like zombies. Hugh, the central protagonist, is a Welsh immigrant and furnace tender, who hour after hour turns pig iron into wrought iron by puddling. He is described as “filthy and ash-colored,” code words of a kind signifying the white laborer’s slavery (4).⁹⁷ His aging, decrepit father is “white-faced” and “pale” (4). Cousin Deborah, cadaverous too, is called “ghastly” and “blue-lipped” (4). Animal imagery suffuses the tale as well indicating industrialism’s transformation of humans into brutes: Hugh is a Wolfe, after all. When readers first encounter his father, Old Wolfe is “wrapped in a horse-blanket,” peering out with “red rabbit eyes” (4). Deborah is called “a drowned cat” (7); her “watch” over Hugh is likened to “a spaniel for its master” (8). For the thousands that labor in Kirby & John’s rolling-mills, the result is “soul starvation” and “living death”—not wages, economic mobility, or independence (8). The “slow stream of human life” depicted in the excerpted passage, “bodies of workmen” “creeping” toward the mills and outside the narrator’s back window—morning and night—is governed by a “vast machinery of system” in which the men function as slaves, animals, and also as drones. The automation of worker-bodies, the conversion of human beings to technological

objects and temporal regimes is replicated in Davis's language: the "hands of each mill"—human persons—are "divided into watches," into shifts but also into items of continual timekeeping. Their individual biorhythms are subsumed by the larger, more powerful time of the factory; as such they "relieve each other"—one to work, the other to sleep—like "sentinels of an army."

Davis did not grow up in the gritty, urban world she so often wrote about. Born the first of five children to wealthy parents, Davis grew up prosperous, well-contented, and fully enmeshed in the evangelical community of Wheeling, Virginia. Instructed primarily at home, she completed her education at the Female Seminary in Washington, Pennsylvania, initiating her life above the Mason Dixon. According to Jean Fagan Yellin, Davis internalized early on the "ethics of preindustrial" Post-Calvinist America, namely an aristocratic disdain for the reverence of money and for a bourgeois belief in wages (206). Like many reformist-minded people of her day, Davis revolted against the desperate conditions facing untold masses, impoverished casualties of the rise of capitalism in America.⁹⁸ For Brownson, as we've seen, growing disparities among social classes was a political problem: gross economic inequality vanquished democratic possibility. For Melville, capitalist excess was more an ontological dilemma: industrial automation and capitalist regimes of power stripped individuals of their humanity, of their imaginative powers and their wills to live. For Davis, industrial poverty was a religious crisis: the conversion of people into dead-in-life drones had devastating spiritual consequences since the developments of rationality, moral reason, and powers of reflection were necessary for working out one's salvation.

The tragedy of Hugh's story, its "secret underlying sympathy," derives from the puddler's "finer nature" that "something unique" that "sets [him] apart" (8). Though Hugh, born into poverty, has "groped" through "slow heavy years of constant, hot work," the half-starved, filthy mill-hand is in fact an artist in the full Romantic tradition: "Think," the narrator says, "that God put into this man's soul a thirst for beauty—to know it, to create it, to be..." (9). Between his watches, Hugh "chips and moulds figures" out of the huge blocks of ore refuse called *korl* lying about the factory floor. The sculptures are "hideous," "fantastic," but also "strangely beautiful" (9).

In its indictment of Hugh's reality, Davis's story exposes industrialism's debasement of the Emersonian doctrine of self-reliance. Noting the cruel yet unexceptional nature of the Wolfe family's bleak existence—their "incessant labor," "kennel-like housing," and meager diets—which was like "those of their class," the narrator implores her bourgeois readers: "Is that all of their lives?—of the *portion given to them* and their duplicates..." (3).⁹⁹ The entreaty borrows directly from the language of "Self-Reliance," from Emerson's grounding of national citizenship and individual autonomy in the principle of proprietorship, which unifies free personhood, righteous labor, and private property: "...that though the wide universe is full of good," Emerson writes, "no kernel of nourishing corn can come to him but through his toil bestowed on that plot of ground which is given to him to till" (176). Yet, as "Iron Mills" bears out, there is no "plot of land," no hope for righteous "toil" that can produce "nourishment" for the laborers of this railroad-iron mill. The "portion" given to Hugh imprisons him; it denies him the promises of self-reliance, of independence and fulfillment. Extreme poverty and its oppressive attendants—hunger, sickness, drudgery, exhaustion, and

perpetual dependence—nullifies the Emersonian right to “make yourself what you will,” a “right” mocked later in the story, in Doctor May’s “complacent,” condescending flattery of Hugh just as it nullifies the sanctity and possibility of human life. Hugh, as we’ll see, dwells outside the promises of “Self-Reliance”; his life within the industrial capitalist regime is a non-life—cadaverous and also bestial. Hence, he is excluded, much like the slaves, prisoners, sailors, and madmen we’ve encountered in this project, from the processes that protect individuals of a particular race, class, or gender and inaugurate them within the rights-bearing, free citizenry.

On the evening of the tale’s main action, the night which brings to Hugh “the crisis of his life,” visitors arrive to appraise Kirby & John’s industrial operations (10). The group includes Kirby, his son Clarke, Doctor May, and two “strangers,” whom Hugh has not seen before. One of these is a brother-in-law of Kirby’s, an erudite man with artistic sensibilities and the “atmosphere” of a “thoroughbred gentleman” about him (12). It is this man, called Mitchell, who first sees the korl woman, one of Hugh’s sculptures, and is rendered “speechless,” “touched strangely” by its “poignant longing” (13):

...the white figure of a woman faced him in the darkness,—a woman, white, of giant proportions, crouching on the ground, her arms flung out in some wild gesture of warning....a nude woman’s form, muscular, grown coarse with labor, the powerful limbs instinct with some poignant longing. One idea: there with as in the tense, rigid muscles, the clutching hands, the wild, eager face, like that of a starving wolf’s. (13)

Eric Schocket interprets the “giant” “white” “woman” rising out of the “soot and blackness” as a racial figure establishing working-class possibility vis-à-vis whiteness. In his view, the korl woman—a container for Hugh’s talent and agency as well as his “eager” “wild” “longing”—emerges in the text as a way to evoke a spiritual redemption, what Davis calls “the promise of Dawn,” but also to claim for the white industrial laboring class the political and social entitlements, the “prerogatives” of white skin privilege in the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁰ Notions of natural rights—of the white man’s prerogative—inform the conversation that commences between Hugh and the visitors.

It is the physician who first inquires as to the “meaning” of the korl woman. “She be hungry,” Hugh grunts at Doctor May, all the while keeping his eyes fixed on Mitchell, who seems to see “the soul of the thing” (14). Feigning outrage, the doctor presses Kirby, “Have you many such hands as this? What are you going to do with them? Keep them puddling iron?” (14). The question, however insincere, forces a defense of the industrial capitalist system that has entrapped this artist in a hellish wasteland, in what the bourgeois visitors call “Dante’s Inferno” (10). Each takes up the cause; though their arguments fail in the end on moral and logical grounds. Kirby reminds those gathered that the “American system” has “social ladders,” ones “any man can scale” (14). His rhetorical addendum, “Do you doubt it?” calls out to Davis’s readers, beckoning them to repudiate, like Fitzhugh and Brownson, trite free market optimism. As the men debate, it is suggested that “kindness” would dictate even fuller dehumanization—“these men who do the lowest part of the world’s work should be machines” (15). Agreeing, finally, that they are not “reformers,” the men take leave—but not before paying Hugh a modicum of respect typically reserved for men of their class: “The doctor held out his hand in a frank,

generous way, telling him to ‘take care of himself, and to remember it was his right to rise.’ Mitchell had simply touched his hat, as to an equal, with a quiet look of thorough recognition” (17-18). It is the impression of Mitchell, above all, that brings about Hugh’s epiphany and his crisis:

Then flashed before his vivid poetic sense the man who had left him,—the pure face, the delicate, sinewy limbs, in harmony with all he knew of beauty or truth. In his cloudy fancy he had pictured a something like this. He had found it in Mitchell...a Man all-knowing, all-seeing, crowned by Nature, reigning,—the keen glance of his eye falling like a scepter on other men. And yet, instinct taught him that he too—He! (18)

The allusions to Emerson are unmistakable. Mitchell, innately poetic, is “Nature’s” apotheosis, the transcendent eye, “all-knowing,” “all-seeing,” all-powerful. Readers are persuaded to share Hugh’s “instincts,” to believe that “he too” is meant for Mitchell’s life, ordained on account of his own “vivid poetic sense,” his artistry, his manhood, his pure, white blood. In Mitchell, Hugh recognizes a “clear, projected figure of himself, as he might [have] become,” and the disparity between his self—starving, slavish, dirty—and that projected self—“pure,” “delicate,” “sinewy”—annihilates, within Hugh, his last spark of humanity: “A hope, trifling, perhaps, but very dear, died just then out of the poor puddler’s life” (19).

Generally, interpretations of the kohl woman have recognized her quite rightly as a literary representation of Hugh’s wasted life, a grotesque image of pathetic appeal. Still, I want to end by suggesting a more optimistic possibility for the sculpture, one that

reminds us of the ruse of total objectification and domination revealed in chapters two and four. Hugh constructs the kohl woman out of the ingredients of his oppression, the materials of his labor. The giant, white woman who emerges is an aesthetic animation of industrial waste—of the “great heaps of the refuse from the ore after the pig-metal is run” (9). She is a curious merging of product and person, and as such she calls to mind an aspect of Marx’s account of commodity formation in *Capital*. Following his explanation of the morally disastrous exchange of worker for commodity that takes place in industrial capitalism, Marx concludes that the “products of labor” which have become “commodities,” are in ways “sensuous things which are *at the same time* supra-sensible or social” (165).¹⁰³ Kohl is not a commodity, exactly, but it is a constituent of commodity production, of the railroad iron, and in Hugh’s hands—hands mechanized by the logics of the factory—it becomes animated. Hugh’s wild eagerness and longing—all that cannot be contained by the factory regime and its calculus of automation—finds substantiation in the personified kohl. She is industrial waste (like Hugh) and *at the same time* the workmen’s extra-laboring, human existence.

The aesthetic achievement of Hugh’s kohl woman, perpetually groping forward from the factory floor, counters, to a degree, the traditional Marxist idea of the entirely labored upon body, bodies that in Melville’s tale are like “so many mares haltered to the rack” (279). Still, the story of Hugh is tragic; like Bartleby he ends in a prison—an architectural substantiation of his long-suffering, capitalist existence. So while the kohl woman’s poignant longing, her freedom struggle, insists upon an extra-laboring, unconquerably human knowledge, she also returns us to the realm of material reality—to the captive space of the factory floor—beckoning us to rectify a social injustice that the

story makes clear: “Blackened” by soot and unremitting labor, Hugh is capitalism’s quintessential wage-slave. The puddler’s perpetual bondage (like that of thousands in the mill) has produced the wealth that assures Kirby’s free life. Understanding the many nuances of the cruel and ubiquitous dialectic Hugh and Kirby occupy, of the mutual dependence of freedom and bondage is, in the end, what *Architectures of Captivity* has been all about.

The literature of early U.S. capitalism provides a vexed and inconsistent portrayal of the emerging free market, of its logics and practical realities. In the minds of some writers, wage work developed human potential; it expanded personal as well as economic possibilities. To others, it trapped workers into lives of dependence. Free market advocates called capitalism the cheapest, safest, and most efficient form of labor. Labor reformers and socialists insisted that the industrial free market converted the working class—bound by ostensibly “free” contracts—into dehumanized tools of commodity production. The debate over the morality, sustainability, and potential of the free market—that which preoccupied labor activists, economists, and social critics during the antebellum industrial revolution—continues today as geopolitical corporate power, sustained by decades of neoliberal rule, amasses unimaginable quantities of wealth into the hands of an increasingly smaller few and forces regimes of austerity, war, and poverty on many of the world’s citizens. The fate of capitalism is hardly agreed upon; still a growing movement of thinking people concur that our present economic reality defeats (as perhaps it always has) the liberal hope of *demokratia*—the rule and the power of the people—and the human dream of freedom.¹⁰⁴

Notes

1. See Shultz, xi, quoting William Heighton, a cordwainer, who in Shultz's words, "announced the birth of the American working class" (xi).
2. See Pratt, 73. Pratt uses Henry James, A. N. Kaul, Michael Gilmore and others to present a critical tradition that interrogates Hawthorne's novel as a kind of social diagnostic.
3. See Pratt, 72.
4. Ibid.
5. See Pratt, 72-73.
6. See Foner, 55, quoting Horace Bushnell in 1851.
7. For a fuller discussion, see Atack, Bateman, and Margo. See also Foner; Lovell, 9-10; and Ranta 10.
8. See 586.
9. Pratt makes this point drawing on the work of Gillian Brown. See 72.
10. See Singh, 140. Singh is returning to Adam Smith in order to formulate his definition. I use "autonomous" because the term is central to notions of the capitalist market as free. And yet, as Singh says, Smith's economic construct is also highly regulated through commerce and competition.
11. See Foner, 59.
12. See Foner, 59-60.
13. See Foner, 59.
14. See Lovell, 12-13 for a discussion of the debates over industrialization, especially vis-à-vis conservative positions.

15. See Lovell, 7, on the early American pro-industrial position, notably that of Alexander Hamilton.
16. The textile mill of the 1820's through the 1840's and the literature surrounding its development resists easy categorizations of home and work, especially as real or ideological "separate spheres." For more, see Kanzler, 555-556. See also Lovell.
17. See Ranta, 10, for an earlier account of the growth of factory labor in America.
18. I am quoting here from Singh. See 140.
19. Ruccio defines "market economy" in this way, making the point that "market economy," "mixed economy," or simply "the economy" are more common ways American cultural studies scholars have discussed capitalism.
20. See Foner, 48.
21. For a discussion of the latter, see Castronovo, 70-78. For others, see Foner, 48-60.
22. See Foner, 66.
23. I am drawing here from Foner's evaluation of Douglass; see 66. Of course, Douglass grows quite disillusioned by the prospects for free blacks in Massachusetts. Moreover, his ideas toward paid labor, of the kind he gains in New Bedford, develops over the next decade to include a critique of black menial work. Douglass was a staunch advocate, as Banner explains, of racial uplift through black acculturation of white, middle-class sensibilities. Douglass recognized that full membership in U.S. civic society required the achievement of bourgeois respectability. Moreover, Douglass was keenly aware of the precarious role former slaves assumed in the nascent, northern wage system. While as a fugitive he pursued emancipation with an eye toward earning pay, as an

abolitionist and a fierce intellectual, Douglass routinely denounced the overt racism that locked black people into menial occupations. His critique of degraded, radicalized labors—notably the stereotypical work of washerwomen and boot-blackers—rested in the observation, evocative of Brownson’s appraisal of industrial labor—that these labors “move nowhere, proceed to nothing,” and only “bind” an entire racial group to perpetual poverty. Thus, he argued in an 1851 letter to his abolitionist colleague Gerrit Smith that black workers needed to “aspire” toward a “modest self-reliance,” one which he and other free market idealists believed the wage system could provide (172). For more discussion, see Banner 294-295.

24. Foner articulates an early American substantiation of the ubiquitous yet fragile American Dream.
25. See Foner, 55.
26. See Lovell, 2.
27. See Lovell, 4. See also Faherty and White, 2-3.
28. See Faherty and White, 3.
29. For more, see Lovell, 17.
30. Lovell understates the paradoxical treatment of the factory setting in the text, especially as regards children. Mary’s decision to open the Sunday School, though evidence of her moral force and influence, is born of a critique of child labor, one that haunts the novel’s pro-industrial stance.
31. See Lovell, 17.

32. I am drawing here from Lovell's critique of public or market logic within the domestic sphere. See 16-17.
33. Lovell sees *The Factory Girl* as important in demonstrating the continuity between public and private work, one which challenges ideological model of "separate spheres" popularized by antebellum people and also scholars of the twentieth century.
34. I am quoting from Lovell here, who interprets Everett's speech. See 17.
35. Both traditions recognized labor and self-culture (maturation, development, and improvement) to be irreconcilable. For more, see Forster, 43.
36. This evolution of thought is evident in the bourgeois sensibilities of William Ellery Channing (Emerson's mentor) and also Douglass. For more discussion, see Forster, 53. See also Banner, 291-296.
37. See Forster, 40, 50-51.
38. See Forster, 51.
39. For a full discussion, see Forster.
40. See Forster, 55.
41. See Foner, 59. See also Schocket, 48.
42. In the midst of heated contests raised by the ostensible dichotomies of free and slave labor, a dual wage system, one combining free blacks and slaves, took root in the geopolitical middle ground of Maryland. Barbara Jeanne Fields's important study of commodity crop farming on the state's eastern shore suggests the lengths to which planters and industrialists were willing to go to preserve both forms of labor amid increasingly ideological and divergent positions of the wage economy.

In their consideration of the relationship between manumission and the emerging free market system, including the substantiation of a “dual wage” economies, Fields and also Jennifer Hull show how wage labor converted former slaves, nearly all menial laborers, into the fastest growing and most permanent population of working poor. For more discussion, see Hull xi-x.

43. For more discussion, see Foner. Still, not all Republicans were pro-market capitalists; rather, many saw tendencies within capitalism itself to be a threat to individual liberty and to the promise of democracy. See Tuchinsky, 12. See also Foner. Others, like Abraham Lincoln based their free labor (and eventually anti-slavery) thinking in a market economy that no longer existed. As Foner explains, Lincoln’s defense of wage labor was informed, principally, by *his* America—the property owning farmers, artisans, and small shopkeepers of Illinois, who far outnumbered wage earners even as the market revolution transformed the expanding northeastern metropole from Boston to New York to Philadelphia. See Foner, 67.
44. See Miller, 471 and 481.
45. See Miller, 475-476.
46. Song is remembered by mill hand Harriet Robinson and published in Dublin, 98-99. For more, see Kopacz, 83.
47. For more discussion, see Foner 59.
48. For a discussion of the poor ventilation and air pollution at the Lowell factories and boardinghouses, see Eisler, 28.

49. See Perry Miller, 436. There are, of course, many varieties of socialism. A more secular variety of socialist, those perhaps of a Marxist vein, might forswear any notions of spiritual progress.
50. See 441 and 438. Brownson decries government collusion with private banks, the creation of corporate, financial monopolies, and unregulated greed.
51. See Tuchinsky, xiii.
52. Foner, 59-60.
53. See Tuchinsky for full list, 10.
54. For a fuller discussion, see Tuchinsky, 15-16.
55. See Jenson, 128.
56. See Greeson, 115-144.
57. For more discussion, namely in the Marxist tradition, see Burawoy, 252.
58. See Ranta for a complete annotated bibliography of 457 texts producing an archive of nineteenth-century American textile factory literature.
59. See Ranta, x. For more on the differing “systems” organizing factory labor and life see Burawoy, 265-266; Eisler, 15; Kopacz, 75.
60. See Ranta, x, who notes that 2/5ths of the workforce was comprised of children under the age of 16.
61. See Eisler, 13. “Total production” refers to that fact that the new factory brought under one roof all aspects of material production.
62. For more discussion, see Kopacz, Burawoy, Ranta, Kanzler, and Eisler.

63. Having said this, Lowell was seen as an American corrective to the evils of the British mill system. Lowell girls were paid higher wages and received subsidized housing. For more see Eisler, 15 and 19.
64. See Burawoy, 266.
65. For more on wages of female operatives, see Eisler, 15. See also Kopacz, 77-78. For more on recruitment practices of mill operatives, see Eisler, 18.
66. See Kopacz, 76. See also Eisler, 22-26.
67. See Eisler, 22. See also Ranta, x.
68. See Eisler, 22. See also Kanzler, 558.
69. For more, see Kopacz, 84. See Eisler's "Time Table of the Lowell Mills," 30.
70. See 4-17.
71. There is a tradition for thinking about the valuable freedoms that inhere within communities of manual laborers. For an example, see C.L.R. James. For a more recent reprisal of this idea vis-à-vis antebellum black labor, see Banner. See also Ranta for a discussion of the influence of women's factory literature and female collectivism on the nascent women's rights movement, x.
72. See Eisler, 29, 32-33.
73. See Eisler, 16 and 33. See also Ranta, ix; Kanzler, 599 and 561; Cook, 223.
74. See Ranta, ix-x.
75. See Eisler, 31. See also Cook, 223.
76. See Cook, 220. See also Eisler and Kanzler.
77. See Eisler, 31. See also Kanzler, 556.
78. For more on the magazine's publication history and reception, see Eisler, 34-38.

79. See Ranta, xii-xiii.
80. See Eisler, 34-35.
81. See Eisler, 35.
82. See Kanzler, 20.
83. See Eisler, 36.
84. See also Cook, 230-240.
85. See Cook on Farley's leadership in this direction, 236-238.
86. For more discussion, see Kanzler, 566-568.
87. See Kanzler, 566.
88. For more, see Cook on the ways *The Offering* posed a challenge to the ethos of Sarah Josepha Hale's magazine.
89. See Cook, 231.
90. See Rosen, 208.
91. See Eisler, 91.
92. See Rosen, 208-210.
93. See Eisler, 58.
94. Rosen is drawing upon the work of historian Patrick Joyce and also her own private correspondence with Florence Boos. See, 218.
95. Eisler notes that the majority of the signatories on two Ten Hour Movement petitions of 1845 were Lowell women. Also, Eisler argues that boardinghouses, while places of supervision, control, and company oversight were also "incubators of peer pressure," places where women formed form subversive solidarities including political activism (26). For more, see 36-37.

96. See Eisler, 36.
97. See Schocket for a discussion of the subdued racial content in “Iron Mills.”
98. See Yellin, 206.
99. Italics are mine.
100. See Schocket, 47. I am quoting from Schocket when not the excerpted passage.
101. See Banner, 297, 299, 203, 309.
102. Banner’s article draws upon thing theory in her consideration of nine literary sketches published in 1850 under the title *Heads of Colored People* by the abolitionist James McCune Smith and also in her discussion of the debate McCune’s sketches provoked in Frederick Douglass’s Paper.
103. For a fuller discussion of this passage in Marx vis-à-vis thing theory, see Banner, 30o. Italics are mine.
104. For more, see Barat, x. See Davis, *FCS*.

Epilogue

“Human beings are magical. Bios and Logos. Words made flesh, muscle and bone animated by hope and desire, belief materialized in deeds, deeds which crystallize our actualities...and the maps of spring always have to be redrawn again, in undared forms.”

— Sylvia Wynter, 1995

In January of 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld established the United States military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba as a site for the indefinite detention of a new class of war subjects known as “unlawful enemy combatants.” Their numbers and identities originally kept secret, the detainees at Guantanamo stand outside all rational, juridical, or national epistemologies.¹ They are specters of menace, rising from the rhetorical Axis of Evil, a tabula-rasa for twenty-first-century terror. Originally assumed to bear none of the protections of the Geneva Conventions, notably those granted at the 1929 Convention Relating to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, the detainees of Guantanamo are quite literally “unlawful”—essentially outside the legal and ethical boundary of the human. As such, torture in the form of extreme temperature, solitary confinement, waterboarding, sensory and sleep deprivation, and forced drug injections has been permitted. Initially, no information regarding the welfare or identity of captives needed to be furnished. Though repeatedly described as exceedingly dangerous, the detainees remain resistant to the rational categories of criminal charge. As late as 2010, a report by the Justice Department determined 48 prisoners “too dangerous to transfer but not feasible for prosecution.”²

Hundreds upon hundreds of federal law suits, commissions, case studies, habeas corpus acts, and international reviews conducted by multiple entities over the course of nearly two decades have attempted to make sense—to codify—the humanity of this aporetic set, to account for its unique status. In much of this discourse, language serves more to abet the normalization, which is also the institutionalization, of state-sanctioned dehumanizing processes than to eradicate their future possibility: torture is rebranded “enhanced interrogation”; suicide is diagnosed as “manipulative self-injurious behavior”; and hunger strikes convert to “long-term non-religious fasting.”³ Even so, human rights advocates and critics of U.S. policy at Guantanamo including The Center for Constitutional Rights, Amnesty International, The Institute on Medicine as a Profession, The International Committee of the Red Cross, The American Civil Liberties Union, and The Center for Policy and Research have given voice to these prisoners, many readied for release but without the prospect of attaining freedom.⁴ Allies of the detainees, both individual and organizational, have raised legal and moral objections to perpetual detention, excruciating labor, and dehumanizing practices, those evocative of the atrocities acted upon captives in the literature of this dissertation. Not surprisingly, Guantanamo has been called the “Gulag of our Times”—an image collapsing multiple carceral forms.⁵

In the wake of the famed 2002 “Torture Memo” and other authentications demonstrating the moral and political failure of Guantanamo, President Obama campaigned on the promise to end indefinite detention at the notorious site.⁶ While again and again repeating this commitment—over eight years and two presidential terms—full closure of the base has proved unfeasible.⁷ The reasons are numerous. Yet, with the

complicated release of each prisoner—nearly 719 to date—it becomes more evident that opposition to closing the facility emanates most emphatically from elected political leaders and military personnel in the U.S., those who remain convinced that American freedom is enlarged by Guantanamo’s circumstance of perpetual and absolute captivity.⁸

While extreme in its geopolitical reach, draconian tactics, and secretive ambitions, Guantanamo is more a nightmarish fulfillment of state-sanctioned institutional captivity than it is an historical oddity. Like the architectures and social systems examined in this dissertation, Guantanamo’s super-max, super-punishing military prison is part of an ongoing process, one dating back to the nation’s founding, of generating a version of freedom inextricable with and mandated by structures and acts of captivity. The “deepest allure” of all these forms—plantations, prisons, ships, factories, tenements, workhouses, mad houses, and military camps— is the role that each plays in the production of personhood.⁹ The Guantanamo detainees, joining captives across the duration of modernity, stand as crucial figures for thinking about how selves—legal, moral, and human—are constructed and endowed with rights. The claim of this dissertation has been that notions of freedom, autonomy, personal sovereignty, and full humanity evolve from and are bound to architectures, practices, and logics of captivity, ones that organize hierarchal violence and perpetuate differentiation, exclusion, and injustice.¹⁰ I turn to Guantanamo at the close of this project precisely because every defense of the camp’s origin and necessity contains the supposition that certain classes of people are made safer and freer by the absolute and perpetual denial of freedom to others. Moreover, efforts on behalf of Guantanamo detainees, those that invoke civil rights talk and humanist discourse and which aim to elicit sympathy seem bound in spirit and in language to

Western liberal values and to notions of the sovereign self—all ideas that tend toward replicating existing political statuses, social understandings, and geopolitical dynamics. Even when such efforts succeed in addressing specific struggle and oppression, they do not unfetter freedom from captivity or create space for freedom to operate outside of a global zero-sum game.¹¹ It may be, therefore, that the critical challenge involved in revising freedom—in conceptualizing it as abundant, as disembodied from the liberal fantasy, as a matter of solidarity not individuation—requires that we “unmake,” as Caleb Smith suggests, the very “concept of the human” most Western moderns agree upon: autonomous, agential, innate, and unique (*PAI* 203).

Sylvia Wynter’s influential theorization of the human echoes Smith’s “harrowing” form as well as the imaginative embodied construct (white, male, masterful) that I’ve traced in the literature of this project.¹² Predictably, Wynter dates the embodied articulation of her interest to the nineteenth-century, to liberal, bourgeois incorporations.¹³ Her work, like that of W. E. B. Dubois, C. L. R. James, and Frantz Fanon, has emphasized the complex ways racialized, sexualized, and nationalized human categories—always irrational and fantastical—become naturalized and historically specific. It is a process in which one version of the human—what Wynter calls “monohumanism” or “Man2”—comes to accumulate more wealth, more power, more empirical rationality because it can subordinate all other lives to the purpose of that accumulation.¹⁴ In representing real and imagined persons in dialectical struggles that produce the very domain of the human—free and unfree—this project has engaged in the explicitly humanist work of critiquing the imaginative, political, and psychosocial foundations of personhood. It has assumed that the self is not self-evident, that the human

subject most idealized in the American consciousness is, in truth, a fiction, an imaginative construct rooted in nation-state identity, liberal philosophy, and capitalist modernity. And it has argued that this fantastic, embodied substantiation of freedom—nurtured, produced, and appealed to in American life and in the nation’s literature—exists at a tremendous cost to the planet and to the multitudes required to sustain it.

The work facing humanists today—those committed to the expansion and realization of an unencumbered, inter-subjective *freedom for all*—is ethical, imaginative, and discursive work. It is work that embraces the possibility of mapping out new correlations and collaborative social worlds through critical, practical, and pedagogical commitments that are generous and rooted in deep historical knowledge and radical possibility. Though bold and rigorous, the terrain of this labor is not uncharted. The theories, imperatives, and praxis of intellectuals like Wynter, Angela Davis, Dylan Rodriguez, Cornell West, and Gary Wilder, among many others heretofore mentioned, signal the difficult yet requisite task of locating our intellectual curiosities and imaginative visions beyond our present knowledge systems, geopolitical paradigms, and human identifications.¹⁵

In the mind of political scientist Sharon Krause, for example, remedying the most severe failures of freedom in American society requires that we reject the prevalent understanding that autonomy and agency are linked to personal sovereignty or are measures of individual self-determination.¹⁶ Embodied freedom (a central tenet of the liberal nation-state, whereby sovereign nations form from sovereign citizens) actually poses a fundamental threat to democratic relations because it denies the degree to which agency, identity, and selfhood are “socially distributed,” a matter of what Krause terms

“social uptake” (15). In stark opposition to deeply-entrenched Romantic ideas, to artistic conceptions shared by a generation of antebellum writers including Hawthorne, Emerson, Melville, and Poe, freedom is not part and parcel of an original, innate, sacrosanct interiority but rather the product of a “complex constellation of [social] causes” that “disappear from view” in the case of more privileged selves (Krause 8, 4). Theorists such as Bryan Turner and Judith Butler have turned to “vulnerability” as a force capable of exposing our full “social dependency” and of forging new kinds of “connectedness.”¹⁷ Vulnerability as an undeniable “factor of embodiment” challenges individuation, autonomy, and sovereignty, revealing each to be, in Butler’s words, “an accomplishment, not a presupposition, and certainly no guarantee.”¹⁸

Sovereignist assumptions—those constituted in part through literature, in the plot lines of exceptional individuals and individualism— generate the illusion that freedom is inalienable, culturally ubiquitous, and accessible to all when, in actuality, sovereignty restricts freedom’s reach and its embodied possibilities. Sovereign selfhood like sovereign nationhood has only one possible terminus—domination. I have grounded formulas of personal sovereignty and possessive notions of freedom in the aesthetic and political theories of liberalism and Romanticism. This historical equation is widely recognized across interdisciplinary study. Even so, I share Krause’s belief that the traditions of liberalism (traditions that have little to do with today’s neoliberal turn) and Romanticism can accommodate a more “relational autonomy” or “socially distributed character” and a conception of freedom that derives not from individuation of the kind that demands denial and captivity, but from interpersonal solidarity and egalitarian intersubjective exchange (13). This is to say, unlike many within the Leftist intelligentsia,

scholars I deeply admire, I hold out hope for liberalism, noting its rational basis in tolerance, and I remain a Romantic, for all its revolutionary idealism.¹⁹

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Recent global crises, including the nightmarish paralysis of Guantanamo, expose the tautological problematic of freedom vis-à-vis human rights: human rights, including life and liberty, are rights one has because one is human; therefore, “human rights have [essentially] no foundation” (Donnelly 18). Traditions and discourses of law and politics, which routinely address such categories and their definitions, have proven inadequate in the face of this impasse.²⁰ Crystal Parikh and Nicholas Matlin suggest that literary studies is better suited to interrogate the “stakes and subjects” of human rights politics (28). Indeed, humanist critical modes, imaginative rhetorics, and radical aesthetics are not only superior to the task, they are indispensable to transfiguring the human concept as it relates to rights, correlations, and freedom precisely because of the innate fictionality and cultural complexity of the human category—a “magical” incorporation of “bios and logos,” to borrow from Wynter in the opening epigraph.

Literature, then, has as prominent a place in shaping and naming new modes of existence as it has had in articulating and working through the exclusionary projects of modernity’s past. The antebellum occasions of captivity and iconic architectures examined in this dissertation—spaces, structures, and aesthetics that produced marvelous and masterful articulations of freedom—have not lost a measure of explanatory power despite the distance created by consequent historical events, likely unfathomable to the period’s writers: World War, nuclear power, unrelenting geopolitical corporatism, terrorism, and environmental collapse. What underlies contemporary occasions of

appalling captivity—militant prisons, detention centers, refugee camps, ghettoized slums, factory warehouses, and regimes of domestic slavery, forced marriage, and human trafficking—is an effect of nineteenth-century carceral forms, the very “undead issue” of private, interior, exclusionary, and hegemonic freedom.²¹ Still, many thinking people, working people, incarcerated and migrant people— worldwide— stand firm and together with intellectual power and moral fervor, and they are on fire for freedom. I cast my lot here and with the radical freedom project envisioned by Wynter as an obligation to “redraw the map” of the human form in “undared” ways. This will require the giving up of race, class, gender, and nation—and all the many grotesque and requisite mandates of these identity categories—so as to think, create, and call forth a new horizon and a new reality: persons materialized within generous solidarity and abundant freedom.

Notes

1. In 2006, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Hamdan V. Rumsfeld* that the Bush administration was acting illegal in violating the Geneva Conventions and that no such special authorization had been given by congress. Many of the most egregious and unlawful practices had by this time been suspended. For more discussion of the military base in an American studies context, see Smith, PAI, 202. Smith brings Donald Pease, Judith Butler, and Susan Willis to bear on the Guantanamo and its many exceptions and brutalities.
2. See Final Report of the Guantanamo Review Task Force (PDF). June 2, 2010. Department of Justice www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/ag/legacy/2010/06/02/guantanamo-review-final-report.pdf.
3. See Rosenberg, Carol (11 March 2014). “U.S. Now Calls Guantanamo Hunger Strikes Long Term Non-Religious Fasting.” Miamiherald.com. See also Rose,

David. "Operation Take Away My Freedom: Inside Guantanamo Bay on Trial." *Vanity Fair* 88 (January 2004).

4. Former President Jimmy Carter wrote a scathing piece for the *New York Times* in 2012 regarding detainees eligible for release. See "America's Shameful Public Rights Record." *The New York Times* (24 June 2012).
5. See Kahn, Irene. (25 May 2005). "Amnesty International Report 2005 Speech by Irene Khan at Foreign Press Association."
6. See "Memorandum for Alberto R. Gonzalez Counsel to the President." (PDF) August 1, 2002. U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Legal Counsel. <http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB127/02.08.01.pdf>.
7. In January 2009, a military judge at Guantanamo rejected a White House request in the case of Abd al-Rahim al Nashiri, setting the stage for a series of challenges that would keep many detainees from trial. See "Judge Rejects Obama Bid to Stall Gitmo Trial." *Associated Press*. January 29, 2009. In May of that year, the U.S. senate passed an amendment to the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2009 blocking funds needed to transfer or release Guantanamo detainees. See Taylor, Andrew. "Senate Votes to Block Funds for Guantanamo Closure." *Associated Press*. May 20, 2009. The Defense Authorization Bill of January 2011, which President Obama signed, placed further restrictions on the transfer of Guantanamo detainees to the U.S. mainland or to foreign nations. In February of 2011, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates claimed that the administration had failed to close the military prison essentially because of the relentless opposition of

Congress. See Steward, Phil. “Chances of Closing Guantanamo Jail Very Low.”
Reuters. February 17, 2011.

8. Ibid. See also report on General John Kelly, President-Elect Donald Trump’s appointee to head the Department of Homeland Security. “Vowing to ‘Stop Political Correctness,’ Gen. John Kelly to Head Department of Homeland Security,” *Democracy Now!*, web audio, December 12, 2016
<https://www.democracy.now.org/2016/12/13/vowing-to-stop-political-correctness-gen>. While stationed at Guantanamo, Kelly and his officials worked, the audio report claims, to undermine and sabotage Obama’s efforts to transfer detainees.
9. See Smith, *PAI*, 22. Smith is referring to the prison as an institution and object of inquiry, but his argument applies, as he himself suggests, to modes of historical captivity more broadly.
10. For more see Smith, *PAI*, 18-19.
11. For more on the “imperative force” of human rights discourse, see Smith, *PAI*, 203. See also Hartman and Krause, introductions.
12. Smith refers to the concept of the human upon which structures of captivity like the prison rest “harrowing.” See *PAI*, 23.
13. See McKittrick in *Sylvia Winter*, 9-10 for a fuller discussion the genealogy of patriarchal personhood vis-à-vis Wynter’s theories. See also Krause, introduction, for a similar grounding of sovereignty in nineteenth-century historical and political concepts.
14. See McKittrick, *Sylvia Winter*, 10.

15. Ibid, x. McKittrick's acknowledgement of Sylvia Wynter as thinker, mentor, and interlocutor shapes my conception of the intellectual path toward a post-liberal, post-national, and post-Romantic freedom.
16. This would not necessary require a full rejection of individuality. For a discussion of an egalitarian, democratic embrace of individuality (not to be confused as embodied sovereignty) within an alternative model of liberalism, see Kateb, notably "Democratic Individuality and the Claims of Politics."
17. See Parikh and Matlin on Turner, 29. I am quoting Parikh and Matlin.
18. See Parikh and Matlin on Butler, 29.
19. In *Watchman in Pieces*, a text cited throughout this dissertation, Rosen and Santesso, offer a most rigorous, insightful, and sustained defense of liberalism, as perhaps the most humane and workable philosophical and political model available. Another important contemporary defense of liberalism emerges from political theorist George Kateb's large body of work. In dialogue with antebellum Romantics, most notably Emerson, Kateb advances a liberal utopianism that embraces individual distinctiveness but which purges society of class, station, and the impasses of present identity politics. See Kateb.
20. See Parikh and Matlin, 27-28.
21. See Smith, *PAI*, 202. Smith is suggesting that older Foucaultian concerns over how inward and private subjectivity might be managed by institutional and government bodies seem less relevant in the wake of more violent, more dehumanizing, more mortifying displays of power. At Guantanamo, for example, the reformist ideals behind the nineteenth-century penitentiary and related

carceral institutions have been wholly abandoned. Still the violent and “undead issue” of sovereignty that Smith identifies in twenty-first century captivity is rooted in antebellum arguments for sacrosanct interiority and private, privileged subjectivity.

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