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Reading Bodies: Disability and American Literary History, 1789-1889

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A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of The College of William & Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

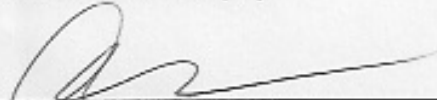
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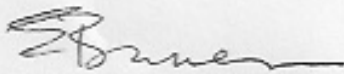
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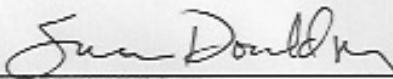


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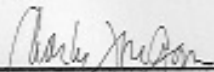
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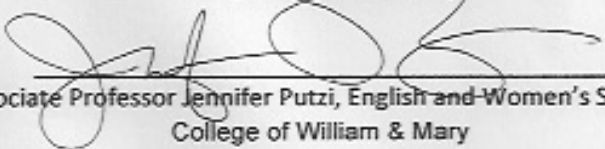
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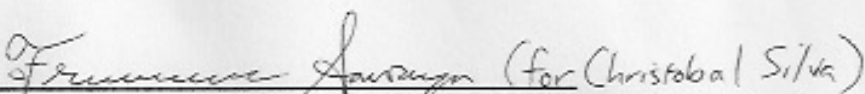
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation brings the field of critical disability studies to bear on organizational paradigms of nineteenth-century American literature. “Reading Bodies” intervenes in these fields with the claim that the book in a variety of formats, publications, and circulations acts as a disciplinary tool that seeks to arrange physical and mental characteristics and capacities into the category of disability. This project moves beyond examining representations of disability to demonstrate that the same social, cultural, and political forces that generated literary movements and outpourings – such as nationalism, displacement of Native peoples, slavery, state-sanctioned violence, and education reform – also generated material conditions of impairment that formal literary conventions sought to consolidate as “disability.” Individuals and communities reading, writing, and responding to the genres of seduction, historical fiction, slave narrative, Civil War poetry, and children’s literature both deployed and challenged formal literary conventions to model or defy normative and deviant behaviors. The formal characteristics and aesthetic concerns of the field of American literature, I find, are products of larger social processes that both cause impairment and that communicate and mark constructions of disability into and onto reading and non-reading publics.

As social and literary forces coalesced the category “disability,” often those populations most vulnerable to impairment responded by challenging, resisting, or completely renovating the conventions and categories of textual and bodily behavior. In a variety of interactions with the book, nineteenth-century women, Native Americans, African Americans, wounded soldiers, and children offer alternative intersectional perspectives and possibilities for what it means to produce literature and for what it means to inhabit a body. Those works considered literary outliers both in their day and in contemporary critical assessments, such as Leonora Sansay’s *Secret History* (1808), the *Life of Black Hawk* (1833), and midcentury children’s books printed for sight-impaired readers, reveal the normative underpinnings of literary and bodily taxonomies.

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My parents put the first books into my hands, and thanks to their support, hard work, and encouragement, I haven't been without a book since. This project is dedicated to them, with love.

This project is dedicated to my parents,
Susan and Max Stuckey

Introduction

In May of 2016, seven-year-old Anaya Ellick, a first grader at Greenbrier Christian Academy in Chesapeake, Virginia, won a penmanship contest. Part of a national educational initiative to promote legible handwriting, the competition required Anaya to print “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” on ruled paper. She also penciled an answer to the test question “What do you like about handwriting?” with the response “I get to write about my ideas.”

Anaya was born with no hands. A photograph in *The Virginian-Pilot* shows her holding a mechanical pencil between both arms. In another photograph we see her proudly hugging a large trophy. *The Virginian-Pilot* and several other news outlets reported Anaya’s victory and praised her determination and her rejection of prosthetics, which, as she told reporters, only slowed her down.¹

According to the newspaper account, Anaya surpassed the perceived limitation of her body to do something that seemed impossible without hands: write, and write perfectly. The newspaper reproduced her winning entry as evidence. Yet what made Anaya’s entry worthy of reprinting was not her precise handwriting, or even the award, but rather the precise handwriting executed without hands. The story makes penmanship and writing in general visible as a discipline, while also demonstrating the ways in which writing occurs because of – or, in Anaya’s case, despite – a certain configuration of the body. Penciling “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” would likely be less “remarkable” for a first grader writing with hands. Only with impairment do these letters become visible as productions of the body. Penmanship as a discipline and as a genre is revealed not as inherent, or “natural,” to the body’s posture but rather as a learned and practiced behavior.

In this project, I examine the relationship between narrative and the body a relationship that, I argue, becomes most apparent when the body does not conform to the conventions of either. In particular, I examine the relationship between bodily non-conformity and literary narratives to understand how narrative seeks to discipline individuals into able-bodied behavior. I also examine the ways in which these individuals challenged, resisted, or transformed dominant narrative forms in response to these disciplinary attempts.

I view narrative as the form – the penmanship, perhaps – that stories take. Narrative, like penmanship, can fit the ruled pages on which it is inscribed, can be legible to a broad audience or to only the person who writes it, can defy rules and, over time, even inspire new ones. Key to this understanding of narrative is the belief that how something is written is as important as what is written. As with penmanship, the way in which a narrative is written affects the experience of reading it: is it messy, precise, or entirely illegible? Deliberately so, or as a result of external factors that affect the appearance of the words on the page?

As this understanding of narrative also suggests, certain rules or guidelines must be in place in order for narrative to take shape. In penmanship, these guidelines may be “official,” even national, standards, like those established by educational organizations and their handwriting awards. These guidelines may also be small and seemingly insignificant ones, like the light blue lines on notebook paper. These guidelines become conventional when they are valued, for example, through awards for how closely one

approximates these standards and through the broader cultural reception that applauds these awards. These conventions are sanctioned in spaces like schools, but also in other venues that evaluate “success” based on how nearly and neatly one conforms to convention, especially despite any odds.

Narrative, too, has conventions, ones that may be established in official or unofficial registers. As with penmanship, narrative conventions often are not visible until a writer deviates from them, or until they become too messy to be coherent, or follow other rules that render narrative illegible. As Jessica Roberts has written, conventions that “conform” to these standards and to our expectations “tend to remain seemingly silent on the page,” while those that deviate from standards and expectations “usually ring out more loudly” (171).

Conventions, Roberts maintains, are the guideposts by which we recognize types of narratives. These conventions also organize and classify narratives into a genre. In the same way that rules of penmanship aim to render handwriting legible, and that an individual’s conformity to or defiance of these rules may produce or distort a final result, conventions act as the “rules” that make narratives legible as a genre. These “rules” are inherently unstable and open to interpretation: two writers’ versions of “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” may follow penmanship’s conventions, but may be discernably different from one another. We are able to read the sentence only if we are able to connect the letters to the official standard of what handwriting should look like. E. D. Hirsch, Jr. has made a similar argument about genre. While “all understanding of verbal meaning is necessarily genre-bound,” he writes, genre is nonetheless “an imprecise and variable concept” because of its interpretability (76-77). Yet it is also, as Hirsch maintains, these genre conventions that make a narrative legible. Rather than oversimplifying the concept of genre, my comparison to penmanship signals the seemingly infinite variations and interpretations of the words and meanings located within the registers of genre conventions.

As conventions organize a narrative into genre, genre may in turn structure broader taxonomies in the form of, for example, a “canon” or a “literary history.” For example, in the book that largely established the critical field of early American literature, Cathy Davidson traces the composition and reception of the genre of the novel and its various types, including the seduction novel, the picaresque, and the gothic.² Studying late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century reading and writing practices, *Revolution and the Word* builds an early American literary history from American authors’ defiance of or conformity to the conventions of genre and of literacy overall. Just as conventions may become most visible when they are defied or ignored, so too may overarching classification systems become most visible when a work contradicts a canon, when it does not fit into the overall narrative arc of literary history. Jacques Derrida proposes that the very impulse to categorize texts, or perhaps to fit narratives to conventions of genre, and genre to larger canons or literary histories, indicates a fear of deviation from these conventions. What he terms “the law of genre” in fact defines genre in terms of conformity or deviance: “impurities” in the genre form may be signaled by “corruption, contamination, decomposition, perversion, deformation, even cancerization, generous proliferation or degenerescence” or “disruptive anomalies” (226). The desire for conformity to the “law of genre” indicates a fear of disruption, deformation, and, more broadly, of any anomalies that might tarnish and resist these classifications.

Derrida figures departure from a genre or canonical norm as deviance of a particular sort. Images of “contamination,” “decomposition,” “perversion,” “deformation,” and “cancerization” characterize genre departures as physical illness, failure, or impairment. The “purity” of genre is defined in opposition to the “contamination” or “deformity” wrought by its departures. This distinction, I maintain, is crucial to understanding the relationship between the body and narrative. Genre and its conventions may become most visible only when a narrative departs from them; they operate almost invisibly and without question. Yet what happens when we look at these supposedly neutral, even “healthy” and appropriately functioning conventions not as the unquestioned structure over and through which narrative takes place, but instead as structures that make originary assumptions about what is “normal” and what is “deviant?”

The fields of critical and literary disability studies emerged in large part from a similar distinction between the “norm” and the “anomalous,” the standard and its deviations. As Lennard Davis writes, “to understand the disabled body, one must return to the concept of the norm, the normal body” (23). Davis traces the concept of the bodily “norm” or “standard” to the consolidation of the statistical sciences in the mid nineteenth century, arguing that the “norm” emerged as a result of statistical methods of organizing, classifying, and understanding human shape, size, capacity, and ability.³ Rosemarie Garland Thomson maintains that “in modern society, an unmarked norm is the reference point. Those who most depart from the normative standard are most subordinated.” The norm and non-normative in fact take shape inseparably from each other: “the disabled figure,” argues Garland Thomson, plays a “crucial role in establishing the boundaries of the normate” (40, 41). In this way, some of the earliest work in the field of critical and literary disability studies maintains this oppositional yet mutual relationship between the norm, or the conventional, and the anomalous, or the unconventional.

According to Davis and Garland Thomson, the concept of the “norm” arises from attempts to organize bodily behavior. The norm is the “unmarked” center around which approximating or outlying bodily behavior hovers. In being “unmarked,” the norm does not require any explanation for its existence; it, like convention, is the invisible standard around which non-normative bodily formations are rendered “deviant.” Because these formations are “marked,” they also require explanation for this marking. They incite narrative, in the same way that Anaya Ellick’s body transformed an otherwise unremarkable act of penmanship into a newsworthy story. As David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder argue in *Narrative Prosthesis*, disability historically has been viewed as a problem or enigma that inspires narrative invention (47-52). The authors point out the metaphorical uses of “disability” not to “provide a strictly historical study of disability” but rather to outline “a finite series of strategies for theorizing the utility and appearance of disability in literary narratives” (1). Their work locates disability as a rhetorical strategy, one that operates in multiple histories and even outside of history in Western literary and visual traditions.

Narrative Prosthesis argues that disability is a trope, the precondition for narrative itself, and locates the opposition between “norm” and “non norm” as a rhetorical condition, not a historical one. Yet more recent scholarship in the field of literary disability studies identifies the necessity to historicize the work that disability does in American literature. Turning to the genre of the American novel, Sari Altschuler

calls for “further scholarship toward the historical idiosyncrasies of corporeal representation,” or the need to historicize the appearance, function, and purpose of disability in the novel and its surrounding cultures (249-50). In this project I argue that the historical contexts that gave rise both to disability and to genre formations are inextricable. In particular, I maintain that the same social, cultural, and political forces that generated nineteenth-century American literary movements and outpourings – such as nationalism, displacement of Native peoples, slavery, warfare, and education reform – also generated material conditions of impairment that narrative conventions sought to consolidate as “disability” or “anomaly.”

The field of nineteenth-century literary and cultural studies has held up to a variety of organizational paradigms beyond temporal or chronological ones.⁴ Contributors to the volume *Unsettled States*, for example, encourage scholars to shift conventional period- and author-based studies to emphasize the national and extra-national spatial, temporal, and bodily conflicts and regulations that gave rise to the field of American literature. In her introduction to *Turns of Events*, Hester Blum offers a “meta-disciplinary” reflection on the tendency of nineteenth-century American literary studies to reevaluate itself continuously as a field, finding in its “constant, mobile reinvention, its drive to regenerate and extend without fracture or dissolution” one of the field’s greatest strengths (2-3). The very titles of these two recent collections attest to a nineteenth-century literary field that is constantly shifting, in motion, even unstable—one that, even though it has generated many organizational paradigms, works equally hard to resist and reinvent them.

Examining this field through a disability studies perspective allows these shifts, these movements, and these instabilities to become definitive of nineteenth-century American literary history. Focusing in on the intersection between narrative and bodily conventions, I suggest that disability studies may “un-organize” some of the forms that have been considered most conventional to nineteenth-century American literature. Although the texts in question may not take up the most obvious or well-known examples of disability in the nineteenth century, I examine those cases in which the material of the book – its conventions, its format, its shape and size – coincide with metaphorical or symbolic uses of the body upon its pages.⁵ This evaluation speaks to larger questions in the field of disability studies as to the relationship between the “material” of disability (the lived experience of the impaired body) and the metaphors of disability (the literary, cultural, or historical symbols and frameworks it may provide).⁶ In this project I examine the intersections of material and metaphor across the pages of the nineteenth-century book. Very real, material forces gave rise to impairment in the nineteenth century, and these material forces, I suggest, are coopted in various genres as a means of producing American literature, as a method of book-making. I aim to move beyond studies of disability representation to understand how narrative and disability are actively created together by the historical conditions under which individuals write, or attempt to write.⁷ “Reading Bodies” explores the intersections of bodily and textual conventions to argue that bodily capacities deemed normal or deviant coalesced alongside formal literary characteristics that structured expectations for what constitutes conventional or anomalous texts. I conclude that the same broad-scale historical processes that brought physical impairment upon nineteenth-century individuals and communities also gave rise to the period’s literary forms, genres, and movements.

Chapter 1 examines how standards of “natural” or “deviant” behaviors were inscribed onto women’s bodies via the conventions of the seduction genre, one of the most popular forms of post-Revolutionary U.S. literature. In particular, I show how the most conventional consequence of seduction – pregnancy – threatened the boundaries of national literature and nationhood itself. I argue that late eighteenth-century writers like William Hill Brown and Hannah Webster Foster figure pregnancy to demarcate anxieties surrounding the origins and insularity of the new nation. In contrast, Leonora Sansay’s difficult-to-categorize novel *Secret History* (1808) seeks to reimagine reproduction beyond U.S. borders and suggests alternate possibilities for the womb in the early republic.

Chapter 2 continues the focus on anxieties surrounding the boundaries and bodies of U.S. national literature. I take up the 1820s historical fiction of Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick to argue that this genre sought to create distinctly “American” literature not just in a book’s contents but also in the author’s compositional practices. These practices were predicated on the fragmentation and indeed the disabling of Native American populations. Incorporating a reading of the 1833 *Life of Black Hawk* into the genre of historical fiction, I argue that Black Hawk’s text highlights the damage done to Native populations by the very composition and concept of historical fiction.

As the U.S. sought to expand territorial holdings, it also became embroiled in transatlantic debates about slavery and emancipation in the western hemisphere. Chapter 3 argues that compositional practices of the emerging genre of the slave narrative reveal the fragility of ideas of independence and autonomy that both emancipation and the literary marketplace viewed as essential to concepts of personhood and authorial agency. Examining the “environment” of the slave narrative’s composition alongside the environments of slavery in the British Caribbean and U.S. south as they appear in narratives like *The History of Mary Prince* (1831) and *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper* (1837) demonstrates how freedom was predicated on intersectional bodily exclusions based on impairment, race, and gender during and after emancipation.

With the rise of antislavery sentiment during the years leading to the Civil War, abolitionist and overall wartime rhetoric became increasingly based in the body, in particular in the ability to understand the physical and mental suffering of another through feeling. In Chapter 4 I examine the sentimental convention of sympathetic feeling alongside emerging medical conventions that categorized nerve injuries, or “injuries of feeling.” I read S. Weir Mitchell’s *Gunshot Wounds and Other Injuries of Nerves* (1864) alongside the Civil War poetry collections of Walt Whitman and Herman Melville to argue that physical and affective feeling become not a pathway for understanding the suffering of another, but instead a source of self-alienation. Disability studies, I maintain, may critique even sympathy, one of the most dominant models of feeling in the nineteenth century.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I turn to the act of reading itself, examining instances of literacy acquisition in children’s books of the mid to late nineteenth century. I take up the convention of the ideal, able-bodied, autonomous reader as presented in Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Men* (1872) alongside one of the nineteenth-century’s most unconventional readers and unconventional books: sight-impaired students and the tactile

books that taught them to read. I argue that Alcott's idealized convention of autonomous reading developed not in opposition to the seemingly anomalous figure of the blind child reader, but as part of a larger nineteenth-century cultural impulse to make of all children, regardless of ability, able-bodied readers. This chapter illuminates the conjoined genealogies of able-bodied and impaired reading standards as they were established in education reforms of the nineteenth century.

Since its inception, the field of disability studies has been considered an inherently interdisciplinary one.⁸ Here, my subject matter of nineteenth-century literature might shift "Reading Bodies" into terms and methods more akin to the discipline of literary studies. Yet I invoke disability studies as an interdisciplinary field in order to interrogate some of the assumptions that organize literature and the methods of literary inquiry. Throughout this project I examine texts considered canonical, like William Hill Brown's *Power of Sympathy* (1789), a field-defining text in its designation as "the first American novel." I also examine texts that may not be considered "literature" in the conventional sense, like *The Blind Child's First Book* (1852), a work unusual and unstudied in both content and form. In examining both the "norms" and "anomalies" delineated by the nineteenth-century canon, I suggest that disability studies has the power to confront the normative underpinnings of the very structures on which literary history is built: the genre, the canon, the history, even the book. I attempt to show that a disability studies perspective can challenge and change not only the way we look at a literary text, but also the way we employ the methodologies associated with conventional disciplinary work. Yet I also maintain that the field of literary studies has the capacity perhaps more than any other discipline to envision boundless possible configurations of narrative, the book, and the body. When "disability" may be defined in terms of oppositional poles of "normative" and "non-normative," the literary imagination flits everywhere between. Indeed, of all the texts discussed in this study, many have in common the norm-defying work of the imagination, the invitation to invent other ways of holding a pencil, of making a narrative, and of envisioning worlds beyond the book.

“The Womb of Futurity”: Seduction and the Nature of Reproduction

In a 1789 issue of the *Massachusetts Magazine*, a columnist called The Dreamer enlists a female hand to address a reader’s question about the high mortality rate of young ladies in America. In keeping with the format of the column, the respondent – who “The Dreamer” promises is indeed a member of the “highly esteemed sex” – recounts a dream that may offer an explanation. “I fancied myself transported to the metropolis,” the author recalls, “not enjoying any of its scenes of gaiety, but standing in a long inclosure, which, to my astonishment, proved a burying ground” (666). Wandering through the graveyard, she too is struck by the youth of the deceased women. The apparition of a young man suddenly appears to explain: “Think not that apoplexies, fevers or deliriums, have brought so many persons to become silent inhabitants of the tomb. It is no disorder that human nature is subject to . . . tis *fashion* that has reduced such multitudes from the full bloom of youth” (667). The apparition explains that fashion itself is not to blame for these deaths; rather the extremes to which young women go in order to achieve fashionable figures cause untimely illness, disfiguration, and death.

The man continues to denounce women’s disfiguring of their own bodies with the use of corsets and other restrictive devices to achieve a fashionable form. “But for what cause is this ridiculous custom encouraged?” he asks.

Is it to destroy the most please shapes, and bring deformity into vogue? . . . How horrid an idea is it, that a lovely and delicate girl, whose limbs are fashioned by the perfect hand of nature, and who ought to move with ease, free from all restraint, should love thus to torture herself, to shrival her delicate skin, and bruize her tender frame. (667)

Not only are the bodily restraint and unnatural distortion caused by stays and corsets akin to “torture,” but they also rival the punishments reserved for the enslaved, punishments that are the antithesis of what the free women of the United States represent:

In the Westindies almost every method has been tried to render barbarity more cruel . . . but they have never yet thought of applying the flexible whalebone, or the elastic steel, to the waist of a female slave. And shall the daughters of a land of freedom, who have displayed fortitude, prudence, taste, and virtue, in the late glorious revolution, become the inventors of a new rack, or an unthought method of punishment. (668)

He concludes that U.S. women will be “held up to posterity, as patterns, bright patterns of everything noble, virtuous, and feminine.” American women, luminous examples of female virtue embodied in the “natural” form of an unadorned physique, do not allow themselves to be enslaved as some women in the West Indies are, nor do they permit themselves to be deformed by the stays of the metropole. Women in the United States prefer to let their bodies to take the course that nature has prescribed for them, and are all the more radiant in this form. After all, this dreamer asks, “Can anything be pleasing that is unnatural?” (668).

In this chapter, I consider what constitutes a “natural” American female in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century literary imagination. How were white women’s bodies made into “bright patterns” for posterity, posterity that these bodies were responsible for producing? How did the early republic represent, imagine, and construct versions of this female within the pages of its national literature? The Dreamer’s

anecdote establishes the geographic coordinates that structure these questions. In this vision, “American women” are newly born into the “land of freedom,” suspended between the metropole and the West Indies. Unmentioned are the “female slaves” within the United States’ own borders. The American female’s coordinates locate her in a delicate, postcolonial balance that Sean Goudie argues characterized the nation as a whole, a position through which she must distance herself from the tyranny of European behaviors and from the unfreedoms of the enslaved bodies of African Americans within her own national borders (Goudie 8). In this postcolonial moment, the United States found itself poised to create, for the first time, a distinctly “American” posterity.

U.S. readers and writers turned to the early American novel, and in particular to the seduction genre, to direct the course that the female American body and the posterity it produces should take. I argue that the prevalence and popularity of this genre in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reveal the ways in which U.S. authors used narrative to construct, transmit, and challenge understandings of “natural” female bodily behavior. I consider the depictions of women’s bodies within seduction tales of the early republic as well as the generic conventions that structured these tales in order to examine how standards of “natural” or “deviant” bodily behaviors and forms were inscribed into the very narratives that represented these bodies. With its interest in the virtuous or corrupted body of America’s female youth, the seduction genre naturalized the lexicon by which bodies in the early republic came to be narrated and understood as “female.” As the conventions of the seduction tale standardized narrative structures, plot trajectories, and embodied consequences specific to the genre’s thematic needs, these conventions also standardized ways of reading, constructing, and imagining the bodies that were the subjects – and, often, the victims – of these conventions.

The seduction genre, preoccupied with the virtue of its female characters and with the female body of the national body’s future, normalizes and naturalizes ways of narrating, reading, and being “female.” Furthermore, the seduction genre projects a certain type of “female” that should be at the helm of posterity—one who must, as the opening anecdote suggests, be distinguished from metropolitan and colonized counterparts as able to achieve the highest form of virtue through submission to the “natural” capacities of her body. Indeed, another convention of the genre serves to qualify the ambiguity of “American” to a specifically U.S.-version of “American women,” a process that involved distancing U.S. women not only from their enslaved counterparts but also from women, like those in *The Dreamer’s* tale, who would become “enslaved” by the body and any “unnatural” or corrupt path it might follow.

Making this distinction forced U.S. readers and writers to confront the reality which, as Michael Warner writes, nationhood had required them to forget: their own origins in a colonial world of cultural overlap and blend.⁹ These colonial origins produced the trope of the “creole,” a term which Elizabeth Maddock Dillon views as a more accurate description of early national literary production in the United States. Dillon contends that national culture in the U.S. required citizens to forget that “white Americans were, themselves, creoles rather than natives of America” (“The Secret History of the Early American Novel” 79).¹⁰ Establishing the “natural” state of U.S.-born white women’s bodies required their differentiation from the bodies of women who were also born in the United States, but into slavery.

Dillon and others have called upon the term “creole” to characterize a variety of experiences in colonial and postcolonial America.¹¹ Specific usage of the term varies, even according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s multiple definitions. A “creole” may refer to “chiefly in the Caribbean, certain parts of the Americas. . . a person born in one of these countries, but of European or African descent,” “a descendent of white European settlers . . . who is born in a colonized country,” “any person of mixed ancestry born in a country previously colonized by white Europeans,” or “a person of black African descent born in the Caribbean or mainland Americas, esp. as opposed to one recently arrived from Africa.” Definitions of the term range from the specific, where it may refer to a type of pidgin unique to a geographic location, to global process through which, as Goudie has surmised, the term “was used to account for admixtures, or syncretisms, between Old and New World races and cultures” (Goudie 8). Despite the permutations of the term, the various definitions of “creole” have in common, as Dillon observes, an emphasis on the place of birth as a key component of creolization.¹² The importance of birthplace in determining one’s relationship to the postcolonial nation became a source of anxiety for readers and writers in the early republic as white Americans faced the problem of having a birthplace, or geographic origin, in common with those they enslaved. While Dillon, Goudie, and others emphasize the “place” in “birthplace,” here I examine “birth,” or generation within the Americas. Women’s bodies become tense localities themselves when “birth” is viewed as a crucial component of what it meant to be a creole in the new nation and when many “American” women, indigenous, Anglo, and African, gave birth on U.S. soil. In response to the fear of similar geographic origins that characterized these anxieties, authors looked to the seduction novel and its hold on the bodies of women in order to create and maintain distinctions among creoles in the new nation. In the seduction novel, creolized and deviant bodies act as repositories for the actual violence of colonization and the resulting inequalities that continued in the postcolonial nation, as well as for the violence of representation deployed through the genre’s conventions.

Here, I attempt to understand the intersection of creolized and deviant bodies in the seduction genre, and how the demarcation of these bodies relied on the construction of a “natural” American female body. I concentrate on incidents of violence or violated bodies within the seduction novel in order to expose the genre’s complicity in such violence and, more broadly, to demonstrate how genre, as a mode of representing the body, effaces the true source of violence in order to condense the origins and consequences of this violence on and within the violated body itself. If the “natural” ability to give birth made all women antecedents for the nations’ posterity, then the seduction novel seeks to choreograph women’s behavior to promote certain versions of reproduction while also condemning other versions as the fault of the woman’s reproducing body. Carolyn Berman notes that the “importation of childbearing women, both slave and free, to the colonies [became] a crucial component” in the history of the colonial and postcolonial Atlantic world (7). The seduction novel does the work of first constructing all women as “childbearing,” and second of controlling the traffic in childbearing bodies through the channel of marriage –or through the downward spiral of seduction.

Indeed, simultaneously encouraging women toward the former channel and warning against the latter became the most persistent convention of the seduction novel.¹³ Neglecting this education, according to the seduction novel, could have social and

physical consequences that are gendered for the female body. The most incriminating consequences are a woman's sexual fall and almost inevitable pregnancy, what Carroll Smith Rosenberg has called the "formulaic conclusion demanded by the novel of seduction" (175). Anna Mae Duane has argued that, more than just a formulaic conclusion, pregnancy outside of marriage in early American novels acted as a disciplinary force to the female body's errant sexuality, thus "subjugate[ing] women's reason to the logic of the body" (99). Within the pages of early republic's print culture, pregnancy, or a physical "punishment" specifically tailored to the body gendered as female, becomes a distinctly American consequence of seduction. The reproductive capacity of the female body represents one intersection between creole and deviance within the seduction novel that attempts to locate the consequences of lapsed virtue within the female body. These consequences become embodied perils not just of the seduction plot but also of being a body that is read and understood as "female."

Thus, when *The Dreamer's* apparition asks of the female body, "Can anything be pleasing that is unnatural," seduction novels of the early republic respond by delineating the parameters of "natural" for the "young ladies of America." Novels like William Hill Brown's *The Power of Sympathy* (1789), Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797) and Leonora Sansay's *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* (1808) use the conventions of the seduction plot to attach meaning to bodies, and, conversely, use depictions of anomalous bodies to bolster narratological norms. An analysis of the conventions of – and the challenges to – the seduction plot as they appear in these novels and their surrounding print culture exposes this violent process of attachment, as "deviant" bodies absorbed the creolizing forces of the nation's past and women's bodies became the purveyors of the nation's future.

According to one critic's assessment, between 1789 and 1796 the *Massachusetts Magazine* published over one hundred stories, letters, and poems on the theme of seduction (Tennenhouse 34). Print culture of the early republic, including publications like the *Massachusetts Magazine*, *Columbian Magazine*, *American Museum*, and *Herald of Freedom*, refined and disseminated European seduction tales for an American readership. So when the *Massachusetts Magazine* reprinted selections from the then-anonymous seduction novel *The Power of Sympathy*, the excerpts were remarkable not in their content so much as in their publication in novel form by an American author. Despite the editors' hailing of *The Power of Sympathy* as the "first American novel," it appears in the *Massachusetts Magazine* in a disjointed state, its various paragraphs organized under headings such as BEAUTY, SELF-KNOWLEDGE, SEDUCTION, TEARS, and SUICIDE ("Beauties of 'The Power of Sympathy'" 50-53). The editors represent Brown's novel in a form that anatomizes the novel into fragments that command the reader's attention with their bold headlines.

However, the effects of the *Massachusetts Magazine's* truncated representation of the cohesive novel reflect one of the governing conventions of the seduction genre: the ways in which the act of reading extends not just to the text but to bodies within the text, in particular to women's bodies. The publication of this skeletal version of *The Power of Sympathy* echoes an earlier article in the periodical entitled "Anatomy." This piece dissects the human body as the author reviews its various parts: the nerves, eyes, heart, hand, skin, and diaphragm are the "wonderful springs" that comprise this "suprizing

machine” (16, 22). The purpose of assessing these “magic materials,” the author concludes, is to arrive at a better understanding of the reading subject, as “by anatomizing each other, we shall learn to know ourselves” (20). Taken together, this article and the subsequent excerpts from *The Power of Sympathy* suggest that the process of reading a book is as much a process of dissecting the body.

Indeed, the very “power of sympathy,” as the epistolary novel’s initial letters demonstrate, is its ability to read the body of another symptomatically, a process that anatomizes this body. Indeed, the first pages of the novel enact a connection between the act of reading and the body, especially the body gendered as female. Harrington, intending at first to seduce the orphaned Harriot, interprets reciprocal feeling not in Harriot’s words but upon her body, as “a crimson drop stole across her cheek” (9). His intentions shift to a seemingly more honorable form as he proclaims virtuous love for her – and proclaims not by voice but by appearance as he is able to pronounce “not a syllable” of his affection. “It was impossible,” he writes to his friend Worthy, “my heart had the courage to dictate, but my rebellious tongue refused to utter a word.” Instead, he and Harriot communicate through mutual understanding that, like the blush, seems to radiate from emotion within to be read symptomatically on the body’s surface. “There is a language of the eyes,” Harrington muses, “and we conversed in that language, and though I said not a word with my tongue, she seemed perfectly to understand my meaning—for she *looked* (and I comprehended it as well as if she had *said*)” (14). In romantic exchanges both nefarious and honorable, the workings of the seduction novel take place across the skin, the eyes, the tongue, and other “wonderful springs” visible on and within the body.

Harriot “*looked*,” reports Harrington, his emphasis indicating the double meaning behind this description. Harriot not only “looked” at Harrington to communicate her feelings, but she also “looked, betrayed a certain appearance,” to Harrington, one that allows him to read these feelings. A broad range of reading practices in the early republic also suggest that literacy is indeed an embodied, felt process. An article in the same issue of the *Massachusetts Magazine* offers an account of a woman named Mademoiselle Salignac, “who was blind from her infancy, and yet could Write, Read, and Play at Cards, etc.” Though not a tale of seduction, the account illustrates the important intersection of reading, feeling, and the body that characterized the late eighteenth-century reading body. Mlle. Salignac miraculously learns to write never having seen a book, instead employing a “singular mechanism” in which “the letters were pricked down on the paper; and by the delicacy of her touches, feeling each letter, she could follow them successively, and read each word with her fingers’ end” (“An Account of Mademoiselle Salignac” 27) The dimensions of the act of “feeling each letter” – feeling its tactility with her hands, and feeling its emotive impact – mimic the dimensions of Harriot’s “look” in Brown’s description. Furthermore, Mlle. Salignac’s “singular mechanism” of learning to read employs paper cut-outs of each letter of the alphabet, thus anatomizing her text into its individual parts, in order to achieve self-expression through literacy.

Women’s bodies increasingly become the subject of reading by anatomizing, and tropes of the seduction genre in particular attempt to ground its rules for female behavior within the “natural propensities” of the female body itself. An essay entitled “On Woman” asserts “to build woman, all anatomists, agree, that her interior structure is full of wonders, as if the creator had contrived in her apartments as well for the reserve of the

most precious curiosities” (394). Contributors to the *Massachusetts Magazine*, it seems, did not hesitate to explore this “interior structure.” A brief anecdote entitled “The Lady’s Pocket Book” may be read as a kind of euphemism for embedding rules for female conduct – especially conduct that would mark women as impervious or susceptible to seduction – within the female body. A writer advertises a pocketbook that he has found, “judg[ing] by the contents of it that it belonged to a lady,” and eagerly explores these contents. “Upon examining into the interiour divisions, and folds,” the writer observes, “I found a number of valuable manuscripts, original and selected, which discovered no mean taste in its owner.” Some of the maxims on these pages are reprinted in the article: “Women often fancy themselves to be in love when they are not . . . in fact they are only coquetting,” and “Most virtuous women, like hidden treasure, are secure because no body seeks after them” (“The Lady’s Pocket Book” 303).

Discovering these maxims within the seams of a lady’s personal possession, sexualizes their discovery in an attempt to naturalize the rules of virtuous and coquettish female behavior within the “original and selected” “interiour” of the object. The unquestioned and publicized penetration of this object almost seems in turn to naturalize the mode of discovery, as if the curious eyes and hands of the narrator would find such maxims without question. One effect of this “naturalization” of standards of female behavior within the female body is the seduction genre’s attribution of fault to the fallen woman herself. *The Power of Sympathy* contains within its plot line the story of Ophelia, seduced by her brother-in-law to give birth to “both son and nephew” of her sister’s husband. Rather than “publish her disgrace” by confronting her seducer, Ophelia instead hopes people will understand her “misfortune” as “the result of a gullible nature, not of abandoned principles,” as if attributing her fall to her “nature” is more acceptable (because it is, therefore, inevitable) than viewing it as a series of bad decisions.

Pronouncing the pocketbook “a lady’s” based on its interior may have resonated with audiences in the early republic as understandings of women’s anatomy marked them as “naturally different” or even as “defective departures” from men and men’s anatomy (Garland Thomson 20).¹⁴ Thomas Laqueur has argued that anatomy texts at the turn of the nineteenth century marked the division between men and women in terms of perceived differences between their reproductive organs (145-188). The uterus became a kind of synecdoche defining “female,” standing in not only for her defining ability to bear children but also for her inherent difference from men. Simultaneously, I suggest, the seduction genre used the womb and all of its implied potential as a metaphor for the unfolding of its plot and consequences. Pregnancy acts as a narrative strategy of the seduction plot because it implies not only a lapse in female virtue but also the “natural” and embodied inevitability of seduction’s consequences. Pregnancy activates a seemingly linear, unavoidable progression of the embodied consequences of seduction, a progression that continues almost outside of the fallen woman’s control. Pregnancy also becomes a narrative strategy for the seduction plot due to late eighteenth-century constructions of its undeniable base within the female anatomy.

The female body, then, becomes understood as an unstable one that exists in the space of future-tense uncertainty. Because of the synecdochal construction of the female body, women were seen as open, unfinished, and incomplete. Penetration and pregnancy gave direction and narrative structure to the wayward female body, and, in the same way that the maxims for women’s virtuous and coquettish behavior were discovered within a

euphemistic rendering of female anatomy in the *Massachusetts Magazine*, the pregnancy that results from seduction is characterized as generated from within the woman herself, as a natural result of possessing a body unfinished, waiting for narrative.¹⁵ In the early republic, women's bodies "could be properly closed only when they were coupled with men's, or confined in the fictive body of the household," dependent upon men for completion and narration (Norton 153-4). It is this form of completion, of "proper closing," that the figure of the republican mother embodied in the new nation. This is the position that Eliza Wharton's friend Mrs. Richman inhabits in Hannah Webster Foster's *Coquette*. Mrs. Richman expresses the essence of the republican mother not in her own written words but, appropriately, in a letter between two men. "We shall not be called to the senate or the field to assert its privileges and defend its rights, but we shall feel for the honor and safety of our friends and connections," Selby reports, repeating Mrs. Richman's words for Boyer and noting that "the gentlemen applauded Mrs. Richman's sentiments as . . . truly republican" (139). Selby's ventriloquizing of the republican mother's position only serves to underscore this position's dependence on male roles, and exemplifying what Linda Kerber has identified as women's mediated "political identity" (120-1).

When voiced and embodied as republican mother, the female body is harnessed in what seems a more acceptable means of controlling women's fate and assigning a narrative to their bodies: that of marriage. Mrs. Richman's own marriage and subsequent pregnancy stand as examples of the marriage plot "closing" and "completing" the vulnerable womb. Such is "the glory of the marriage state," Mrs. Richman tells Eliza, "to refine, by circumscribing our enjoyments" (123). The "refinement" and "circumscription" of Mrs. Richman's body intensifies with the birth of her daughter Harriet. Mr. Richman notifies Eliza of the baby's arrival, musing that "imagination fondly traces the mother's likeness in the infant form" (159). The marriage plot "refines by circumscribing" almost to the point that, in Mr. Richman's description, the figures of the mother and daughter overlap. Marriage and reproduction circumscribe almost too completely, rendering child and parent – daughter and wife – nearly inseparable. Like the distortion of family formations that results from Ophelia's seduction by her brother-in-law, and the birth of her "both son and nephew," marriage, too, has the potential, even if only figuratively, to rearrange family structures.¹⁶

Indeed, one of Foster's major contributions in *The Coquette* is the blurring of narrative lines between seduction and marriage. Scholars have observed the similarities between the two, in both the parallel language with which Foster describes marriage and seduction and in the resulting relationships, as both marriage and seduction reveal the limited "choice" that structured possibilities for women.¹⁷ However, if turn of the century thought consolidated the female body into constructions of the womb, the direction that the bodies can take and the decisions that they make also assume a trajectory parallel to the narrative model of pregnancy, one that reins in bodies already perceived as deviant into a legible and recognizable narrative. Upon the death of Mr. Haley, Eliza describes herself as "young, gay, volatile"—a description that seems to characterize both body and mind as she continues: "The mind, after being confined at home for a while, sends the imagination abroad in quest of new treasures, and the body may as well accompany it, for ought I can see (115)." Despite the "freedom" that Eliza has recently gained from the "shackles" of her parentally sanctioned engagement to Haley, she perhaps senses that this

quest abroad may not allow her to embody this freedom in full. She contemplates the course this venture may take, revealing a tension between self-direction and fate as she writes that she often considers “submitting implicitly to my fate, without any exercise of free will, but as mine seems to be a wayward one, I would counteract the operation of it, if possible” (122).

One way that Eliza might “counteract” this “wayward” fate may be to follow the advice she receive from her friend Lucy Freeman, expressed metaphorically as Lucy evaluates the tone of Eliza’s letter. Lucy asks her to be more “methodical” and particular” in her writing, a request that echoes the lecture that Mr. Holmes gives to a young reader in *The Power of Sympathy*. Holmes recommends that young ladies read “methodically” and avoid “desultory reading” in order to pursue an unwavering course of self-development (22, 23). As she pursues this course, Lucy reminds Eliza, marriage is the highest form through which to “lead down the dance of life with regularity” (121). If figuring “female” as “womb” implies a kind of cooptation of the female body through the impinging narrative progression of pregnancy, marriage may be the first step to cure desultory reading and proceed methodically.

Marriage may grant the legitimacy to the pregnancy that would restrain Eliza’s wayward tendencies, yet Eliza’s conception of her fate seems to reflect the synecdochal construction of the womb that Lacqueur has observed. In Eliza’s mind, the lack of differentiation between marriage and seduction resides not just in lexicon or in choice but also within the body. She tells Lucy that she has “nearly determined . . . to give Mr. Boyer the preference, and with him tread the future round of life” (177). Yet she almost seems to feel this decision already scripted for her, looking instead toward a fate gendered as female:

The morning dawns, and ushers in the day, perhaps big with the fate of your friend! What that fate may be is wrapped in the womb of futurity; that futurity which a kind Providence has wisely concealed from the penetration of mortals! (177)

The “womb of futurity” does not represent a wide expanse of possibility, or even the difference between a life with Boyer or a life with Sanford, so much as it represents the inescapability of Eliza’s body and her realization that her fate is more dependent upon her body than upon her choice of men. The day is already “big with the fate” that harnesses Eliza’s “volatile” self, and even that fate reduces her, symbolically at least, to the level of the body: the “womb of futurity” implies constraints enforced upon Eliza’s future and fate by her body itself. Even though “a kind Providence” may have “concealed” this futurity from “the penetration of mortals,” the unknowability of the future is exactly why the seduction novel and the readers of and within these texts establish the female body as penetrable.¹⁸ Futurity, in the configuration of this genre, is located upon and within women’s bodies as these bodies have the potential to become the index of a “wayward” and “desultory” path that leads toward seduction.

If Eliza feels her fate tied to the inescapability of her body, Leonora Sansay’s representation of the fate of female bodies in her 1808 novel *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo*, embraces the desultory as a model for female bodies unconfined by – and detached from – their wombs. Dillon connects *The Coquette* and *Secret History* in terms of the novels’ focus on female characters “negotiating the complexities of heterosexual, marital ties” (“The Secret History of the Early American Novel” 80). In

both novels, female protagonists experience these “ties” as constricting and at times indistinguishable from the “traps” of seduction. But as the narrative path of Eliza Wharton becomes more restrictive of her body, the narrative paths of Sansay’s protagonists radiate outward, not only in search of release from the restrictions constructed upon and within their bodies, but also to reveal these restrictions as conventions of the seduction genre. Whereas *The Power of Sympathy* works to instill the conventions of the seduction genre within the bodies of the female “victims” of seduction, and whereas *The Coquette* complicates an easy division between marriage and seduction only to realize the inescapability of the female body, *Secret History* exposes the violence of the marriage plot. Sansay’s novel suggests that in order to detach reproductive capacity from the female body, one must also denaturalize marriage as a solution for the “wayward” potential of the womb.

One of the most obvious revisions Sansay makes to the seduction novel comes with her decision to transfer the predominantly New England world of her predecessors onto Saint Domingue during years immediately following the revolution. The novel begins as Mary, who pens all but three of the letters in the epistolary novel, describes her journey with her sister Clara from their Philadelphia home to Cape Francois, where she envisions “a new world opening to my view” (Sansay 61). Yet Clara, married to a French planter who is violent in both his physical and emotional attachment to his wife, seems only beginning to view her marriage through this new perspective. Of her sister, Mary writes:

Her proud soul is afflicted at depending on one she abhors, and at beholding her form, and you must know that form so vilely bartered. Whilst on the continent she was less sensible of the horrors of her fate. (64)

The “new world” opening before the sisters is not foreign and unknown but rather all too familiar in its uncovering of ongoing domestic violence. The “vile bartering” of the slave trade that made Saint Domingue – and the United States – into colonies and then nations has not ended with revolution; indeed, it continues in the form of marriage and its exchange of female bodies.

The female body also carries implications for the postcolonial futurity of the new nation as a whole because of the traces that this body may bear of the colonized past. Leonard Tennenhouse has deemed the seduction novel the archetypal genre of the early republic because stories about broken family ties resonated with a nation that had just cut ties with its own “parent,” and because seduction plots described “the rules for the exchange of women . . . that constituted kinship relationships between men” for the new nation (44-45). However, the seduction genre became even more of an imperative for the postcolonial United States because of the ways in which it distanced the new rules of exchange for women from the ongoing traffic of bodies within slavery. The seduction genre articulated the white female womb in a way that made it responsible for perpetuating the tenuous geographic position noted above in “The Dreamer,” reproducing and creating futures as creoles upon newly independent U.S. territory but distancing and relegating to the past (and to territories outside U.S. borders) any ties to the traffic in enslaved bodies of its West Indian neighbors. The United States looked to the reproductive capacity of the female body – the “womb of futurity” – in order to ensure continued traffic in both female and enslaved bodies.

Certainly, Clara's body exists as a "form so vilely bartered" both within her marriage to St. Louis and in her relationships with men outside of her marriage. While on the island, Clara attracts the attention of General Rochambeau, who arrives in Saint Domingue two decades after serving in the American Revolution. In describing her sister's relationship with the General, Mary seems to subscribe to the belief, established in vignettes like of "The Lady's Pocket Book" and the story of Ophelia in *The Power of Sympathy*, that female behavior can be located within the constitution of the female herself. Mary notices Clara's flirtatious behavior with the General, and while she partially excuses her sister based on her unhappy marriage, she also admits "there is a vein of coquetry in her composition which, if indulged, will eventually destroy her peace" (77). Although both sisters believe that Clara and St. Louis are poorly matched – indeed, in one of the first paragraphs of the novel Mary confesses that Clara "repents every day having so precipitously chosen a husband: it is impossible for two creatures to be more different" – the sisters still attribute the problems in Clara's marriage to this "vein of coquetry" rather than to St. Louis' own jealous constitution, and certainly not to the institution of marriage that has asymmetrically matched the two (61).

As Rochambeau seeks Clara's company, and as St. Louis fumes at the attention his wife garners, Clara continues to view these marital conflicts as the result of her own imprudent behavior. St. Louis forbids Clara from attending any social events at which she might be admired, and in his threats Mary foresees "the approaching destruction of all domestic tranquility" (81). When another General chides Clara for being "so entirely governed by her husband," Clara assumes responsibility for his punishments with the admission that

she had suffered much in consequence of coquetting with general Rochambeau, in which her only intention had been to find amusement, but she was now convinced of its being highly dangerous and improper; and that it had been productive of much ill. . . . [she is] too sensible of [her] own defects. (100-101)

Yet as black revolutionary activity in Saint Domingue makes the island a dangerous place for the sisters, Clara gradually realizes that her "coquetting" with Rochambeau only highlights the "vile bartering" of her body within marriage. Rochambeau tracks Clara's movements throughout the island, and confronts her when the two are alone. Mary warns her sister that St. Louis is approaching, and when he sees the two together, Rochambeau with his usual levity, told St. Louis that he came in time to prevent him from running away with his wife. Then twining round her arm a wreath of jessamin . . . said, with such fetters only you should be bound! Does she find those that bind her too heavy? asked her husband. No, replied the general, she seems content. (102)

The "fetters" of Rochambeau's pursuits only reveal those that already "bind" Clara, as she is trapped, in this scene, not only within the "bonds" of Rochambeau and St. Louis, but also within the "vile bartering" that takes place over her body even when she is in the supposedly safe confines of marriage.

Furthermore, the "wreath of jessamin" is only one form of entrapment that keeps Clara suspended, immobile, between these two men. St. Louis wants to send Clara and Mary away from the island, ostensibly to avoid the dangerous aftershocks of revolution but also perhaps to remove her from Rochambeau's designs. However, in a counter-move to St. Louis' plan, Rochambeau declares an embargo that prevents anyone from leaving

the island. If St. Louis cannot tighten his grip on Clara by removing her from Saint Domingue, he does so instead by immobilizing her within their home, “keep[ing] her locked in a small room, adjoining her chamber” (86). In the tension that Clara creates between Rochambeau and St. Louis, tension that prompts both small-scale bonds of jessamin and large-scale mandates that keep all people bound to the island, what started as a “vein of coquetry” results in what Dillon calls “a greater system of patriarchal violence—one that encompasses the politics of colonialism as a whole rather than just the gendered divide between men and women” (“The Secret History of the Early American Novel” 92). Sansay uses the liminal space of Saint Domingue, a space “self-emancipated” from colonial rule yet still experiencing the violent ripples of revolution, to highlight the patriarchal structure of the project of colonization (77). When Clara and Mary are able to leave the island, they travel to Cuba and then to Jamaica and witness the effects of colonization upon these islands and their inhabitants. Though the sisters eventually plan to settle in Philadelphia, the novel ends before these plans materialize. The United States becomes not a realized achievement of ultimate freedom, but rather a space upon which the sisters speculate their future happiness.

Indeed, Sansay’s versions of marriage and seduction as they play out on the island of Saint Domingue functions to locate the United States not as “self-emancipated” as a free, untroubled nation, but rather as yet another node along an archipelago of crumbling yet still apparent colonial rule. Whereas the U.S. seduction novel attempts to transform the bodies of those who suffered most during colonization into supposedly liberated subjects of a postcolonial nation, the vexed relationships that both Eliza Wharton and Clara St. Louis have with their “paternal roofs” suggest these bodies actually only continue to serve a reconfigured patriarchy within the new nation. This reconfigured authority marks the inheritors of colonial violence as naturally deviant rather than as suffering from a continued imbalance of power. Such sleight of hand seems unique to the seduction novel of the early republic in a comparison of two epistolary anecdotes that describe distinctly American scenes yet bring the subterfuge of seduction into relief. J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur composed his *Letters from an American Farmer* before the American Revolution, though it was published only five years before Brown’s *The Power of Sympathy*, and a comparison of two scenes in these text demonstrates the capacity of the postcolonial seduction genre, in contrast to Crèvecoeur’s pre-revolutionary composition, to continue to subject “deviant” or “inferior” bodies to colonial violations.

The *American Museum* elected to reprint Crèvecoeur’s Letter IX, “Description of Charles Town; Thoughts on Slavery; on Physical Evil; A Melancholy Scene” in 1787, two years before *The Power of Sympathy* appeared in print.¹⁹ While “James”’s excursion in South Carolina is frequently referenced, as it is in this issue of the *American Museum*, for its depiction of the brutality of U.S. slavery, Harrington too tells of his travels in South Carolina in a less remarked letter in Brown’s novel.²⁰ Both accounts detail a northern traveler’s confrontation with the injured and disfigured body of a slave in order perhaps to generate abolitionist sentiment. Yet Brown’s post-revolutionary version of this encounter seeks to defend the freedom of the new nation as a whole, while Crèvecoeur’s pre-revolutionary composition seems to emphasize the deplorable state to which slavery reduces unfortunate bodies. The retooling of slavery in *The Power of Sympathy* also

further the seduction genre's goal of making the wounded, disfigured body liable for its own violation.

Crèvecoeur's Farmer James concludes Letter IX with an anecdote whose memory continues to "oppress" his mind. While walking through the South Carolina woods, he feels an "air strongly agitated" and hears a "sound resembling a deep, rough voice" that "uttered . . . a few inarticulate syllables. In a display "horrid to think and painful to reflect," James finds a slave suspended in a cage and hanging from a tree. Carnivorous birds have mutilated and devoured much of his flesh, and the man's body "seemed to be attacked with a multitude of wounds." The brutality of this punishment arrests James as his "nerves were convulsed" and he "trembled . . . stood motionless, involuntarily contemplating the fate of this Negro in all its dismal latitude." James even considers shooting the man to end this misery. The man responds in English as maimed and fractured as his body when James gives him some water: "'Tanky you, white man,'" he says, "'tanky you; puta some poison and give me'" (177, 179). James leaves the man to die, learning later that the man is being punished for killing his overseer. The chapter ends abruptly, as if Crèvecoeur himself, like James, wishes not to reflect on the horrors of slavery.

In contrast to the "oppression" that persists on James' mind and body in this scene, Harrington meets an enslaved woman in South Carolina whose wounds almost indirectly cure him of his own mental distress. Upset by a criticism leveled at Harriot, Harrington feels his soul restored at the sight of the woman who, in contrast to Crèvecoeur's dying subject, is very much alive, with "something in her air superior to those of her situation—a fire that the damps of slavery had not extinguished." This woman's wounds appear to Harrington in a gust of wind as it blows her "handkerchief from her neck and exposed it to my sight," revealing her scared flesh (61). When he asks about these marks, the woman "answered composedly" that she has taken the blame for her child's mistake and rejoices in being able "to shield with my body the lash from my child." Her articulate response contrasts with the "monosyllables" of Crèvecoeur's scene, and prompts Harrington to laud her "heroically" spoken deeds and to encourage such behavior:

May thy soul ever be disposed to sympathize . . . with thy brethren and sisters in calamity. . . all thy labors will become easy – all thy burdens light, and the yoke of slavery will never gall thy neck.

Harrington himself feels "sensibly relieved" to pronounce these words: his sensitive soul is restored and he looks forward to the day when "the sighs of the slave shall no longer expire in the air of freedom" (61-62).

The purpose of this comparison is to suggest that postcolonial, post-revolutionary images of slavery view the United States as a climate of freedom in which slavery is, as Julia Stern notes in her reading of Brown's vignette, "simply a state of mind" (25). Calling upon the woman's disfigured neck in order to create a narrative from her scars, Harrington is able to affirm that the "yoke of slavery will never gall" this neck because she has sacrificed her body – here, merely a symbol confirming not only her sympathy for her son but also Harrington's own sympathetic soul – to spare the pain of another. While James wishes he could end the misery he witnesses, a misery in which living life in an enslaved body is worse than death, Harrington's view almost functions to perpetuate the enslaved status of this woman by reading her body and writing it off as

irrelevant to the higher values of her mind. Proclaiming her mind free despite and because of the story that her violated body tells implies that, unlike Crèvecoeur's exposé of slavery as reductive to the level of the body, the seduction novel of the early republic can bracket the wounded body as a self-inflicted act of heroism that makes slavery not only "simply a state of mind" but also simply "skin deep."

Harrington's encounter is set apart from the main narrative of the novel, situated as a kind of interruption to the larger narrative arc. The scene is distanced from the rest of the text perhaps because of the "air of freedom" that Harrington shares with this enslaved woman. Such shared space becomes one of the problems that the seduction novel must resolve. Although he maintains a distinction between the northern and southern states, Harrington nonetheless shares a birthplace, an origin, with the enslaved woman, a recognition that perhaps accounts for his hailing of her as "heroic" and "free." Yet marking the body with a racialized form of disfigurement while symbolically freeing the mind demonstrates the ways in which the seduction novel attempts to use the exchange of bodies, whether through slavery or through marriage, not only to reconstitute relations between men in the new nation, but also to dissociate the various lives of people born in the "air of freedom" who no longer have a colonizing power to blame for a widespread climate of unfreedom. In his encounter with the disfigured body of the slave woman, Harrington must confront his own origins, origins that mark him and the woman as "creole."

The seemingly disjointed inclusion of this scene within the larger narrative arc of the novel appears to leave this confrontation unresolved, save for the reaffirmation of Harrington's sympathetic soul that this scene facilitates. Yet the scene arrives at perhaps the most pivotal point in the novel. Mrs. Holmes has written Harrington's sister Myra that she has "a tale to unfold," an ominous characterization of the revelation that Myra and Harriot (and thus Harrington and Harriot) are half-siblings. In the letter immediately following Harrington's account of his travels in South Carolina, Mrs. Holmes writes at midnight the fatal news that "Harriot is your sister"; the events in South Carolina unwittingly delay this disclosure. However, a parallel between this piece of news and Harrington's confrontation exists in the fact that both hinge upon a fear of shared origins, origins that threaten to blur the boundaries between "slave" and "free" and between "brother" and "husband." Fears of incest entwine with fears of creolization. Anne Dalke has argued that the former are "distinctly American" because of the "dreadful condition that incest symbolizes: the absence of a well-defined social system" (188). Interrupted by a detour southward, the revelation of potential incest in *The Power of Sympathy* may stand in for what the novel as a whole tries to relegate to an aside: that question of how the postcolonial United States should account for bodies marked as different that share origins and "the air of freedom" with the very people who perform this marking.

Accounting for the shared origins of birth gave heightened meaning to the synecdoche of the woman's womb. The enslaved woman in *The Power of Sympathy* is a mother, and it is her position as a mother that leads to the whipping and scars. The substitution of her body for that of her son may even establish this woman as a counterpart to the figure of the republican mother. But if women were understood largely through their wombs, enslaved women may be more accurately characterized as perpetuating the very system that violates and disfigures their bodies. The United States retained British colonial law that defined a person as a slave, from birth, if his or her

mother was a slave. The very anatomical feature that came to define “female” was also maintained as a feature that could produce slaves simply by fulfilling its “natural” capacity for conception, gestation, and delivery.²¹ Kathleen Brown writes that this law in colonial Virginia transformed women into “a means for naturalizing slave status with a concept of race” (135). The law may also anticipate the seduction novel’s self-designated task of distinguishing between racialized origins within the womb gendered as female.

Thus, when Mrs. Holmes “unfolds” “The History of Maria” following Harrington’s description of his encounter in South Carolina, her didactic language seems to echo understandings of slave women’s bodies:

Discover how a woman may be an accessory to her own ruin . . . when a woman exposes herself, she is an accessory, for though her heart be pure, her conduct is a tacit invitation to the seducer, [and she] yields herself to a kind of voluntary slavery. (73-74)

Print culture of Brown’s contemporaries also espoused the belief that ultimately responsible for such “voluntary slavery” was, indeed, the “ruined” woman herself. A regular contributor to the *Massachusetts Magazine* under the name “Philo” writes that “one snare may ruin” women forever. Women’s “peculiar situations” put them at risk for ensnarement, as “one incautious step may ruin them forever” and as “by their incredulity, [they are] deceived” (734). The warnings that Worthy offers to young women about which books to read bears the same rhetoric; “unsuspicious of deceit,” he cautions, “she is easily deceived . . . she falls a sacrifice to her credulity” (Brown 23). Brown even supports Worthy’s reasoning with the footnoted account of Elizabeth Whitman, whose biography inspired Foster’s Eliza Wharton and, as Brown states, whose “own fancy, tempered with judgment, were the cause of her ruin” (23). In turn, *The Coquette’s* Mrs. Richman warns Eliza that even “Richardson’s Clarissa” was not seducible, “until she made herself the victim, by her own indiscretion” (134). Seduction becomes understood as a kind of “voluntary slavery” to which the victim commits herself.

This “voluntary slavery” is realized most obviously in pregnancy, the consequence of seduction written upon and within the female body. Dillon maintains that throughout U.S. history, femininity has been

construed as a bodily handicap . . . insofar as the woman’s body (in particular, the female reproductive system) is understood to exercise upon women a kind of constraint not experienced by men. . . . the pregnant female body (an image that represents a condition that some, but not all, women experience for a relatively brief time in their lives) comes to stand as a synecdoche for both femininity itself and for constraint, dependency, and the limits of volition. (*Gender of Freedom* 14)

Pregnancy becomes the narrative that threatens not just to overtake the seduced woman’s body but also to subsume female experience in its entirety. Pregnancy becomes the dominant narrative for the female body, and as Eliza’s own pregnancy progresses it begins to overtake her voice as well as her body. Eliza confesses that “writing is an employment, which suits me not at present” as her narrative presence dwindles and finally disappears (213). Paradoxically, as Eliza’s body increasingly evinces the illicit sexual behavior that results in her pregnancy, she also becomes increasingly consumptive: “see you not,” she remarks, “my decaying frame, my faded cheek and tottering limbs” (220). In one of her final letters to her mother, Eliza confesses, “the

effect of my crime is too obvious to be longer concealed, to elude the invidious eye of curiosity” (230). Thus the punishment of seduction is the specifically gendered result of being female. The consequence of seduction, when written on the body, is Eliza’s total possession not by the man he seduced her but by her own body, by the form overtaking Eliza’s life with its own.

Yet earlier Eliza has attempted to redefine the lexicon of marriage in *The Coquette* in order to expose the overlap of marriage and seduction that occurs in the construction of women’s bodies as penetrable and impregnable. Eliza’s deliberation and refusal of choice allow Foster a space to question the narrative conventions of the seduction plot and to demonstrate how these narrative conventions are reproduced in and through constructions of the female body. The subtext of Eliza’s correspondence with her friends shows a renegotiation of how the lexicon and narrative of seduction should unfold. Eliza even casts doubt over the accuracy of the novel’s title as she writes to Lucy, “I believe I shall never again resume those airs, which you term *coquettish*, but which I think deserve a softer appellation, as they proceed from an innocent heart” (109). Eliza attempts to detach the narrative of coquetry of which her friends have charged her not just from her behavior but also from her body.

Clara too has been charged with the “vein of coquetry” that threatens to overtake her body because of the violence that she believes her dalliances have caused. However, as St. Louis’ efforts to “protect” his wife manifest in violence toward the very body he tries to shelter, Sansay is able to sever the link between body and behavior that *The Power of Sympathy* and *The Coquette* perpetuate. The “secret history” latent throughout the novel comprises the compulsory silence surrounding and effected by marriage. Early in the novel, Mary and Clara are presented as “Americans” to Pauline Leclerc, sister of Napoleon and wife of Rochambeau’s predecessor General Leclerc. Mary’s description of Madame Leclerc’s bedroom focuses on her marital bed: “near the bed is an alabaster figure, representing silence, with a finger on its lips and bearing in its hand a waxen taper” (84). In her reading of Sansay’s *Secret History*, Dillon suggests that “what is most hidden within the colonial scene is . . . the violence of men turned upon women” (92), and, in Clara’s experience, the violence of husbands turned upon wives is a secret ensconced within the bedroom.

The “silence” of Clara’s own marriage is exposed much later in the novel, when her voice joins Mary’s in the narrative and exposes secrets that such bedrooms keep. St. Louis’s jealous watch over his wife only escalates when he joins Clara and Mary in Cuba, and culminates in a confrontation that Clara has kept a secret from even her sister. St. Louis returns from a night of gambling

in a transport of fury, dragged me from my bed, said it was his intention to destroy me, and swore that he would render me horrible by rubbing aqua-fortis in my face. This last menace deprived me of the power of utterance; to kill me would have been a trifling evil, but to live disfigured, perhaps blind, was an insufferable idea and roused me to madness. (137)

The ruin that Clara faces in marriage is just as violent as what Eliza faces in seduction: that Clara’s husband would “destroy” her by disfiguring her and, consequently, by making her body the repository of their marital violence demonstrates the near synonymy of marriage and seduction. Breaking the bonds of marriage becomes the only recourse for Clara, and she does so only after another violent encounter with her husband. Stunned by

the threatened disfiguration, Clara is “rendered motionless,” only to be “roused by his caresses, or rather by his brutal approaches,” as he “sought in my arms gratification which should be solicited with affection, and granted to love alone.” This assault precipitates Clara’s flight from St. Louis; after being raped she is determined, she writes, “that the dawn of day should not find me beneath that hated roof” (138). The violence of the rape is heightened only by the fact that marriage makes these “caresses” and “brutal approaches” indistinguishable.

Thus the bonds of marriage, “bonds which [Clara] had been taught to consider sacred,” are also bonds of secrecy and silence. When Clara breaks these bonds, she even more than Eliza Wharton is able to show the similarities between marriage and seduction. Yes, as Eliza suspects and as Clara experiences firsthand, the lexicon of confinement and ensnarement applies to both marriage and seduction. But Clara’s flight from St. Louis’ household suggests a more insidious similarity between the two: that while marriage and seduction represent ways of controlling and “bartering” female bodies, the integrity of marriage actually relies upon the silencing female voices. “To live disfigured,” in Clara’s estimation, may be a fate worse than death not just because of potential blindness but because her voice will be overtaken by a body that marriage has rendered “disfigured”—a body upon which the secret history of marriage is inscribed.

As Eliza deliberates the decision between Boyer and Sanford, she repeatedly hints that although marriage to one would grant her a life vastly different from a union with the other, she still weighs the choices. Her “fancy” and “judgment,” she maintains, “are on scales . . . which will finally outweigh, time alone will reveal” (145). Both men “claim some share in the decision,” and Eliza “cannot tell . . . which one will preponderate” (175). Eliza seems unsure of whether the scales are weighted equally in this decision, and yet the measure of each man is ultimately inconsequential when the “womb of futurity” – the future not only gendered as female but gendered in a way that promotes a version of female constraint – has structured the rest of her life’s narrative. In order to internalize her eventual submission to this narrative, Eliza cites narrative antecedents in her confession to her mother. When “the power of expression” fails her, she resorts to the third person to describe her “crime”: “Yes madam, your Eliza has fallen, fallen indeed! She has become the victim of her own indiscretion . . . She is polluted and no more worthy of her parentage” (229). Eliza’s third-person confession also echoes Mrs. Richman’s earlier recollection of Richardson’s *Clarissa*, and Eliza accepts that precedent as her own story, grafting the narrative consequences that make her and Clarissa, as well as Ophelia and Maria, victims of their own “indiscretion.”

Yet one crucial difference remains between the story of Clarissa and the story of Eliza: distinctly American about Eliza’s fate is the certainty of her pregnancy, where Clarissa’s remains unconfirmed.²² Eliza’s narrative suggests that while marriage attempts to make seduction its antithesis, both strategies of control rely on a version of “woman” that constructs her as already constrained by her own body. The role of pregnancy in Foster’s novel – whether it is that of the republican mother or of the seduced daughter – ensures that women’s bodies will be legible as bound from within. Thus Eliza’s blurring and disregarding of the line between seduction and marriage momentarily recall the fear haunting the seduction novel: that both narratives can claim similar origins within the exchange of female bodies, an exchange that only confirms the creolized and unknowable nature of the nation’s past, present, and future. This future is unknowable even in the

Secret History's cartography. The novel ends as Clara and Mary anticipate a reunion with the friend with whom Mary has been corresponding throughout the novel. This friend, as the title page acknowledges in bold lettering, is Vice President Aaron Burr, and Mary – possibly a stand-in for Sansay herself – downplays the prominence of the man whom she simply calls “friend” within her letters, perhaps as an acknowledgement of the intimacy and informality with which the two can communicate.²³ The novel’s commentary on marriage and seduction plays out in Clara’s relationships with Rochambeau and St. Louis, but as Mary becomes the mouthpiece for this commentary, she also begins to realize exactly what U.S. patriarchy attempts to conceal: that she, Clara, Burr, are both U.S. residents and creoles.

Mary is at first hesitant to admit anything in common with the creoles she meets in Saint Domingue.²⁴ The creole ladies especially, she believes, give off an “air of voluptuous languor” and are “incapable of serious application” as “libertinism, called love, was without restraint” (Sansay 69). At the beginning of the novel, Mary and Clara are presented to the people of the island as “Americans.” When the sisters meet the French Pauline Le Clerc, however, Mary’s ability to distinguish “creole” from “European” begins to falter, as does, eventually, her ability to distinguish “creole” from “American.” Even though Madame Le Clerc is not a creole, Mary finds herself using similar terms to describe the lady, who possesses a “voluptuous mouth” and “is rendered interesting by an air of languor which spreads itself over her whole frame” (64). Mary’s markers of “creoleness” even expand to include Clara, whose presence at General Rochambeau’s ball impresses all who see her body on display: “A robe of white crape shewed to advantage the contours of her elegant person. Her arms and bosom were bare . . .” and, as Clara dances with Rochambeau, all note the “physiognomy in her form” (75).

Indeed, Clara and the creole women gradually become indistinguishable on the island. At another ball, Clara is disappointed because she simply blends in with those around her; “accustomed to admiration,” Clara “expected to receive it in this occasion in no moderate portion, and to find herself undistinguished was not flattering.” At times, Mary even seems to combine descriptions of “creole” with those of “coquette,” especially as they relate to Clara. Certainly, the pursuits of creole women – “divided between the bath, the table, the toilette, and the lover” – bear some similarity to the pursuits of the coquette, as Eliza Wharton’s friends reproach her for devoting too much attention to dress and to her appearance (73). Unlike Eliza, however, Clara is a married coquette. Perhaps, then, the figure of the coquette needs to be disciplined in a way that reforms her wayward body and in a way that will cure her of the “desultory” pursuits that allow her to circulate both within and outside of marriage.

As Mary and Clara attempt to leave Saint Domingue, and as they travel from Cuba to Jamaica and make plans to reunite with Burr in Philadelphia, Mary begins to see Clara’s “creole” qualities – and those of the creoles whom they meet during this journey – as resources and as strategies of mobility and release from various institutions and locations that confine them, including marriage. Indeed, most of the creoles that the sisters meet are “unhusbanded women,” women whose family ties have been broken by the violence of colonial warfare or by the violence of marriage itself (“The Secret History of the Early American Novel” 80). For example, Mary devotes one of her longest letters to the story of Madame C—, whose husband abandoned her and her daughter. “How terrible is the fate of a woman,” Mary contemplates, “thus dependent on a man who has

lost all sense of justice, reason, or humanity” (115). The stories of these “unhusbanded women” begin to dominate the text of Mary’s letters; whereas Mary has felt imprisoned when she was considered an “American” on the island of Saint Domingue (77), as creole women befriend the sisters and help them move from one island to the next, Mary and Clara too begin to take on characteristics of these creole women. Clara’s ability to speak French procures accommodations for the sisters as they begin their journey, and she studies Spanish so diligently that she speaks it “with the faculty of a native” (112). Creole women even dress Clara “a la espangole” and are thrilled with how well she fits the look. Even Mary, who insists that her life is inextricably bound to Clara’s, pretends to be a French-speaking woman in order to eavesdrop on Spanish soldiers’ conversations in Jamaica (133). As “Americans,” the sisters seem to make an easy transition to “creole” behavior in what is, perhaps, not a transition at all but a realization of another “nature” of the American female.

As the narrative of *Secret History* jumps from one woman’s story to another, as the sisters travel from one location to the next, the seemingly disjointed, broken, and nonlinear plot comes to represent the landscape of the Caribbean itself: a place where stories both interrupt and are interrupted; and where predictable narrative trajectories – such as those of seduction and its consequential pregnancy – do not exist. If creolization intimates the same “absence of a well-defined social system” that seduction conventions such as incest and broken family structures also imply, then perhaps Sansay’s novel is most jarring to the seduction form in its refusal of a well-defined narrative. Narrative, Sansay seems to suggest, is no more “natural” than the pregnancy that, as far as the reader knows, never occurs within the marriage whose secrets she displays. Delaminating narrative from the female body, Sansay also delaminates “pregnancy” and “womb” from the female body by reconfiguring seduction as non-procreative marital rape. When she leaves St. Louis, Clara’s fate is restricted not by supposedly static anatomy but rather is expanded by the mutability and possibility of her body. When “held up to posterity,” the female figures of the seduction novel, to varying degrees, begin to problematize the “natural” connection between “anatomy” and “female.”

“Touching the Goose Quill”: Historical Fiction and the Matter of Composition

In the 1819 version of Washington Irving’s *Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*, the narrator characterizes the voyage from England to the United States as a process of “clos[ing] one volume of the world and its concerns and . . . open[ing] another” (11). Irving’s comparison of two nations to two different books reflects in brief the publication history of the *Sketch Book*, printed once for a U.S. press in 1819 and again for a British one in 1820. To the 1820 volume, Irving added two new sketches: “Traits of Indian Character” and “Philip of Pokanoket.” These supplemental sketches describe the lamentable yet inevitable “triumph of civilization” over Native America, a triumph viewed as a distinctly “American” story. Including these sketches allowed Irving to disentangle the United States’ pre-revolutionary past from British colonial rule and to pen a fictionalized version of U.S. history distinct from British literary antecedents and cultural holdovers. As critics have suggested, the 1820 *Sketch Book* gave Irving currency as a uniquely American writer and excavated a chapter in U.S. history worth writing about.²⁵

Although “Traits of Indian Character” and “Philip of Pokanoket” at first seem necessary additions to articulate distinctly U.S. authorship and subject matter for U.S. history and historical fiction, sketches in the 1819 American-published *Sketch Book* outline a version of British authorship that Irving attempts to shrug off. “Traits of Indian Character” and “Philip of Pokanoket” do not seem to initiate a new “American” project so much as they continue what was already begun in the 1819 version, a project of defining a uniquely American compositional process in contrast to outdated and uninventive British methods. In the 1819 version, Crayon views the latter as “an antiquated pile [with] its no less antiquated inhabitants” (194). In “The Art of Book Making,” for example, Crayon visits the British Museum, entering its “spacious chamber” only to encounter “pale, studious personages . . . poring intently over dusty volumes, rummaging among moldy manuscripts, and taking copious notes of their contents” (61). The “hushed chamber” is as airless and lifeless as the “glass case of minerals,” the “hieroglyphics on an Egyptian mummy,” and the “allegorical paintings on the lofty ceiling” that Crayon also takes in. The “book manufacturers” are as much relics of the museum as they are writers. Crayon notes the “worm eaten” volumes that are as threadbare as the “lean, bilious looking authors” also sealed within the museum. Indeed, the only vitality and sustenance of these “book manufacturers” seems to be the books themselves, as Crayon witnesses the “racing of pens over sheets of paper,” the “deep sighs of one of those old sages as he shifted his position to turn over the page of an old folio,” and the “famished voracity” with which these “manufactures” seize, “tooth and nail,” endless volumes fed them by the librarian (62).

So archaic seems this library that Crayon falls into his own imaginative reverie, dreaming that whenever these “manufacturers” pick up a book
 it turned into a garment of foreign or antique fashion, with which they proceeded to equip themselves . . . no one pretended to clothe himself from any particular suit, but took a sleeve from one, a cape from another, a skirt from a third, thus decking himself out piece meal, while some of his original rags would peep out from beneath his borrowed finery. (64)

Here, “authorship” is born of a “literary preserve” of poaching and borrowing, a revelation that occurs to Crayon, importantly, in the form of a dream: an original, self-generated – even unconsciously generated – production of Crayon’s mind, a tale spun almost without his realizing it. This method of storytelling, of producing a narrative, one that occurs solely within the mind, contrasts with the “racing pens” and “famished voracity” of British book manufacture. Crayon’s vision continues in a sketch entitled “The Mutability of Literature” when he encounters a talking book. The book, a six hundred year old “little quarto,” was once the object of a writer’s “aching head . . . weary days . . . [and] sleepless nights.” Now it languishes almost forgotten on its “inch of dusty shelf” (101).²⁶ Crayon converses with the book, all the while unsure “whether all this rambling colloquy actually took place” or if he “imagined it” (108). The mind of the author, of Irving via Crayon, animates this book, rouses it from its dusty shelf, and makes it seem to speak on its own. Like the dream in “The Art of Book Making,” the book speaks not because someone has labored over it – indeed, the compositional process has been forgotten along with the book – but because Crayon’s mind and Irving’s sketch make it do so. Through Crayon’s dreams, Irving begins to suggest that the spinning of American tales occurs through abstract, self-evident revelations rather than through embodied labor or material authorship and “manufacture.”

Crayon also counters British criticism leveled at American “book manufacture” and the self-generated experimental project of post-revolutionary nationhood. In “English Writers on America,” Irving addresses England’s representations of the United States as itself “piece meal” and derivative, protesting not so much the content of these representations so much as the ways in which they project a limited view of American accomplishments and potential:

The tissue of misrepresentation attempted to be woven round us are like cobwebs, woven round the limbs of an infant giant. Our country continually outgrows them. One falsehood after another falls off on itself . . . every day we live a whole volume of refutation. (45).

Where Irving began the *Sketch Book* with the “closing of one volume” and the “opening of another,” here he describes the American “volume” as a lived work, one that speaks for itself as it continues to cast off the ties of misrepresentation with which its former colonial power attempts to bind it. America is and will continue to be a “live” and “lived” book, and England merely a “perpetual volume of reference” (48).

In this passage, Irving fixates on lingering colonialist ties that operate by constraining and embodying an American subject. Irving refutes not the “tissues” and cobwebs” through which England spins its misunderstandings so much as the fact that this imagery represents the United States as a bound, embodied entity. The self-spun, dreamlike narratives through which many of Crayon’s sketches take shape, however, prefer a version of American subjectivity and authorship that is disembodied, merely facilitating self-evident narratives. This view of the United States contrasts with the self-generated narratives that Crayon spins in a dreamlike state, in contrast to the laborious, antiquated world of British compositional practices. In “English Writers on America,” Irving argues that United States is “singular” in both its literary and national projects because its “members . . . are individually portions of the sovereign mind and sovereign will, and should be able to come to all questions of national concern with calm and unbiased judgment” (48). This mode of national sovereignty contradicts English efforts to

cast a still-colonial and colonizing net onto the new nation, one that would define them exclusively in terms of a formerly colonized body. According to this model, national sovereignty is the property of an abstract national consciousness, not of the body, in which the individual merges into the overall mind and will of the republic and is rendered indistinguishable from the nation itself. Irving refutes both England's misrepresentation of an embodied and bound United States as well as British authorial practices that are based in the body, that are at once "voracious" yet unoriginal, "bilious" and piecemeal.

The relationship between U.S. authorial practices and lingering British literary images and practices forms the subject of critical debates surrounding Irving's work and that of his contemporaries.²⁷ Emily Todd notes that although Irving's *Sketch Book* does not begin to approximate the epic national histories of, for example, Walter Scott's *Waverly* novels that appeared in the U.S. around the same time, Irving's work does introduce thematic and compositional conventions that historical fiction writers like James Fenimore Cooper and Catharine Maria Sedgwick would make characteristic of the genre (107). Michelle Sizemore observes that Irving's juxtapositions of England and the United States in the *Sketch Book* position the relationship between the two locations as a continuing, evolving one in which, even in post-revolutionary years, U.S. authors draw from residual British literary and cultural forms (160). Sizemore argues that Irving's work reveals how U.S. "national history is at the same time colonial history" (160). Composing a national history in the early republic meant confronting a colonial past as well as ongoing colonization on U.S. soil, this time in the form of removing Native Americans from expanding U.S. territorial holdings and relocating them, among other places, within the pages of distinctly "American" scripts like "Traits of Indian Character" and "Philip of Pokanoket." In contending with the colonial past and national present, Irving and his contemporaries transferred colonial processes of "binding" and embodying subjects onto Native American bodies in order to maintain the fiction of a self-generating, disembodied national sovereignty and national authorship.

In reading Irving's work and that of his contemporaries, I argue that the authoring of a U.S. "national history" required the importation not so much of British literary forms but the transfer of U.S. colonial past onto Native American bodies of the early nineteenth-century. Irving and his contemporaries, including Catharine Maria Sedgwick and James Fenimore Cooper, sought also to disentangle themselves from lingering British colonial reach to distinguish themselves as "American" authors by configuring a disembodied sovereign American self. They did so not so much in their representations of bodies within their texts but rather through representations of compositional practices that could either call attention to the materiality of the book and the body or transcend it. Authorship as portrayed within the genre of historical fiction creates visions of national history that equate narrative coherence with white bodily integrity. The genre of historical fiction attempts to resolve its key thematic confrontations with Native populations through narrative tactics of legitimizing land possession and dispossession. To narrate, these authors propose, is not only to possess but also to render narrative itself invisible and inevitable.

In her study of the legacy of King Philip's War in U.S. culture, Jill Lepore maintains that narrative itself is one of the means by which land possession and dispossession through warfare takes place, that "wounds and words – the injuries and their interpretation – cannot be separated, that acts of war generate acts of narration" (3).

Here, I take up a finer distinction in the relationships between “injuries and their interpretation,” arguing that dispossession took place not just in what was written about the American past in early republic historical fiction, but in how these authors envisioned ideal narrative and compositional practices, and authorship itself. If, as the logic of Irving’s postcolonial/early national formulation suggests, a fundamental maneuver of colonization ensnares its subjects by embodying them, then this formula of colonization was not completely eradicated but rather transferred from Anglo-American populations onto Native bodies in the pages of early national historical fiction. What is piece-meal and derivative of British forms, then, is the transfer of the template of British colonialism onto a new landscape, that of the ever-expanding U.S. frontier.²⁸ Distinctly “American” in historical fiction is a version of authorship that positions these authors as disembodied assemblers and arrangers of historical facts that speak for themselves.

Of course, as critics also note, during the early republic Native removal was not a figment of the past. In order to understand how narratives of pre-revolutionary Native dispossession affected narratives of Native removal contemporary to Irving, Cooper, and Sedgwick, I examine the compositional practices of another “history,” the 1833 *Autobiography of Ma-Ka-Tai-Me-She-Kià-Kiàk*, or *The Life of Black Hawk*.²⁹ I suggest that the *Life of Black Hawk* reinvests the materiality of composition and communication into the U.S. past and present, proving “narrative” to be not a one-way, self-generated and disembodied consensus but rather a result of material cross-cultural exchange. The questions of authorship and authenticity that surround and, indeed, produced this slippery text only serve to underscore the challenge that Black Hawk’s narrative poses to the conventions of narrating events as history and as fiction, conventions that attempt to efface authorship in the service of authenticating U.S. history as national history.³⁰ *Black Hawk* displays authorship itself as an embodied act, and suggests that when narrative purports to be most transparent in its portrayal of national consensus and coherence, it is, in fact, most fabricated.

As Edward Watts has argued, early national writing like Irving’s “responds both to the external burden of the imperial archive and to internal declarations of detachment from that tradition to reflect on how parallel patterns of continued colonization . . . might be disguised as nationalism” (464). A primary convention of U.S. historical fiction aims to revise this “imperial archive” – including works like Thomas Morton’s *New English Canaan* (1637) and William Hubbard’s *Narrative of the Troubles with the Indians in New England* (1677) – to rescue Native Americans from early colonial historians who portrayed them as “surly dogs” and “beasts of the forests” in order to paint a more accurate, sympathetic picture of their character (Sedgwick 3, Irving 225). In his importation of large excerpts from Hubbard and Morton’s texts within the sketch “Traits of Indian Character,” Irving might be reenacting the kind of “literary poaching” and “piece meal” garmenting of his text that he critiques in “The Art of Book Making.” However, as much as Irving tries to “correct” the version of history that his colonial predecessors put forth, he also recognizes that within these histories “facts are occasionally to be met with. . . [that] speak for themselves” (231). Just as Irving’s mind activated the little quarto in “The Mutability of Literature,” so too must the early national authorial mind activate and release the “facts” from these “rude annals,” despite “the obloquy with which early historians have overshadowed the characters of unfortunate

natives” (231). In this way, early national authorship in the U.S. entailed selecting those “facts” of history that were supposedly undeniable and inevitable, and transforming the page into a corrective filter of the past, through which “facts” are made self-evident.³¹

Yet the acts of filtering “facts” and of revising the work of “interested writers” often produced a “live” text at the expense of dead or dying Native Americans. Critics of the historical fiction genre anchor readings of “Traits of Indian Character,” “Philip of Pokanoket,” and the works of Cooper, Sedgwick, and many other authors to the trope of the “vanishing American,” or the observation that these writers recover and represent Native characters only to portray their “spontaneous and ineluctable” disappearance and death.³² Tracy Fessenden identifies a similar phenomenon in the early colonial histories that Irving, Cooper, and Sedgwick mined, in which material death and disease coupled with the rhetorical control colonial authors wielded over history-writing itself effected Native “disappearance.”³³ This disappearance is linked with acts of writing—not just in what is written but how it is written. In *The History of King Philip’s War*, for instance, Increase Mather affirms his position as a recorder of fact with the statement “this hand which now writes, upon a certain occasion took off the jaw from the exposed skull of that blasphemous Leviathan [King Philip]” (197).³⁴ Writing becomes analogous to the violence of fragmenting Native bodies, of taking off the jaw – the source of speech – of a formidable Native opponent, thus doubly expunging Native voices from these histories and rendering them fragmented bones in what Fessenden calls the “rhetorical imposition of surplus physicality on Indians” (25). “Facts” are predicated on material Native embodiment, materials that mark them as dead. This “surplus” is not unlike that which Irving, Cooper, and Sedgwick heap onto Native characters in their historical fiction in order to transfer colonial ties off of their own bodies and onto those of Native Americans.

In their re-readings of colonial sources nineteenth-century authors seem more interested in revising the writer’s implication in colonial violence than in rescuing Native American bodies from this violence. In the scene that Mather describes, the writer is also fragmented to the level of the body, as both the “hand which now writes” and the hand that “took off the jaw.” Colonial histories like Mather’s needed to be revised to efface the articulation of text and of violence that this synecdochal hand enacts. In the *Sketch Book*, Irving creates a text that “speaks for itself” not just in the little quarto but also in the figure of the Native American. Irving ties Native “traits” to their bodies, averring “no being acts more rigidly from rule than the Indian. His conduct is regulated according to “some general maxims early implanted in his mind” and that Native “sensibilities are not diffused over so wide a surface as those of the white man; but they run in steadier and deeper channels” (227). Depicting Native “traits” as linked not to choice or to free will, and not even to moderate circuits of sensibility but rather to the “early implantation” and “deep channels” of Indian character, Irving anticipates the linkage of Native character and Native bodies that Cooper and Sedgwick will transform into traits of Native storytelling. Irving, Cooper, and Sedgwick needed to remove this authorial hand (and its connection to violence) from the text and transfer embodiment solely onto their Native characters. In doing so, they mimic the very colonial webs they attempted to shake off, and also deny Native Americans possession of their lands, stories, and bodies. The sketch concludes in the words of an “old warrior,” who admits that “we are driven back . . . until we can retreat no further . . . a little longer and the white man will cease to persecute us—for we shall cease to exist!” (233). In attempting to redeem the “true” character of Native

Americans from colonial misrepresentation, Irving transplants the hand of this violence onto the Native himself, re-hinging the fragmented jaw to stage Indians' self-erasure and to deflect authorial responsibility for the "vanishing" of Native peoples from these pages. The trope of the "vanishing American" becomes a self-removal from the path of the inevitable "march of the nation."

Removing Native Americans from the pages of early American histories within the nineteenth-century context of the novel of historical fiction, however, required authors to call upon new strategies of legitimizing the dispossession of Native land. As Lucy Maddox has written, building a new national ideology required the "removal or supplanting of inappropriate forms of discourse" as much as it required the literal removal of barriers to white settlement (42). Shirley Samuels has observed a perhaps unintentional convention of 1820s historical fiction in recurring scenes of bloodshed – whether through actual violence or more symbolically through marriage – that signify a "contract with hidden terms" that marks the passage of land through the unions that bloodshed either ruptures or formulates (57). However, in examining the materials that surround these contractual unions – the contracts of land, the spilling of ink and the spilling of blood that contracts of land possession signify, and the bodies that blood indicates – I suggest that white authors manage to legitimize past, present, and future white land possession through a renovation of the materials of composition. In reworking compositional practices in order to make Native disappearance and white land possession seem "inevitable" and to divest white violence and responsibility in both, these authors also seek to divest the white body of its own materiality.

In *The Pioneers* (1823), Cooper takes up the blood and ink used to enact and seal legislation that organizes and regulates ownership of the land. One of the most distinctive features of Leatherstocking's "native" attributes his retention of a "natural" law, an unwritten contract between himself and the land's resources. As he explains it to Templeton's patriarchs, "if a body has a craving for pigeon's flesh . . . it's made the same as all other creature's, for man's eating, but not to kill twenty and eat one" (247). We see Natty put this law into practice when he steers a canoe through water teeming with bass, spearing only one. The spear stands in for the pen that would put the law into writing. Natty rejects written law as a dictate for his behaviors as well as a way of making his behavior legible. When he removes the skin of a panther that almost kills Elizabeth and Louisa, in accordance with Templeton law Natty is asked to swear an oath on the Bible affirming the skins are his. "I keep no books," Natty replies, "not such bible as the law needs" (313). And when Templeton's patriarchs request pen and paper to witness Natty's ownership of the skins, again Natty scoffs "what should I be doing with scholar's tools? I want no pens or paper, not knowing the use of 'ither; and I keep none" (313-4).

Cooper himself demonstrates some ambivalence about the purpose and power of these "scholar's tools." In his 1832 revisions to *The Pioneers*, he acknowledges that the additional edits and footnotes may break the continuity of the narrative. "The author has no better apology for interrupting the interest of a work of fiction," he concedes, "by these desultory dialogues, than that they have reference to fact" (233). The "facts" that Cooper includes, however, most often clarify and support the novel's representations of property transmission laws enacted through writing by references their "actual" counterparts in U.S. legal history. These facts authorize "official" statutes of ownership that are so necessarily sealed by pen and paper within the novel.³⁵ In the final pages of

The Pioneers, Natty also rejects the bank notes that Oliver and Elizabeth offer to him as one final link to the “march of the nation” that Templeton’s expanding borders seek to complete. “This, then, is some of the new-fashioned money that they’ve been making at Albany out of paper,” Natty exclaims, “it can’t be worth much to them that hasn’t learning” (455). Natty prefers the “Frenchman’s powder,” “lead and leather,” materials that, to him, hold more currency than paper. As he tries to say goodbye to Oliver and Elizabeth, “once or twice he essayed to speak, but a rising in his throat prevented it” (456). Rejecting the currency of the scholar’s tools, by the end Natty’s own body prevents him from speaking. Just as Irving laments in “Philip of Pokanoket” that Native Americans “have left scarcely any traces on the page of history,” Natty’s rejection heralds his final disappearance into the wilderness.³⁶ Though a man with no “cross in his blood,” in Cooper’s eyes, Natty becomes most “Indian” when he rejects writing as an official transmission of property or of mediating exchange, thereby silencing himself.

Part of the project of penning historical fiction, I am suggesting, is a reworking of these “scholar’s tools,” a reworking that seeks to obscure compositional practice in order to allow books of historical fiction to “speak for themselves.” Cooper and Sedgwick not only had to fictionalize stories of the American past that legitimated ongoing Native removal in their 1820s present, but also had to devise new compositional and narrative strategies that enacted these removals. The version of authorship that Sedgwick describes for the historical fiction genre in her preface to her 1827 novel *Hope Leslie* anticipates these rhetorical removals and the removals of “inappropriate” rhetoric. According to this preface, to write the novel, Sedgwick’s narrator performed a “patent investigation of all the materials that could be obtained” while also “exclud[ing] every thing decidedly inconsistent with them” (3). The authorial voice that Sedgwick allocates for herself and for U.S. authors is one in which such narrative manipulations are transparent. She writes

The mighty master of fiction [Walter Scott] has but to wave the wand of his office . . . but we, who follow him at an immeasurable distance—we who have no magician’s enchantments, wherewith we can imitate the miracles wrought by the rod of the prophet; we must betake ourselves to the compass and the rule . . . offer[ing] the following detailed description . . . quoted from an authentic record of the times. (149)

Here, U.S. authorship, the “we” that Sedgwick invokes, charts a more disinterested and transparent telling of history, arranging and delineating reality with the “compass and the rule” rather than the enchanting “wand of [Scott’s] office.” The “compass” and the “rule” are there to measure what already exists, to make a finished and complete project.

This version of authorship contrasts with instances of Pequot narration within *Hope Leslie*. Early in the novel, Sedgwick’s narrator presents the Fletcher family and the reader with an opportunity to listen to a Native American perspective on the Pequot War. Rather than giving voice to an alternate version of past events, *Hope Leslie* represents Magawisca’s “recital” of the violence done to her family as a material cover for a dangerous secret: that her father Mononotto plans an attack on the Fletcher family as atonement.³⁷ Everell Fletcher listens attentively to Magawisca’s narrative of the Pequot War, “confident that she would in no way aid or abet any mischief that her own people might be contriving” against his family (45). Yet he witnesses material indicators of this attack and of the fact that Magawisca’s “recital” actually covers up her knowledge of the impending attack. This knowledge is wrapped within her body, as she “arranges her

mantle” and Everell sees “something [fall] from beneath its folds.” She “hastily recovered and replaced it, but not til Everell had perceived it was an eagle’s feather,” the “badge of her tribe and Mononotto’s own symbol” that indicates the secret she harbors from her audience (47).

Although Everell has heard stories of the Pequot War “in the language of the enemies and conquerors of the Pequods,” from Magawisca’s “lips” the history “took on a new form and hue; she seemed, to him, to embody nature’s best gifts.” Everell’s imagination is “touched by the wand of feeling,” and he rejoices that in Magawisca’s narrative, “the chisel” of history has been put “in the hands of truth” (55-6). Yet again Everell misses the indications of another devastating truth to come. Magawisca warns that “when the hour of vengeance comes, if it should come, remember it was provoked” (48). But so enchanted is Everell that he cannot distinguish between the history that Magawisca narrates and its cloaked references to the looming “hour of vengeance” that will claim the lives of Everell’s mother and sibling and that will render Everell himself a captive of Mononotto’s Pequot band. Magawisca narrates this history as Everell anticipates his own father’s return to the Fletcher homestead Bethel, and Everell chides Magawisca for not being more excited for Mr. Fletcher’s return. “Do you think,” he asks, “that if your father was near I would not share your joy?” (64). In another moment of misinterpretation, what Everell does not realize is that Magawisca’s father is indeed near, with less than joyful intentions.

Sedgwick’s representation of Magawisca’s “recital” of the Pequot War demonstrates the author’s project of imbuing materiality and physicality into Native American narrative strategies. History takes on “form” and “hue,” as Magawisca begins to “embody” a spirit and truth greater than her narrative. This exchange between Magawisca and Everell prefigures the violent material exchange of Mononotto’s attack, in which Magawisca takes on Everell’s own bodily materiality and vulnerability. During her father’s attack, Magawisca attempts to defend the Fletcher family by substituting her body first for that of her adopted mother Martha Fletcher. As the Mohican/Pequot band descends on Bethel, Magawisca “sunk down at her father’s feet, and clasping her hands,” pleads with Mononotto: “save them . . . the mother—the children. . . I bleed when they are struck” (65). Magawisca positions her body “as a shield before her benefactress,” defying a warrior’s advances with the words “you shall hew me to pieces ere you touch her” (66).³⁸ These words and the interposition of Magawisca’s body between the Indian hatchet and the white woman’s body, though they do not save the life of Martha Fletcher, initiate a pattern in which Native “nobility” is translated into self-destructive loyalty, and in which Native bodies self-fragment in order to ensure white longevity and continuity. When Mononotto captures Everell Fletcher during the Bethel massacre, Magawisca more than once risks her own life to help him escape. Mononotto plans to behead Everell in revenge for his own son Samoset’s death in the Pequot War, and at the moment Mononotto’s axe is poised to fall on Everell’s neck, Magawisca “interposed her arm” and the “stroke aimed at Everell’s neck, severed his defender’s arm, and left him unharmed.” With the words “I have bought his life with my own,” Magawisca commands Everell to flee his captors (97). Magawisca substitutes her body for Everell in a “paternally administered amputation” (Stadler 46) that not only releases Everell from fatal captivity but also suggests that violent threats to Native bodies come not from white settlers but from their own people, and from their own fathers. Magawisca’s bodily sacrifice allows

Everell to return to his home and continue his claims to freedom, property, and corporeal integrity.

The “paternally administered amputation” also severs from Magawisca’s body the arm and hand that held the “chisel” and the “wand of truth” that so entrances her audience. This “personal deformity,” as Sedgwick calls it, renders Magawisca’s writing all the more material and, indeed, opaque (189).³⁹ When Hope secretly follows Magawisca to her mother’s grave, she observes Magawisca

Kneel[ing] before an upright stake, planted at one end of a grave. She appeared occupied in delineating a figure on the stake, with a small implement she held in her hand, which she dipped in a shell placed on the ground beside her. (195)

Hope watches her in secrecy, spellbound by the “spirit-stirring figure of Magawisca . . . the duty she was performing, the flickering light, the monumental stones, and the dark shadows.” So entranced is Hope that she almost “suppressed her breath” to avoid disturbing the scene. Sedgwick does not characterize Magawisca’s actions as “writing”; the Pequot girl “delineates a figure,” using a small “implement” and “shell” rather than the exacting “compass and rule.” Magawisca, too, becomes a figure, one who “delineates” with her one remaining arm and who is in turn delineated by this one-armed figure. Hope herself “suppresses her breath,” the presence of a body, in order to allow the scene of “delineation” to proceed uninterrupted. Untranslated, this scene of writing, like the act of “chiseling” one truth in order to cover up another, emphasizes the materials of composition, including the composing body, rather than the “truths” themselves.

(make suppression transition better: the act of suppressing the white body/presence functions differently in HL than in BH) *The Life of Black Hawk* also required the “suppression” of a white presence in order for the Sauk warrior to see his story in print. Dictated to translator Antoine LeClaire for publication by newspaperman John Patterson in Cincinnati in 1833, the narrative continues to generate questions about the presence and “authenticity” of Black Hawk’s voice through the layers of white mediation.⁴⁰ At various points throughout the narrative’s publication history, readers have attempted to discern the presence of Black Hawk’s “authentic” voice in the narrative, buried as it is under those of his white interlocutors. Some have even posed *The Life of Black Hawk* as a study of the very meaning of “authenticity.”⁴¹ Rather than attempting to detect Black Hawk’s “authentic” narrative voice or to weigh the influence of the text’s mediators, I examine references to the act of writing in *Life of Black Hawk* to pose the narrative as a counterpoint to the privileging of disembodied, dematerialized acts of writing in works like Irving’s *Sketch Book* and Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*. Historians suggest that Black Hawk’s introduction to the written word was also a material one, in which the circulation of his body on display occurred largely through the medium of print. As a prisoner of a series of conflicts over a questionable treaty signed to cede tribal lands to the U.S. government, Black Hawk traveled with his captors to the east coast cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York. On “display” in these cities, Black Hawk’s captive body stood as “evidence” of the U.S. government’s domination over both the tribal land and Native American resistance. Historians of Black Hawk and his narrative suggest that it was during this tour that the Sauk warrior witnessed the power of material print culture through the handbills, posters, and newspapers that announced his arrival.⁴² If these materials did introduce Black Hawk to print culture’s ability to carry language across space and time, perhaps they also inspired the dictation of his life story.

The Life of Black Hawk represents writing and the pen as a key fulcrum for Native-U.S. relations, one that violently diminishes Native sovereignty and violently fragments Native populations. In the first pages of Black Hawk's narrative, Native sovereignty is defined through material exchange with international emissaries. Native Americans as early as Black Hawk's great grandfather Na-nà-ma-kee negotiated with French, British, and Spanish "fathers" through exchange of medals, "cooking utensils and . . . their uses," and a "variety of presents" (10, 11, 12). The proliferation of materials in these first pages also establishes the authority of Black Hawk's role as leader of his people, as the chiefs who engage in these transnational relations also give Na-nà-ma-kee the medicine bag that will fall into the hands of his great grandson. Black Hawk's narrative does not reference specific dates or a chronological timeline; the transition from colony to Nation that Black Hawk himself witnessed is marked by a transition from material exchange to verbal and written communications with an "American chief" and his interpreter (17). In particular, Black Hawk's narrative denotes this transition with a reference to an 1804 treaty signed by four impaired Sauk warriors, in which "all our country, east of the Mississippi, and south of the Jefferson, was ceded to the United States for one thousand dollars a year." The signing of this treaty, the narrative claims, "has been the origin of all our difficulties" (19).

The 1804 treaty reappears nine years later, when governor of Missouri Territory William Clark urges Black Hawk to sign the treaty to reaffirm the ceding of Native land enacted in the original. Black Hawk's narrator describes signing the treaty:

Here, for the first time, I touched the goose quill to the treaty—not knowing, however, that, by that act, I consented to give away my village. . . . What do we know of the manner of the laws and customs of the white people? They might buy our bodies for dissection, and we would touch the goose quill to confirm it, without knowing what we are doing. This was the case with myself and people in touching the goose quill for the first time. (44)

The misunderstanding portrayed in this scene is not just one of the land provisions of which Black Hawk seems unaware, but also one of the medium of exchange itself. Writing, here described as "touching the goose quill" becomes a material exchange, a tactile process. In this passage, the act of "touching the goose quill" is an embodied act, one that reveals cross-cultural communication to be, like Black Hawk's narrative, a material process mediated by the body, ink, and paper that have the potential to distort or misrepresent. Far from "speaking for itself," a written document and its authorization require material exchange and physical, embodied contact. Black Hawk's narrative denaturalizes writing as a transparent form of communication in the attention that it draws to the mechanisms required for writing and for authorship. In *The Pioneers*, Cooper poses the "scholar's tools" and the ink and paper of "official" law in opposition to the material, non-verbal exchange of "natural law." But Black Hawk's narrative suggests that the two systems are not mutually opposed but exist on a continuum. Native communication practices may be material exchanges, his narrative suggests, but so too is the written word. Acts of writing, then, mark the conversion to U.S. nationhood as well as the depletion of Native land holdings and of Native status as an equal party in transnational exchange. Black Hawk's narrative defines acts of writing in material terms that suggest retention of Native sovereignty as well as an awareness of the material and

often violent consequences writing effects when it poses as an unquestioned, transparent mode of representation.

In this passage, the act of writing also has violent, almost unnatural, and certainly deleterious consequences for Native Americans, for it authorizes not only the asymmetrical exchange of land but also the sale and “dissection” of “our bodies.” Rather than acknowledging Native equality in cross-cultural relations, the signing of treaties reduces the value of their land claims as well as their corporeal integrity. Black Hawk’s narrative does not downplay the violence of U.S.-Native interactions, often defining the warrior’s own success in battle in terms of the number of “scalps taken” (14, 16). Yet this passage denotes the first explicit link between writing and violence; U.S. written negotiations, this passage implies, also implement acts of Native self-fragmentation and self-erasure in the same way that Irving’s “old warrior” speaks the final damning words of Indian removal. In Black Hawk’s narrative, writing becomes a contrived form of communication that forces the Native hand to confirm the splintering of their land, bodies, and overall sovereignty. Where authors of early national historical fiction suggest that the “hand which now writes” is the Native’s own, Black Hawk’s narrative reveals the true “fiction” to be writing itself.

Certain reviews of the *Life of Black Hawk* also accused the text of being almost unreadable, obscured by its sheer materiality. One review of the 1838 edition of the narrative asserts that the actual codex of *Life of Black Hawk* overshadows the book’s contents:

This well-written volume is disgraced by a scarecrow wood-cut, in the frontispiece, bearing the name of Black Hawk, and by the unpardonable paper on which it is printed. If the reader can overcome his repugnance to the repulsive externals, he will find matter for interest and amusement (“Review 2” 504).

Other reviews in the *North America Review* rarely mention a book’s physical condition; when they do, it is often to admire how the materiality of a text matches its contents. A review of George P. Morris’s *The Deserted Bride and Other Poems*, following that of *Life of Black Hawk*, praises the author’s work of collecting his poems into a discrete volume, “which, for elegant type and luxurious paper, is surpassed by no book hitherto issued from the American press.” The review even attends to its own textuality as the column concludes “we intended to invite [Morris] to speak for himself in our columns . . . but we find ourselves too soon at the end of our sheet” (504). This columnist advocates a match between content and material, in which both attributes shape the contours of each other. The congruence between text and material, in these reviews and in the “unreadable” scene of Magawisca’s writing, must be a transparent one. In *Hope Leslie*, this textual and narrative strategy extends beyond the text to become a model for both narration and for land possession. Sedgwick’s preface hints that the “exclu[sion] of inconsistencies” is necessary to create a coherent narrative as well as to create the coherence of white sovereignty over expanding U.S. territory. Land possession in *Hope Leslie* occurs not because of violent conflict waged over the land, both in the colonial decades about which she writes and in her nineteenth-century present, but because Native bodies like Magawisca’s gradually self-eliminate through the assumption of wounds directed at white bodies, and the resulting fragmentation of their own.⁴³ Excluding or removing inconsistencies constituted the act of authorship in the work of nation-building

through literature as writers attempted to create a narrative as seamless and barrier-free as the land across which its characters moved.

This “exclusion of inconsistencies” also becomes, throughout *Hope Leslie*, a means of making white land possession and settlement a seemingly natural, inevitable one. Narrative tactics that deny the seemingly mundane materiality of the composition process – the pen, the implement, the chisel – also deny the treaties and bodies violated by this process. In her legal inquiry into U.S. bodies and sovereignties, Elizabeth Loeb argues that corporeal integrity signals the receding of the body as a material concern; the body no longer “matters” or calls any attention to itself when it is whole and functions properly. This “unembodied” integrity occupies a privileged states as well as an “enabling fiction that works to legitimize all-too-material distributions of capital, property, and freedom” (45). In the first volume of *Hope Leslie*, Everell retains his “corporeal integrity” thanks to Magawisca’s “amputation.” Throughout the remainder of the novel, overall white “corporeal integrity” is facilitated by Native American embodiment, as Native American characters absorb white physicality into their own injured bodily states. This exchange allows Sedgwick to represent Anglo-American claims to the land as inevitable and unhindered by physical warfare or injury.

Hope’s description of her gaze upon the wilderness of New England offers evidence of unembodied – and therefore unquestioned – passage throughout the land. Exploring this “new world” with her father, Cradock, and Mr. Holioko, Hope “follow[s] the Indian foot-path that winds along the margin of the river, and reached Northampton, without any accident,” when, “wishing to have an extensive view of the country,” Mr. Holioko “engaged an Indian guide to conduct [Everell’s] father and himself to the summit of a mountain.” They arrive at the summit “without scathe to life or limb” to “relish the view of “our western world” (103). As the party continues, Mr. Holioko and Mr. Fletcher christen the landscape “Holioko” and note “sites for future villages, already marked out for them by clusters of Indian huts” (104). Francis Jennings and Tracy Fessenden point out that English settlement patterns, like those Sedgwick fictionalizes in Bethel, Northampton, and Holioko, often bypassed the arduous task of clearing land for settlement, opting instead to occupy plots that Indian labor had already prepared for habitation.⁴⁴ Sedgwick may have even drawn this scene from one of her sources, as Francis Higginson’s 1630 *New-England Plantation* records “there is much ground cleared by the Indians, and especially about the Plantation, and I am told that about three miles from us a Man may stand on a little hilly place and see divers thousands of acres of ground as good as need be, and not a tree in the same” (2). Yet *Hope Leslie*’s narrator reminds us that the Puritans “did virtually renounce all dependence on earthly supports” in order to “bring down the hills, and make smooth the rough places” in preparation for further generations (75). Not only does this perception of Puritan settlement negate the presence of Native laboring bodies, but it also suggests that British colonization relied on “smoothing” the terrain of their “new” world and “excluding” any barriers to their progress or possession. Puritan settlement, in *Hope Leslie*’s nineteenth-century formulation, relies on removing obstacles from the land as well as on translating Native labor into white mobility.

The *Life of Black Hawk*, in contrast, describes a distinctly nineteenth-century journey throughout this world, one that takes him, a prisoner of war after his surrender, to the east coast via roads, railroads, and waterways. Black Hawk’s narrator admits that

it is astounding to see what labor and pains the white people have had to make this road, as it passes over an immense number of mountains, which are generally covered with rocks and timber; yet it has been made smooth, and easy to travel upon. (89)

These observations reveal both the narrator's awareness of the taming and smoothing of the landscape and the labor that this tailoring required, thereby denaturalizing white mobility. Black Hawk's narrator marvels at the railroad: "although it has given the white people much trouble to make. I was surprised to see so much labor and money expended to make a good road for easy traveling." Black Hawk would have preferred, the narrative states, to travel on horseback, but the "white people prefer riding in their new fashioned carriages, which seem to run without any trouble" (90). As Black Hawk is shuttled through the once "western world," he attributes the "easy traveling" to massive physical labor that has subdued even mountains in order to exert dominance over the land through rapid, seemingly effortless passage. Claims to American land occur in *Hope Leslie* not through violent confrontation with Native Americans but through white sublimation of Native bodies and Native labor into their own unencumbered, uninhibited passage through the wilderness. Yet from Sedgwick's own nineteenth-century perspective, Black Hawk's narrative ruptures both the "easy traveling" as well as the unbroken narrative progress of the novel with revelations of the very un-natural extent to which "the white people" go in order to naturalize land possession and the narrative of this possession.

Indeed, any physical or material assistive devices that Hope receives in the New World only become barriers to her free-will movements. Hope describes her devoted tutor Cradock's company on an excursion to Northampton as a "right godly and suitable appendage to a pilgrim damsel" (176). Yet as he offers to escort her down the mountain, she must actually stop to help him and "linger. . . to allow him time to recover breath" (106). When Cradock suffers a snakebite, he forbids Hope from attempting to extract the poison for fear of endangering her, leading Hope instead to call upon her aging Pequot acquaintance Nelema to perform a cure. The cure is indeed a performance; Hope describes how Nelema "writhed her body in the most horrible contortions and tossed her withered arms wildly about her" (109). Nelema, too, exposes her body to Hope's view in a scene that recalls Magawisca's graveyard inscriptions. Hope "recoils" as she watches Nelema's "cure": "she first threw aside her blanket, and discovered a kind of wand, which she had concealed beneath it, wreathed with a snake skin. She then pointed to the figure of a snake delineated on her naked shoulder." Nelema's bodily "delineations," like Magawisca's, mark her as a reservoir of white corporeal integrity. This performance brings negative attention to Nelema's body and sets in motion the narrative drive for the remainder of the novel: Hope's efforts to redeem her sister Faith, captured during the Bethel massacre, from Mononotto and his son Oneco

Hope's perspective remains an inviolate, unquestioned, and protected one. In penning *Hope Leslie*, as critics have noted, Sedgwick attempted to reinvest early American settlements, like those of Bethel and Northampton, with the female agency that patriarchal histories of "our western world" wrote out of their narratives.⁴⁵ Janet Dean observes that historical fiction links transfers of land with transfers of women, appropriating female reproductive power in order to redirect it toward genetic continuity of patriarchal land claims (17).⁴⁶ Scholars have also identified a convention of the historical fiction genre in the linkage of land possession to the "unpossessed" female

body, one that resolves Anglo-American claims to America largely through patriarchal claims to women within white marital union.⁴⁷ Critics have argued that the insertion of new national forms of companionate marriage as a organizer of relationships among both Anglo- and Native American characters stands as a primary means of de-legitimizing Native structures of kinship and property transfer.⁴⁸ In traversing the “western world” unimpeded by its uneven terrain or by her own body, Hope Leslie must also disown the patriarchal forces that seek to define her solely in bodily terms.⁴⁹

Critics credit Sedgwick with articulating female voice and authorship within the male-dominated realm of early republican literary nationalism to revise both national history and national narrative, and I suggest that Sedgwick does so by divesting Hope of female embodiment and transferring it onto Native American characters. Hope Leslie creates a version of individualism that perhaps anticipates disembodied liberal individualism by acting based on her individual will, and Sedgwick is able to weld Hope’s will to the narrative as a means of completely divesting any fabrication of her role as author. In doing so, Native American characters continue to be the repositories of any of Hope’s bodily or physical features. Even though Sedgwick revises the masculine narratives of her predecessors, she nonetheless recapitulates historical fiction’s logic of predicating national sovereignty on disembodied will and continued colonization in the form of nationalism. Hope’s character comes to represent sovereign national will while Native characters and those “inferior” to Hope’s will assume her corporeality (110).⁵⁰

Throughout the novel, Hope’s will transcends religious and gendered restrictions as she breaks free from Old World patriarchal configurations of her body as well as from an American Puritanism that compels her deference to communal rather than individual will. The narrator describes Hope as

doubtful of [Puritan] infallibility, and like the bird that spreads his wings and soars above the limits by which each man fences in his narrow domain, she enjoyed the capacity of her nature, and permitted her mind to expand beyond the contracted values of sectarian faith. (128)

In the first volume of the novel Sedgwick de-territorializes Hope’s body from the symbolic patriarchal fences that attempt to confine her. Her Aunt Grafton, a somewhat comical Old World holdover, notes that Hope is, “to be sure, notwithstanding her living entirely without medicine, in indifferent good health” (120). Grafton’s material connections to her Old World home in the form of the tonics and fabrics on which she remains fixated contrast with the increased de-materialization of Hope’s existence both in Sedgwick’s fictionalized seventeenth-century and in national efforts to cast off colonial embodiment, and distinguish the heroine as fit for inhabiting this “western world.” Hope writes that “our new country develops faculties that young ladies, in England, were unconscious of possessing” (102). Throughout the remainder of the novel, Hope’s material embodiment evaporates as her most cultivated “faculty” is the ability to compel the behavior of her New World companions to align with her own will.

As she frees Nelema and secretly plans to meet with Magawisca in a cemetery on the outskirts of Boston, Hope also circumvents the patriarchal authority that her home in Governor Winthrop’s mansion represents.⁵¹ Hope’s intentions block out the reader’s view, as when she reaches the cemetery, “her feelings spread a mist before her eyes.” The narrator too spreads a mist before the reader’s eye as here the narrative pauses, “leav[ing] [Hope] to the secrecy she sought” (177). Thus ends the first volume of the novel, and the

narrator resumes the storyline back in the midst of the Winthrop home, before even explaining the conspiring that results in Hope and Magawisca's meeting. When Hope returns to the governor's home, she is "muffled in Sir Philip Gardiner's cloak," whose encumbrance she struggles to remove until "she broke the string and running back to the door, gave the cloak to Sir Philip" (182). Rid of this cloaking of her body, Hope is free to maintain the "secrecy she sought" in her refusal to explain her absence to the household.

The entry of Sir Philip and Hope simultaneously into the governor's mansion represents the collision of two plots, one involving the arrival of Sir Philip and the seduced, cross-dressed Rosa in Boston, and the other involving Hope's efforts to redeem Faith. Judith Fetterley has argued that the Sir Philip storyline represents Sedgwick's attempt to excise the seduction plot from women's writing and from the "new world" of literary nationalist projects (149). Yet the ways in which this subplot both parallels and ultimately bolsters Hope's more dominant narrative thread demonstrate the narrator's increasing investment both in ridding Hope of her own embodiment and in tailoring the storyline to fit Hope's self-willed mobility. Furthermore, the two plots converge at the point of making Native bodies repositories for the materiality Hope's body and for that of the narrative itself. When Hope returns from the cemetery, Governor Winthrop asks that she "render an account of thyself to thy rulers" to explain why she enters the mansion with Sir Philip, wearing his cloak, in the middle of the night (182). Even though disclosing the purpose of her midnight visit could save Hope's reputation, she has vowed to Magawisca not to tell of their meeting; "others are concerned in my secret," Hope declares, "a scared promise requires me to preserve it inviolate" (188). However, this "disembodied" version of female virtue occurs not so much as the revision of Puritan history along the lines of nineteenth-century ideologies of true womanhood as it does in using Hope's secret with Magawisca as a metaphor for her virtue, one that removes the physical dimension of preserved female virtue from Hope's body and onto Magawisca's own life. To "violate" this promise is to disclose Magawisca's location and ensure her capture. In this way, Sedgwick predicates metaphors of white female virtue on the materials of Native bodies.

Hope's disembodied state makes her a master at rescuing everyone from captivity except Faith. When orchestrating the exchange of Cradock for Magawisca in the jail, Hope rearranges their clothing "with an almost supernatural celerity of movement," and even deflects the jailkeeper's inspection as she "so skillfully managed the light" to avoid detection (329-30). Later, Hope's disembodiment also saves herself from captivity. Kidnapped by Mononotto for fear that she has betrayed his family while Faith is transported back to Boston, Hope still seems more spirit than body, as "lightening flashes" and Hope "might have been taken for some bright vision from another sphere" (248-9). She escapes this captivity only to fall into the hands of intoxicated sailors threatening rape. Seeking refuge on Chaddock's ship, she encounters the sailor Antonio who "very naturally mistook her for a celestial visitant . . . she scarcely looked like a being of this earth" and speaks to Antonio as if she is his saint, daring not "dispel the illusion" (253). When left to her own resources, Hope relies on the "elastic spirit" that allows her to shed the body that represents her greatest liability (255). And when Hope's virtue is most vulnerably and visibly female, she manages again to masquerade as a disembodied, ethereal vision rather than a penetrable body.

Yet Sedgwick still faces the problem of maintaining the integrity of white social structures like marriage and the biological family without the white female body to stand as collateral for racial purity. Critics often read Sedgwick's shunting of Everell and Hope's marriage to the final pages of the novel as a dismissal of the importance of the marriage plot, and as reaffirmation of the novel's final assertion that "marriage is not *essential* to the contentment, the dignity, or the happiness of women" (371).⁵² What is significant, however, about this version of marriage – and about the trajectory of Hope and Everell's relationship throughout the novel – is the way in which Sedgwick deploys what Elizabeth Barnes describes as "virtual incest" to efface the erotic, embodied component of the marriage plot while also maintaining a biological notion of blood (74). Sedgwick appears to use Hope and Everell's status as "surrogate" brothers and sisters (Barnes 74) to de-eroticize (and therefore disembody) her heroine's attractions. Even the virtuous Esther's feelings contrast with Hope's; when Esther first sees Everell after his return to Boston, Hope notices her friend's "burning blush, that looked even through the folds of [Esther's] veil, as if it would set on fire" (139). At first, Hope subdues her own feelings for Everell with respect to Esther's, treating Everell with "frank, sisterly affection" (166). Hope's feelings are closed off from her own view, "hidden even from [her] own self-observation" and "imperceptible, even to herself" (222). These feelings only become apparent when Everell confronts Hope about her associations with Sir Philip, when he insists on speaking to her "as a brother." His words stir the feelings of which Hope has been unaware; only when Everell defines their relationship as a sibling one does Hope realize she is "beloved" and that "she loved" (231). Beyond relegating marriage as an afterthought in the novel's final pages, Sedgwick also renders it as disembodied as Hope herself, as her narrator writes "we leave it to that large, and most indulgent class of our readers, the misses in their teens, to adjust, according to their own fancy, the ceremonial of our heroine's wedding" (369). The spilling of blood, drawing on earlier contracts of marriage and land possession, occurs in the minds of *Hope Leslie*'s readers. The seamless transition from page to imagination befits a heroine whose effervescent claims to American posterity and territory are facilitated by fragmented Native bodies. Thus Hope can resist the embodiment of the white marriage plot while also preserving the racial integrity of genetic "whiteness" through her union with a surrogate sibling. Hope and Everell's pseudo-incestuous union transforms the heterosexual ties that threaten to embody women into near-platonic, lateral ones.

In *Hope Leslie*, not just Hope's words but also Hope's actions and those of the narrator increasingly coincide. As she plans her second meeting with Magawisca, Hope dismisses Digby's questioning of her motives with the assertion "I like to have my own way." Digby agrees that "having our own way . . . is the privilege we came into this wilderness world for" (235). Hope's "own way" becomes indistinguishable from both that of those she enlists to serve her purposes and that of the rationale for "eliminating" any barriers inconsistent with this will, including those bodies who would circumscribe her movement. Her "own way" also becomes the justification for colonizing America, and the collusion of voices within the narrator's hand represents the sovereignty that transitions the colonial into nationhood. In the same way that the nation they envision weaves disinterred individual wills into the fabric of sovereignty of voice, so too must the author of this nation's historical fiction remain a disembodied presenter of narrative, one who does not seek to muddle the reader's ability to distinguish between his present

moment and the “scenes and characters” of the past. This narrative strategy becomes an originary principle of U.S. settler colonialism: to represent it as disembodied will, and to narrate it as “talking book,” as a self-evident story that speaks for itself. In this way, narrative strategy divests authors and their subject of responsibility in the “rhetoric” of dispossession. The “trick” was making it seem natural all along.

Narrative itself departs from linearity in *Life of Black Hawk*, as the narrator admits he “might be giving some parts of my story out of place” (23). In doing so, the narrator also incorporates other voices into the narrative fabric, quoting from his ally Gomo’s interactions with a war chief, as well as giving voice to the “Great Father” Andrew Jackson himself. Jackson’s emissaries to St. Louis accuse Black Hawks’ men of defying the terms of the 1804 treaty, and Black Hawk’s narrator states “we knew very well that our Great Father had deceived us . . . and could not believe that he had put this speech in the mouths of these chiefs to deliver to us” (44). Stories in *Black Hawk* are portable, like homes, and their portability attests to their constructed and deconstructed status. With its proof that narrative authority can be exported from the mouth of one, to the hand of another, and to the page of a third, *Life of Black Hawk* dismantles the narrative continuity that early nineteenth-century white authors sought. The Black Hawk War, though downplayed in nineteenth-century accounts, nonetheless exemplified Native resistance to being “smoothed away” along the path of the “march of the nation.”⁵³

Yet the *Life of Black Hawk* dislocates the narrative hand from the text, uncovering the effort required to render narrative transparent and omniscient. In one of the narrative’s final scenes, Black Hawk’s narrator recalls the launch of a hot air balloon during his east coast tour, which “we watched with anxiety to see if it could be true; and to our utter astonishment, saw him ascend in the air until the eye could no longer perceive him” (92). A report in the same issue of the *Niles Weekly Register* that described Black Hawk’s overwhelming reception at Baltimore also describes a “ballooning” expedition: the balloonist “in 25 seconds was out of sight, and in 2 minutes *he* lost sight of the earth” (258). The disappearance of the balloonist from the spectator’s sight perhaps provides a kind of metaphor for the narrative strategy that early nineteenth-century authors sought: detachment from the text, omniscience in observation and collating of materials, and flattening of the earth and text in order to render both landscapes smooth and continuous beneath the author’s hand and reader’s eye. Yet Black Hawk’s narrative reveals a potential trajectory of such literary projects. Without an anchor to the material world, the author “loses sight of the earth,” swallowed by the very abstract and de-materialized position he or she attempts to assume, as the text becomes unbound and, ultimately, unreadable.

“I was a sickly body”: The Surface of the Slave Narrative

Toward the end of his 1845 *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, the fugitive Douglass is pleasantly surprised when he sets foot on the free soil of New Bedford, Massachusetts:

Everything looked clean, new, and beautiful. I saw few or no dilapidated houses, with poverty-stricken inmates; no half-naked children and barefoot women, such as I had been accustomed to seeing [in the slave-holding state of Maryland]. The people looked more able, stronger, healthier, and happier than those of Maryland . . . the colored people . . . liv[ed] in finer houses, and evidently enjoy[ed] more of the comforts of life, than the average slaveholders. (114)

The contrast between slave-holding states and free locations is evident: New Bedford gleams with health, strength, and capability. It is a robust, happy place where people and the buildings that house them are well maintained and thriving. Douglass is so “accustomed” to the “dilapidated” condition of things in slave states that the harmony of New Bedford is all the more apparent. In contrast, slavery wears down the people and the landscapes of Maryland and everywhere south.

In many ways Douglass’s alignment of this free setting with health, cleanliness, and stability anticipates the social model of disability. This critical cornerstone of disability studies asserts that people may experience a variety of impairments, but the social, cultural, and physical barriers that their environments pose actually disable them.⁵⁴ The social model places the responsibility for disability not on the impaired individual but rather on forces and surroundings that oppress, debilitate, or disadvantage. In Douglass’s assessment, slavery is the “environment” that disables and corrupts its “inhabitants,” its values, and its overall structure. Throughout his narrative, Douglass associates the material, natural, and intellectual environment of slavery – everything from its consuming violence, to its “coldest winter and hottest summer,” to its laws against slave literacy – with his lack of self-control over his own health, integrity, and intellectual life (23). New Bedford, far-removed from Maryland shores, evinces the opposite. Its newly freed residents thrive materially, and overall the town is able-bodied and well kept. Freedom, too, has an atmosphere of its own.

Scholarship on African-American texts like Douglass’s *Narrative* also views the environment of slavery as inherently inimical to autonomous and liberated cultural production. In his by now standard conception of the Black Atlantic, Paul Gilroy suggests that the African diaspora is less a discrete, geopolitical space and more a series of “webbed networks” of black affiliation and community throughout time and across multiple locations like Maryland, New Bedford, and beyond (29). Existing “between the global and the local,” the Black Atlantic “challenges the coherence of all narrow nationalist perspectives” to argue, as Douglass does in the contrast between two states of the same union, that environments like that of slavery operate along multiple intersecting paths that do not abide by strictly national boundaries. Interestingly, Gilroy’s cultural location is in part premised in rhetoric commonly associated with disability; he writes of the “disfiguring” effects of white supremacy on black life in the nineteenth century and of African and African-American cultural forms “dislocated” through the channels of nineteenth-century slavery into the present (83, 113). Andrea Stone has observed that scholars of the Black Atlantic often invoke metaphors of disability to “describe systems

and events that have crippling, paralyzing, disfiguring, and deforming effects” on individuals and communities of African descent (815). Studies of subaltern communities overall have a deeper history of rootedness in metaphors of impairment. In his influential *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, for example, James C. Scott argues that within systems of vast inequality like slavery, astute readers can detect “hidden transcripts that do, in fact, allow the subaltern to “speak”; they speak, however, with a severe “speech impediment” brought on by asymmetrical relations of power that deny equal access to a full range of communicative devices.⁵⁵ Stemming not solely from its writer’s self-generated free will but rather from conditions of violence, confinement, and debility, the genre of the slave narrative itself might even be considered a “deformed” text, one produced by communities who are already disadvantaged and struggling to speak.

Studies both of slavery and of disability, however, are wary of such metaphors. Hortense Spillers, for example, notes that “under hegemony” like that of racialized slavery in the Americas, “the human body becomes a defenseless target” and “in its material and abstract phase, a resource for metaphor” (66). Such rhetoric has the capacity to drain slavery of the historical realities of its extreme violence that did in fact “paralyze,” “disfigure” and “deform” human subjects. Similarly, very material conditions and conceptualizations of the body and of the environment gave rise to the social model of disability as scholars and activists sought increased access and mobility for people with impairments. Slavery and disability occupy common ground in the tension between material and metaphor.

Yet this ground can get slippery. On the one hand, historicizing the intersections and co-constructions of race and disability proves that “disability” is not a one-dimensional category of analysis. As Chris Bell demonstrates, the field of disability studies has neglected “issues of race and ethnicity in a substantive capacity, thereby entrenching whiteness as its constitutive underpinning” (275). Such limits only continue the marginalization of both the disabled and people of color, not to mention that of disabled people of color. On the other hand, studying physical disability in African-American slave communities risks over-emphasizing and over-determining the enslaved body as a site of non-normative difference. The work of literary and cultural historians like Lindon Barrett shows that the enslaved continually fought to resist the “alleged overwhelming corporeality of blackness” on which racialized slavery was based (415).⁵⁶ Historians demonstrate that slavery itself was rooted in the belief that people of African descent were, in fact, “disabled.”⁵⁷ The study of race and disability must account for the ways in which our very understanding of “disability” is itself racially conditioned, and for the ways in which “race” is constructed through historicized instances of ableism and disablism.

Scholars have not completely neglected instances of disability within the African diaspora, though. In her influential study of women within slavery, Deborah Gray White analyzes women’s health on Virginia plantations to point to a gap in archival mentions of illness, disability, or other impairments. “It is difficult to ascertain,” she observes, “whether bondwomen who claimed to be ill were actually sick or whether they were practicing a kind of passive resistance” (85). Feigning illness paradoxically could grant women a kind of agency in the form of exemption from hard labor and, more generally, in the reassertion of some measure of control over their own bodies. More recently,

historians and literary critics alike have begun to conceptualize disability within slavery according to a similar framework of resistance. Dea H. Boster contends that even though enslaved African Americans seemed to view disability as a sign of individual, personal weakness (a perspective that the social model overthrows), they nonetheless “recognized the utility of disability as a resistance strategy.” In Boster’s view, “disability was an important element of slave agency and resistance in antebellum America” (124-5). In her analysis of the Bermudan slave narrative *The History of Mary Prince* (1831), Barbara Baumgartner reads Prince’s claims of her impairments – including rheumatoid arthritis and chronic back pain – as “actual” disability, not contrived but rather induced by the harsh environments of slavery. Baumgartner nonetheless argues that Prince regains agency over her body by emphasizing or downplaying her impairments to suit her efforts to resist hard labor and to work toward freedom. Historical and literary studies of disability within enslavement strive to deliver the enslaved body from slavery, viewing the body as a strategically deployed tool of resistance that has the power to re-establish agency and autonomy and to generate conditions of freedom.

However, agency and autonomy are terms that both studies of slavery and studies of disability independently have established as problematic. Saidiya Hartman forcefully asks how it is possible “to think ‘agency’ when the slave’s very condition or social existence is defined as a state of determinate negation,” or when the mechanism of chattel slavery redraws the boundaries of personhood as bound property (52). In her study of disability in U.S. literature, Rosemarie Garland Thomson challenges the construction of agency to argue that the “disabled figure calls into question such concepts as progress, responsibility, and free agency, notions around which liberal society organize their identities.” The nineteenth-century U.S. defined agency against the figure of the disabled person, maintaining that a person achieved autonomy when he was able to control his body, to use it as a “tool of the will” rather than to experience it as a barrier or limiting factor (Garland Thomson 47). The critical concept of agency, concurs Walter Johnson, is steeped in nineteenth-century ideals of the liberal individual, which defined liberalism in contrast to the condition of slavery (115). Independence, then, was defined in opposition to both the enslaved and the disabled, from whom freewill seemed perpetually withheld due to the potential for the body to “run amok,” or to defy self-ownership and self-control (Garland Thomson 23). The primary definition of freedom, it seems, lies in being able to control one’s body. When coupled with the social model of disability, this scholarship ultimately asks that we reframe the equivalence of “control” with “agency,” and opens up the study of race and disability to explorations of the ways in which both concepts presuppose an autonomous self.

Rather than reading into the slave narrative’s portrayal of slavery to excavate signals of resistance and asserted agency, I attend instead to what the genre reveals to be the limitations of individual agency, including authorial agency. The binary opposition of slave and free, of dominance and resistance, may be too simplistic a tool to disentangle the complexities of slavery, especially as it is represented in the genre of the slave narrative. I suggest that the slave narrative asks what it means to be an autonomous writing subject charting the convoluted and often incomplete transition from slavery to freedom. Examining more closely the various dimensions of the genre’s compositional environment exposes the dynamics of dependence and interdependence that worked to produce the slave narrative throughout the African diaspora and the Atlantic world.

And this environment needn't be vast. As Brian Connolly recently has argued, the individuals and communities incubated in wide-scale geopolitical and environmental frameworks like the Black Atlantic are actually "constituted at the level of intimate conjugality," within the individual body, and are stabilized as "transatlantic" or "global" mainly through contemporary critical discourses rather than through historicized, local interaction between places and persons (paragraph 12). Examining intimate contact between individuals and their environments reveals how race and disability are co-constituted in acts of violence writ large within the genre of the slave narrative. Whereas readings of the body within the slave narrative often seek evidence of the individual's agency over vast environmental conditions and structures, I suggest that the genre calls agency into question, and presents a more complex understanding of autonomy and freedom during the decades of the nineteenth century, when the meaning and achievement of both were at their highest pitch.

On May 30, 1812, the *Bermuda Royal Gazette* reported the eruption of Mt. Soufrière and a concurrent series of earthquakes that shook the Caribbean island of St. Vincent. The volcano had "slumbered in primeval solitude and tranquility" for almost a century, until

just as the Plantation Bells rang 12 at noon on Monday the 27th, an abrupt and dreadful crash from the mountain, with a severe concussion of the earth, and a tremulous noise in the air, alarmed all around it. . . the sea became discoloured . . . the whole of this part of the Island was in a state of continued oscillation [and] undulated like water shaken in a bowl.

A heavy cloud of vapor and rumbling noises from within the earth warn of the imminent eruption. "Terror and consternation now seized all beholders" as

The Negroes became confused, forsook their work, looked up to the mountain, and as it shook, trembled, with the dread of what they could neither understand, nor describe.

Finally the volcano overflows as "earthquake followed earthquake almost momentary," and as "the miserable Negroes flying from their huts, were knocked down, or wounded, many killed in the open air."⁵⁸

Reports of earthquakes and other extreme weather conditions were indeed news on the twenty-one square miles of Bermuda and on the distant islands like St. Vincent that dotted the Caribbean. Such accounts detail the instability of the natural environments: the earth moves "like water" while the sea becomes "discolored." The "Negroes" become conflated with the agitating volcano; the mountain "shakes" as the enslaved "tremble," and the proximity of these convulsions both in the structure of the *Gazette's* description and on the island paints these confused observers into St. Vincent's landscape. The "primeval solitude and tranquility" of the island may not be just the mountain's slumber, but also the uninterrupted regularity of slave labor that both shaped and blended into the colony's operation. This "slumber" is disturbed just as the plantation bells strike noon. Even as the *Gazette's* description denies the enslaved the voice and humanity with which to process these events, in its conflation of "negroes" with the disrupted mountain it also intimates the possibility of other, more volatile eruptions by the enslaved themselves. These environments complicate disability's social model as

transatlantic forces like enslavement shape and change the landscape with their potential to both impair and disable. Colonial slavery occupies uneven, unstable ground.

So too does the genre of the slave narrative. According to one critic's estimate, over six thousand ex-slaves from the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean gave accounts of their lives in slavery.⁵⁹ Often, these individuals had to travel far beyond the Americas in order to narrate, publish, and sell their stories. And often, white abolitionist activists, sympathizers, and publishers influenced the composition, agenda, and distribution of these narratives. *The History of Mary Prince* (1831), a slave narrative that originated in the Bermudan and Caribbean islands that the *Gazette* documents, is especially exemplary of the many dynamics at work in the production of a nineteenth-century slave narrative. Even though *The History of Mary Prince* is not as frequently discussed as the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, it nonetheless displays the compositional tensions that have become characteristic of the genre.

In 1828, Mary Prince traveled with her owners from the British colony of Antigua to England. There she sought the aid of London's Anti-Slavery Society and befriended its secretary, Thomas Pringle. With Pringle's encouragement, Prince dictated her testimony of life in British colonial slavery and of her path toward freedom to an unnamed amanuensis, later revealed to be British author Susanna Strickland. Prince's thirty-eight page narrative is more of a pamphlet than a book, yet it was published with a variety of documents that lend material and thematic heft. One of these documents is Pringle's own preface; in it, he attests that "the idea of writing Mary Prince's history was first suggested by herself" and that "the narrative was taken down from Mary's own lips by a lady." Even though Pringle claims that this lady (Strickland) faithfully transcribed each word, he also notes that afterward he "pruned it into its present shape" not to change its meaning but to "render it clearly intelligible" for a British readership (3). Prince's narrative follows, and afterward Pringle includes letters, appendices, and even an entire other slave narrative, all of which are intended to act merely as "convenient supplements" to confirm the truth and authenticity of Prince's own account.⁶⁰

Such "convenient supplements" have been the target of scholarly critique since the recognition of the slave narrative as a literary genre. Indeed, these interventions from abolitionist sympathizers are almost constitutive of the genre, as the work of Henry Louis Gates, William L. Andrews, Valerie Smith, and Dwight A. McBride demonstrates. These and other scholars argue that white editorial interventions destabilize the coherence, authority, and very humanity of the ex-slave narrator even as they purport to assert it. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century abolitionists posed these documents, and the slave narrative overall, as transparently depicting "slavery as it is." Yet twentieth- and twenty-first century analyses assert the very opacity of these documentary impulses and layers, laden as they are with racialized undertones between white interlocutor and black narrator. As Gates avows, "every spoken word or written utterance of the ex-slaves was written or published for an essentially hostile auditor or interlocutor, including the 'white abolitionist'" (*Figures in Black* 105). White abolitionists, in other words, were not neutral, "invisible" presences in the narratives (or in the lives) of former slaves. In the very act of "pruning" and "rendering" slave narratives to make them "clearly intelligible," white abolitionists did further violence to the enslaved with the "pruning" of their authority and agency over their own narratives. Worse still, white abolitionists often encouraged formerly enslaved narrators' emphases on the physical and emotional

violence of slavery, thereby continuing the objectification and degradation of their bodies in a more insidious form of violence. As Beth McCoy writes, “the classic space of white domination remains that of the black body marked directly by physical violence” (158). If any motif can unite more than six thousand narratives of slavery, it is the emphasis on the violated body of the enslaved.

Indeed, Andrews argues that the slave narrator’s conscious confrontations with these hostilities establish one of the key conventions of the genre (21). Pringle’s aggressive intrusions – which also include lengthy footnotes and edits throughout the body of Prince’s narrative – motivate critics to view the slave narrative as a genre whose surface, like that of St. Vincent, is unstable, subject to distortion by narrative eruptions and interruptions along with racialized, violent overwriting. In her reading of *The History of Mary Prince*, Jessica Allen argues that Pringle’s “pruning” of Prince’s narrative is meant as a “civilizing” act, one that assumes that any cultural production from a person of African descent will necessarily be a primitive, crude one, offensive to Western sensibilities and inferior to a Western intellect. In “refining” Prince’s words, Allen argues, Pringle actually “robbed the narrative of certain meanings” that Prince’s “own lips” intended (512). Allen and other scholars of the slave narrative question the audibility, integrity, and even existence of the ex-slave’s independent presence as white amanuenses, editors, and the overall “textuality” of the genre threaten to subsume any of the ex-slave narrator’s “authentic” voice.

The racialized power dynamics that persist in the composition of the slave narrative, even once the ex-slave narrator has ostensibly reached free soil, prompt scholars to read beneath the unstable surface of the genre and sift through its multiple layers for fragments of resistance to white representational violence. These readings argue that the slave narrative is more than what it seems on the surface, and that the ligatures of a racist white abolitionist agenda are the skeins beneath which an “authentic” slave voice is suppressed. Because the genre’s surface seems overlain with white penmanship and, by extension, white supremacy, critical readers often search for hidden, less obvious signs of the ex-slave’s agency buried within the text.⁶¹ The “surface” of the slave narrative – a “white envelope” – masks and distorts a deeper, often hidden [black] “message” of resistance to such oppressive confinement, a message indicative of the ex-slaves reclaiming of authorial agency.⁶² The slave narrative as a genre presents barriers that degrade authentic voice, and the work of the critic, according to these readings, is to salvage and restore the subjectivity of the enslaved to visible agency and autonomy.

Viewing the slave narrative as in part a hierarchy of voices, these readings attempt to re-order this hierarchy, rightfully valuing the voice of the enslaved over that of violent interventions. Recently, however, Samuel Otter has advocated readings of complex texts like the slave narrative according to a more horizontal organization. Otter contends that the layered exteriors of texts like the slave narrative constitute a sort of “deep” textual surface, one upon which dislocations and upheavals are already written. He argues against the more common “excavation” approach to the analyses of literary texts in order to attend to the “expressiveness and trenchancy – the depth – of [textual] surfaces” (*Philadelphia Stories* 111, 118). Following Otter, Rachel Banner argues that the “surface” of *The History of Mary Prince* configures a “performed opacity” of voice and that it resists the excavation process overall (301). In a reading of *The History of Mary Prince* and of several other slave narratives from the African diaspora, I argue that what

appears at first as a deep hierarchy of distance and separation between distinct voices within the slave narrative may actually be a hierarchy more intimately produced on the surface of the slave narrative's text. The different strands of voice and agency that scholars attempt to separate and identify may be more enmeshed and entangled than excavation metaphors imply. Such a reading does not seek to excuse the racialized power dynamics that collided to produce the genre, but rather suggests that instead of attempting to deny these complications and dynamics, narrators and their interlocutors may have incorporated them into the process of composition. Moreover, this reading interrogates the ablist assumptions underlying critical investments in recovering autonomy, investments that obscure the acts of dependence and collaboration that produce a text. In the physical landscapes it describes, in the bodies disabled by these landscapes, and in the very surface organization of the page, narratives of slavery, I argue, reflect a power relation not of strictly defined hierarchy but of interrelatedness and dependence.

The attention that Prince's narrative pays to the material environment of slavery stands out in such a brief narrative. Born in Brackish Pond, Bermuda, Prince is soon separated from her mother and sold to a distant part of the island. In its descriptions of Bermuda's landscape, Prince's narrative often effaces the distance and even the difference between its surface and its core. When she first sees her new owner's house, she recalls that "the stones and timbers were the best things in it; they were not so hard as the hearts of the owners" (13). The comparison of the unforgiving landscape of slavery with its more sinister, inner core violates the division between surface and interior, demonstrating Prince's view of slavery as a shifting landscape, one that is in continual flux and that negates any easy distinction between cracking surface and erupting interior. Later in her narrative Prince recalls the dangers of harvesting these materials as she "div[es] for large stones to build a wall round our master's house." With "the great waves breaking over us continually," she remembers, "we lost our footing, and were in danger of being drowned" (20). The "hard hearts" of her new owners also become part of the island's built environment, externalized in a comparison to the landscape of colonization. The "surface" of Prince's text, too, experiences an interruption of sorts as Pringle footnotes this passage with the assertion "These strong expressions, and all of a similar character in this little narrative, are given verbatim as uttered by Mary Prince" (13). While in this note Pringle might seem to qualify Prince's "authentic" voice and at the same time to disqualify it with the interrupting presence of his own, it also demonstrates the "deep surface" to which Otter refers, the layered voices that intertwine to produce the slave narrative. Pringle attempts to bolster Prince's words in the same way that the hard materials of stone and timber structure both the physical landscape of slavery and its internal, more sinister scaffolding. Pringle's attempts to reinforce Prince's words only serve as another manifestation of the "hard heart" of slavery.

Pringle's voice appears frequently throughout the text, often in conjunction with Prince's descriptions of the local environment of slavery. In describing the auction in which she was separated from her mother, Prince notes again that "slavery hardens white people's hearts towards the blacks." She overhears slave traders' speculations about the "value" of the people they want to purchase, recalling that "many of them were not slow to make their remarks upon us loud . . . though their light words fell like cayenne on the fresh wounds of our hearts" (11). The reference to cayenne, one of the products extracted and exported from the southern hemispheric Americas, as abrasive to the heart's surface

demonstrates the intimate connection and friction between body and place, and locates Prince in a global, colonial context through channels of commerce that lead not ever outward but inward, to the heart. In a lengthy footnote to this passage, Pringle corroborates the violence of this account of family rupture and asks readers to compare Prince's description of the slave auction with one that he himself witnessed on the Cape of Good Hope. Pringle writes that he overheard one slave trader's promise to "train" his new purchases "with the sjamboc," or, as Pringle clarifies parenthetically, "a whip made of the rhinoceros' hide" (12). What Prince records as "light words" Pringle translates as the hand behind the lash, abolitionists' most potent symbol that, as Otter writes, "has the power to define and convert human skin" with its violent inscription of dominance upon the slave's body (*Melville's Anatomies* 51). In corroborating Prince's image of cayenne with the violent reality of the sjamboc, Pringle draws more attention to the materiality of the enslaved body. Though he expands slavery's reach outward, as far as South African shores, Pringle also references the very "local" material of the rhinoceros hide, skin that comes into violent and intimate contact with the skin that marks the enslaved. Surfaces intersect in multiple ways within the slave narrative, including the surface of the page on which Prince and Pringle's accounts meet. The text connects South Africa and Bermuda (and London, the site of Prince and Pringle's own meeting) on the surface of this page only to focus inward, on the surface of the individual's skin where, as Prince attests, the division between feeling body and feeling heart can evaporate.

Even the division between Prince's interior, feeling heart and her physically abused body blurs in her text. Sold to a Mr. D--, Prince travels almost a thousand miles south of her Bermudan home to work in the salt ponds that sliced the shores of Turks Island. She and the other salt miners endure

the heat of the day; the sun flaming upon our heads like fire and raising salt blisters in those parts which were not completely covered. Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone. (19)

More than the cayenne sprinkled on the wounds of the heart, these wounds wear the surface of the flesh, "eating down" to the bone. Prince's narrative deflects the brutality of slavery from the hand of Mr. D--- not only by withholding his full name but also by characterizing the environment as controlling and abusing her skin; the environment of Turks Island "flames," "blisters" and "eats" Prince's body. Prince's flesh mirrors the surface lacerations of the landscape of Turks Island as the two mutually shape and erode each other. The harsh environment exposes the interior of Prince's body, eating and boiling away the flesh that encapsulates her in racialized colonial slavery.

While critics have noticed the influence of the sentimental mode in these descriptions, a mode which often characterizes emotional pain as physically wounding and which seeks a relationship of transparency between surface and interior (Baumgartner 256), these passages also disrupt the structure of interiors and exteriors on which the sentimental is premised. In a description that recalls the eruption of Mt. Soufrière, Prince recollects a series of natural disasters that further erodes the boundary between surface and interior. During a "heavy squall of wind and rain," Prince's mistress sends her on an errand with an earthen jug "already cracked with an old deep crack that divided it in the middle," and as she empties it, "it parted in my hands." Her mistress "flogged me . . . as long as she had the strength to use the lash, for she did not give over

til she was quite tired” (16). Prince’s master also beats her for the broken jar; afterward he

sat down to take breath; then after resting, he beat me again and again, until he was quite wearied, and so hot (for the weather was very sultry), that he sank back into his chair, almost like to faint.

Just as he rests, “there was a dreadful earthquake. Part of the roof fell down, and everything in the house went – clatter, clatter, clatter . . . the earth was groaning and shaking, everything tumbling about, and my mistress and the slaves were crying out” (17).

Prince punctuates her account of the earth’s upheaval with instances of the vulnerability of not just her own body, but also that of her owners’ bodies; the details of her floggings are in turn punctuated with the fatigue and weakness of the flogger. Ostensibly neutral forces, like the crack already present in the jug, foreground the violent beatings in which the scene of the earthquake is embedded, and Prince’s body is not the only one to suffer the ill effects of these beatings. Both her master and her mistress beat Prince until they themselves are worn out and must cease. This observation is not to suggest that slavery takes an equal toll on the bodies of all it involves, nor to overemphasize the characterization or apparent suffering of the white body in a scene of black violation. Rather, the uneven vulnerability of all bodies in this scene contributes to Prince’s reconfiguring of the material world around her. Autonomy, whether in voice or in bodily capacity, can be dashed by larger environmental forces indifferent to power dynamics based on skin color. No longer is her body, beaten, kicked, and maimed, front and center in a display of visible, graphic materiality for the readers of the slave narrative to witness, but the entire world of Prince’s Bermuda is literally crumbling. The vernacular objects – the cracked jar that Prince must fill, the roof under which she is enslaved – become emblems of slavery that fail and fall not only because of the earthquake but because the surface of slavery is unstable and uncertain. In Prince’s earthquake scene, the consequences of the seemingly incidental jar “already cracked” manifest in the earthquake, suggesting the physical landscape’s capacity to shift boundaries unexpectedly, to fracture and subsume exteriors into interiors, and to call into question not the stability of the surface but rather the stability of the division between surface and core, between master and slave, between human and environment.

“Already cracked,” also, is Prince’s voice in this narrative, broken apart by Pringle’s interjections, yet also fractured by the fact that Prince herself composed her narrative with Pringle’s help and with that of amanuensis Susanna Strickland. Prince’s limited access to literacy may have necessitated their aid, but her narrative also subtly questions the “power” and “agency” that nineteenth-century literary figures, Douglass included, seemed to find in the abilities of reading and writing.⁶³ Certainly, critics continue to problematize literacy as the key marker of this “privileged state of mind”; as Valarie Smith has cautioned, prioritizing literacy as the measure of an individual’s attainment of freedom and the “life of the mind” reenacts the very logic that came to define slavery itself, as it “suggests that without letters, slaves fail to understand the full meaning of their domination” (3). Yet the scene of the earthquake may also ask readers to question what coherence exists in narrative voice in the first place, and what stability one actually has on which to build a narrative. According to her history, Prince could read and write very little. She first learns of letters and words from her owner’s daughter, who

eagerly shares her lessons with the enslaved woman. “As soon as Miss Fanny had said her lessons to her grandmamma,” Prince recalls, “she used to come running to me, and make me repeat them one by one after her; and in a few months I was able not only to say my letters, but spell many small words.” Later in her narrative, Prince notes that some white “Moravian ladies” on the island of Antigua also teach her to recognize a few passages from the Bible. Such is the extent of Prince’s literacy when she sits down with Strickland to produce her narrative.

William Andrews observes that slave narratives like *The History of Mary Prince*, composed with an amanuensis, were especially written “in the context of a power relation that gave the supposed passive amanuensis ultimate control over the fate of the manuscript and considerable influence over the immediate future of the narrator” (21). Yet the collaborative, oral nature of the conditions under which Prince first learned “to say [her] letters” with Miss Fanny parallels the conditions under which Prince dictated her narrative to Strickland, and suggests that the narrative results not necessarily from what Prince viewed as literacy or an “authentic” narrative voice but from a coached repetition of predetermined words and phrases. Prince’s initial experience with literacy is not one that liberates her to self-expression, but is one in which Prince is “made” to repeat the words of another in order to articulate her own.⁶⁴ Beth McCoy notes that concealed or apparent interventions into the slave narrative constitute “an indirect white supremacy” that “interferes with the fugitive writer’s authorial primacy.” Yet she also notes that the very concept of “authorial primacy” is laden with a Western tradition in which the author’s labor and final product result from “self-generating” autonomy and control (158). To locate the slave narrator as agent and teller of her own story and life means, in part, to imbue the concept of authorial agency with nineteenth-century ideologies of the self-controlled, self-governed liberal individual. To assume that the slave’s agency must be extracted and redeemed from the slave narrative not only perhaps recapitulates the abolitionist ideologies that saturated the slave narrative with undercutting paratext in the first place, but also implies that the ultimate definition of freedom lies in being able to control one’s voice.

Earlier, Prince’s assertion that the “strong expressions” of Prince’s narrative “were given verbatim as uttered by Mary Prince” also implies that other parts of the narrative may *not* be “given verbatim.” This implication in turn references Strickland’s role of recording whatever Prince “uttered.” However, Strickland’s own career as a writer bears traces of the complexities of authorship at work in producing the slave narrative. Although her name was never published along with Prince’s text, Strickland does allude to her part in the narrative in a short story that she published after moving to Canada as Susanna Moodie, only a year after transcribing Prince’s words.⁶⁵ “Rachel Wilde, or Trifles from the Burthen Life” appeared in several installments of the *Victoria Magazine*, a periodical that Strickland and her husband established while in the British outpost of Ontario (Thurston 4-5). In this story, the pro-slavery Mrs. Dalton attacks the titular character’s abolitionist leanings:

“Who cared for a slave? . . . One would think,” she said, “that you belonged to the Anti-Slavery Society. By the by, have you read a canting tract published by that *pious* fraternity called ‘The History of Mary P----.’” It is set forth to be an authentic narrative, while I know it to be a tissue of falsehoods from beginning to end.

Mrs. Dalton continues to discredit the authenticity of the narrative, dismissing it as “an imaginary tale, got up for party purposes.” To Mrs. Dalton’s shock, Rachel replies “But I do know Mary P---, and I know that narrative to be strictly true, for I took it down myself from the woman’s own lips” (229). Even in a short story of her own creation Strickland appears as another undercover figure—as Rachel Wilde, who asserts Prince’s existence and the authenticity of Prince’s narrative through her role as amanuensis. Comparing the passage from “Rachel Wilde” with Prince’s recollection of learning “my letters” through an oral transaction with a white female speaks not so much to the extent of the “truth” of *The History of Mary Prince* but more to the ways in which the “truth” is produced on a collaborative rather than a self-generated level. Furthermore, the appearance of Prince in a fictional story that paradoxically ascertains the “strict truth” of her narrative indicates that the relationship between truth and fiction is not as straightforward as characters like Mrs. Dalton might demand. In this formulation, truth and fiction, amanuensis and narrator, operate within systems of interdependence; one cannot stand alone without the other. Both pairs are mutually produced at the level of voice and on the intersecting surfaces of Prince’s and Strickland’s texts.

Strickland’s name does appear, however, on another slave narrative that she transcribed in 1831, the same year Prince’s *History* appeared in its first printing. The title page of *Negro Slavery described by a Negro: being the Narrative of Ashton Warner, a Native of St. Vincent* boasts the claim “By S. Strickland” in prominent typeface. Yet Thomas Pringle’s presence is also felt – though to a lesser degree than in *The History of Mary Prince* – in the epigraph to Warner’s narrative. An excerpt from Pringle’s antislavery poem “The Bechuana Boy” speaks in the first-person voice of an enslaved boy as it laments “And tears and toil have been my lot/Since I the white man’s thrall became; And sorer griefs I wish forgot--/Harsh blows and burning shame.”⁶⁶ Standing alone on the title page, unattributed to Pringle, this epigraph appropriates and redistributes the “authentic” voice of slavery, as Pringle employs the first person to speak in the voice of a slave. The sometimes-acknowledged, sometimes-hidden voices of Strickland and Pringle in *The History of Mary Prince* and the *Narrative of Ashton Warner* indicate that Prince, Warner, and their interlocutors may not have been competing to have individual voices heard, or even tempering or amplifying various points in the narratives at the expense of the ex-slave’s “authentic” experience. The voices that emerge on the literal, textual surfaces of these stories seem aware of the complications of voice entangled within the nascent genre of the slave narrative, and perhaps used the space not solely to assert an individual voice but rather to problematize the act of narrative representation.

Indeed, in recalling the life of a slave, both Prince and Warner’s narratives step in and out of the past as they reflect in the present on their lives in the British colonies. Prince admits that the “trials” of slavery “make the salt water come into my eyes when I think of the days in which I was afflicted” (12-13). The external abrasiveness of the salt ponds, upon reflection, burns Prince’s eyes from the inside outward, blurring her vision of past events but not the pain of reflection. In similar imagery, Ashton Warner, who spent his time in slavery as a domestic worker, recalls the harsher conditions of field labor that he has not only “seen” but “felt,” “though never in my own person . . . with the salt water in my eyes” (32). Whether the reference to the “salt water” is a turn of phrase specific to Afro-Caribbean speech patterns, an example of the editorial influence of their

common amanuensis Strickland, or a broader convention of the genre, references to tears extracted by past events yet not shed in the present also blur the boundary between the body's interior and exterior. Rather than attempting to delineate a clear boundary between the life of the body and the life of the mind within the slave narrative, these passages reveal the indistinct border between slavery's past and its present and between the pain of the body and the pain of the reflective, feeling mind. Mind and body, too, exist in systems of interdependence rather than in hierarchical relation to one another.

It is this sort of "border realm" of brimming tears that Karen Sánchez-Eppler has identified as the "physicality of the reading experience" that "contracts the distance between narrated events and the moment of their reading" in the broader nineteenth-century tradition of antislavery writing. In the slave narrative, this "border realm" may also contract the distance between the moment of recollection and the experience of that which is recalled. Sentimental effect and affect, such as the welling of tears, cloud the distinction between the emotional and the physical just as the "eyes of readers take in the printed word and blur it with tears"(36). However, these tears also blur the surface of the page, muddling the contrast between black ink and white paper that makes the page legible. In his analysis of the material culture of print, Jonathan Senchyne argues that even the printing press "participat[ed] in nineteenth-century racial formation by modeling how whiteness is to be seen while unseen, providing the structural backdrop against which marks or types become legible" (142). Tears render this legibility indistinct; unshed tears like Prince and Warner's cloud the vision on the past and on the page. Unable to read most of the text, the pages of their slave narratives appear to be discrete, regular marks on a white background. Yet the "salt water" attenuates these distinctions, suggesting the body's capacity to destabilize black ink on white paper.

Moreover, slave narratives had the power to destabilize the distinction between the black skin made "legible" by a seemingly invisible, normative white background. In 1835, the North Carolina-born fugitive slave Moses Roper made his way to London and sought out the company of abolitionist organizations like the Anti Slavery Society. These societies still thrived, even though the Emancipation Act of 1833 had abolished slavery in the British colonies. Pringle and others focused their abolitionist energies on U.S. slavery and were eager to envelop Roper in their efforts. Roper received a formal education in London that allowed him to pen and publish his own story, *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper*, in 1837.⁶⁷ Although Roper's narrative became "a transatlantic success" (Hotz 147), even in its broadest geographic scope the narrative consistently returns to the intimate production of the surface of the skin, and to the ways in which epidermal and textual surfaces merge in the production of the slave narrative genre. Five times within the first two paragraphs of his narrative Roper remarks on the whiteness of his skin. On the day of his birth, an aunt pronounces him "very white"; Roper grows up aware that he is "so much whiter" than his fellows slaves and that this whiteness makes it difficult for his owners to sell him since "people [object] to my being rather white" (41, 42). One of his owners even sends him to work in the field so "that I might be burned darker by the sun" (42). Another owner sends Roper to "work without any shirt in the cotton field, in a very hot sun, in the month of July" (56). The skin can darken and lighten; at one point, Roper is imprisoned and loses so much of the "southern tan" that others believe he is "a white man" (53). The surface of Roper's body registers

the skin's capacity to change, giving the lie to a U.S. slave trade that has difficulty selling him because the most physical marker of enslavement can fade.⁶⁸

The surface of Roper's skin and the surface of the text render the division between black and white, between page and type, less distinct. As a frequent runaway, Roper often seeks falsified passports and other authenticating documents to appear "legitimate" to any who might inquire. After receiving shelter and support from one family along his escape route, he persuades the youngest son, the only literate person in the family, to compose a passport for him. Roper accepts it with gratitude and leaves, only to realize once he actually looks at the documents that

although I could not read a word, I perceived that the boy's writing was very unlike other writing that I had seen, and was greatly blotted besides; consequently

I was afraid that these documents would not answer my purpose. (66)

Even though he cannot read, Roper recognizes that the appearance of the boy's letters does not conform to a textual norm that standardizes the shape, size, and precision of words on the page. Roper begins to "consider what other plan I could pursue to obtain another pass" until, wading through an overflowing river, he "[took] the pass out of my hat, and so dipped it in the water as to spoil it" (66). No longer legible, the passport's dark ink seeps into its white surface. The marks on the page do not support the "binary opposition" of black and white on which literacy is premised, and this opposition dissolves within Roper's own body and within the page. The page can be blurred not just because of the emotional response reader or narrator's tears, but also because of the unstable materiality of the text's physical properties. Roper invokes the materiality of skin and page to demonstrate nothing "natural" or even permanent about a body marked by race, or a page marked by ink.

The scene of blurring the page may distort what Henry Louis Gates identifies as the trope of the talking book, or the "ur-trope of the Anglo-African tradition" (*Signifying Monkey* 131). Gates locates this trope as appearing first in the slave narrative of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, the earliest narrative published in Britain. After witnessing Dutch shipmen read the Bible, Gronniosaw recalls holding a book up to his ear, hoping that the book will also "talk" to him. When he cannot communicate with the book, Gronniosaw decides that this particular book and the book as an overall form simply will not converse with black skin. Gates argues that the book "constituted a silent primary text . . . in which the black man found no echo of his own voice." Gronniosaw's "desire for recognition of his self in the text of Western letters" prompts the ex-slave's composition of his own text (*Signifying Monkey* 137). Yet in Roper's hands, the text does not speak to anyone. He shows the soaked passport to white traders, who also cannot read it, and makes it speak for his freedom, for the legible text that supposedly existed before its ruin. If the text does "speak," it does so through silence as Roper stifles and redefines it to suit his objectives and purposes.

The image of Gronniosaw holding the book to his ear also gestures to a less explored aspect of the slave narrative: the interactions between body and book that the text both represents and at times commands. A closer examination of the materiality of the slave narrative suggests that the book may call upon the body of all its readers, and that Gronniosaw's apparently unproductive interaction with the book may not be as unconventional as it seems.⁶⁹ The first edition of Roper's narrative is a small book, fewer than six inches high and not quite four inches wide.⁷⁰ The narrative is unusual for the

genre in its inclusion of images by an unnamed illustrator. These images are embedded in the text, yet also divide up the text's surface. One illustration in particular changes how readers might interact with the book. In it Roper details one "instrument of torture" his owner used to employ. Before the description, however, comes an image that fills the remainder of the page: an imposing, horse-powered machine with menacing boxes and screws, from which one person is suspended while another stands below, brandishing a whip. The skin of each figure is darkened, effacing any external indications of race. The illustration also has letters e, a, c, and d next to various parts of the machine, from top to bottom.

On the next page, Roper identifies this object not as an "instrument of torture" but as a "machine used for packing and pressing cotton." He then describes how it became an instrument of torture as his master both strung him up and enclosed him in the box:

By it [my master] hung me up by the hands at letter *a*, a horse moving round the screw *e*, and carrying it up and down, and pressing the block *c* into the box *d*, into which the cotton is put. (57)

The letters seem out of place in this description, like interjections that function to string the ungainly sentence along. The letters also interrupt the act of reading as they keep the reader turning back to the previous page to match the letter to its corresponding part on the cotton press. Roper's description anatomizes the cotton press while also calling attention to the anatomy of the reader, the hand turning the page, the eye redirected. The nonconsecutive a, e, c, and d almost anatomize the alphabet itself as they separate and remove context from its letters in order to deploy them for more violent purposes.⁷¹

Samuel Otter has written that antislavery narratives often give off an "eerie aspect" in their organization of punishments like Roper's. Narrating these scenes of punishment and violence simultaneously "textualize[s]" "corporeal horror" (*Melville's Anatomies* 60). For example, the indexes to books like Theodore Weld's 1839 *American Slavery As It Is* organize instances of punishment alphabetically; readers can refer to scenes of flogging as well as to more detailed descriptions of punishments like "ear cropping," "ear notching," "ear splitting," and "teeth knocked out" (213, 220). These categories organize the book – and the reader's experience of the book – according to the anatomy of the punished slave. Roper's illustration, however, effaces anatomical differences between the master and the slave with the same crosshatching marks that darken the skin of both figures. With these marks the illustration also darkens the "whiteness" of both Roper's and his master's skin. Whereas Weld's textual organization asks the reader to approach the book in a detailed, methodical way and to segment out different body parts and punishments, Roper's illustration and its accompanying description break down the coherence of the alphabet, the coherence of Western left-to-right reading practices, and the binary opposition of white and black racial categories. Both, however, rely on the physicality of the reader to enact this dissection. These books transform the reader into "hands," "fingers," and "eyes" in an anatomization that, while it does not come close to the painful fragmentation of the slave's body, nonetheless indexes the reader's body according to the same principle.

In this way, though gradually, the text begins to break down the division between racialized black embodiment and white humanity that supposedly transcends the body. Yet just as external racial distinctions are beginning to waver, texts like *American Slavery as It Is* reasserts inflexible bodily identity by relying on gendered bodily attributes. The

index lists “Female slave starved to death,” “Female slave stripped,” “Girls’ backs burnt with smoothing iron” “girls toes cut off,” “Women dying,” “and Women flogged” without corresponding entries for “male,” “boy,” or “man” (213, 224).⁷² Interestingly, in many entries these “females,” “girls,” and “women” refer to both black and white women, with qualifications like “Female—Pregnant women,” “Female—Slave drivers,” and “Trials of women, white and black” (214, 221). In the case of slavery in the Americas, these text demonstrate the ways in which textuality produces race and gender not to justify abolition, but to embody the disabling effects of slavery. Black and white, slave and slave-owning bodies are conflated within the same gendered bodily category, suggesting that gender is perhaps a more rigidly encompassing bodily category than race, and that the male-female binary may be called upon when racial identifiers began to fade or darken.

As Hortense Spillers has observed, slavery in the Americas enacted a “theft of the body” in the “actual mutilation, dismemberment, and exile” of its inhabitants of African descent, male or female. Slavery “‘atomizes’ the captive body” and “the procedures adopted for the captive flesh demarcate a total objectification, as the entire captive community becomes a living laboratory” (67, 68). The bodies of women, especially in their reproductive capacities, became one of the primary “laboratories” in which slavery was incubated. Enslaved women’s bodies may have been textually anatomized and atomized in Weld’s *American Slavery as It Is*, yet as Spillers and others remind us, the bodies of enslaved women became all too physical and real in acts of sexual violence within slavery. Indeed, as Aliyyah Abdur-Rhman writes, the “rape and coerced concubinage” of enslaved women “augmented the population of the enslaved and guaranteed, thereby, the very means of production and profit making at the heart of New World slavery” (237). Sexual violence created the very conditions of slavery as well the enslaved themselves.

While sexual violence was a daily reality in slave women’s lives, Hester Blum and others have demonstrated the representational failures of slave narratives in documenting these realities. Rarely, Blum observes, do nineteenth-century texts candidly narrate instances of sexual violence. Representations of sexual violence conventionally occur in the slave narrative and other nineteenth-century text through euphemism or suggestion, or even through the absence and breakdown of narrative itself. The “excruciating” paradox, notes Blum, remains that while it is entirely conventional for slave narratives to describe in detail the “mutilated bodies of lashed slaves,” few slave narratives even begin to articulate sexual violence in such detail (261). The pain of such violence can be neither narrated nor quantified. Certainly, Weld’s *American Slavery As It Is* does not index direct examples of sexual violence; the listings for “Naked females whipped” and “female stripped of clothing” indicate the sexualized violence that occurs within the slave narrative, but say nothing explicit about rape or other coerced sexual activity.

But this “absence” is where the female body is made most material. Weld’s compendium indexes sexual violence not in the text but in the bodies of female slaves. Listings for women in “childbirth,” enduring “miscarriage,” and subject to “breeding,” and for “pregnant” and “pregnant slave whipped” register the sexual coercion that exists in slavery. Not only do references to reproduction consolidate the “laboratory” of potential sexual assault solely within these women’s bodies, but they also exist discretely

in the index, separated off from the forces that made reproduction possible. Not all of these instances of pregnancy may have resulted from rape, but the inability to distinguish any level of what today we might call consent from these listings proves all the more the ways in which enslaved women's bodies, even in antislavery texts, are divorced from subjectivity to become the site of slavery's propagation. The text constitutes and constructs gender over the female body and, in doing so, perpetuates racialized slavery and the bodily mutilation of the enslaved.

Roper himself alludes to the sexual violence of slavery in the first paragraph of his narrative. He recalls that upon his birth his aunt "told her mistress that I was white and resembled Mr. Roper very much" (9). Mr. Roper is the owner of Moses Roper's mother, and Roper's text immediately starts off on the logic of euphemism, on the absence of the pain of sexual violence because it is too painful to narrate. Roper's body – rather than his mother's – seems to be the one on display, the one in and on which the traces of sexual violence are made legible. Furthermore, Roper's drenched passport, unreadable in its dissolution of white into black and black into white, demonstrates the narrative tensions that also make sexual violence unreadable. Yet Roper transforms this body and this paper into a narrative of his own arrangement, of his own authorship. Later in his narrative, Roper describes a punishment of five hundred lashes at the hands of his master. "This may appear incredible," he acknowledges, "but the marks which they left at present remain on my body, a standing testimony to the truth of this statement of his severity." Importantly, Roper does not actually display this body for the reader; the scars are present and permanent, but Roper does not expose his back or any other part of his body for the reader to view. Roper deploys his own narrative of his body in a way that his mother and the women in Weld's text cannot.

Jenny Franchot makes a similar observation about Douglass's references to his own scars. Often while lecturing, she notes, Douglass would mention his scars but never show them to his audience, never offer up his back as visual, tangible proof of their existence and of the mutilation his body suffered in slavery. Douglass's resistance to putting his body on display, Franchot maintains, is a gendered decision (143, 145). Spillers and, more recently, Kimberly Juanita Brown observe that beatings of men and women are always sexualized even to the point of effacing gender. These bodies are "imprinted with the fixations of hegemonic desire and branded with the significance of all-encompassing acquiescence" (Brown 50). If slavery sexualized the enslaved, and if to be sexualized was to be female, then Douglass and Roper underwrite their masculinity by reserving their scars, by shielding their bodies from view. Such withholding in turn gendered freedom as masculine, as the continued focus on the body even after liberation risked perpetuating the feminizing degradations of slavery.

Prince, however, does not have the option of keeping her scars to herself. After the first publication of Prince's narrative in 1831, Pringle faced libel suits for defaming the character of John Wood, Prince's final owner who brought her to England and who physically abused her. These libel suits generated a second edition of *The History of Mary Prince* only three months later, and Pringle adds even more supplementary material in Prince's (and his) defense. In one appendix, Pringle inserts a letter as well as an explanation. Because, he writes, "inquiries have been made from various quarters" about the "existence of marks of severe punishment on Mary Prince's body," he has asked his

wife and other members of the Birmingham Ladies Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves to inspect Prince's back and to confirm in a letter the presence of these marks.

Pringle's wife and fellow female members of the Society do confirm these marks; Mrs. Pringle writes that "the whole of the back part of [Prince's] body is distinctly scarred, and, as it were, chequered, with the vestiges of severe floggings." One of the women who inspects these scars is Susanna Strickland. To her own testimony Mrs. Pringle adds "that of Miss Strickland (the lady who wrote down in this house the narratives of Mary Prince and Ashton Warner)." Beyond the scars on Prince's back, these women view "many large scars on other parts of her person, exhibiting an appearance as if the flesh had been deeply cut, or lacerated with gashes, by some instrument wielded by the most unmerciful hands" (110). More vague than the reports of gashes that "chequered" Prince's back, these allusions may reference other, less visible violence. But they are still presented in the context of a surface inspection of Prince's body, suggesting again the un-representability of sexual violence, whether because it is not as easily detected or because Mrs. Pringle and her companions refuse to read its palimpsest.

In a rare archival example of an enslaved woman speaking publically and formally about slavery's abuses and about the sexual life she conducted outside of slavery's parameters, Prince does testify about sexual relationships of which she was a part. She leaves ambiguous, however, the consensual or coerced nature of these relationships. In an extract from Prince's testimony given at the action of libel in *Wood v. Pringle*, on March 1, 1833, *The Times* reported that when cross-examined Prince details several relationships with men in Antigua. *The Times* also reports Prince's claim that she "discharged" herself from the Moravian church because she felt guilty about her sexual activity. Even though, the article continues, Prince "told all this to Miss Strickland when that lady took down her narrative, . . . [t]hose statements were not in the narrative published by the defendant" (103). The failure to represent potential sexual violence, it seems, is registered in Strickland's editing of Prince's words. Though sexual violence may not be visible, the gap in its representation may also occur when people refuse to see it.

Even though Prince eventually acquires enough resources to separate herself from the Wood household in England and to become, in theory, a free person, she continues to carry the violence of slavery and its locations within her body. Looking back on Antigua from her position in London, Prince recalls how laboring in the freshwater ponds of Antigua induced her chronic rheumatoid arthritis as she "[caught] cold at the pond side, from washing in the fresh water" (25). Her illness prompted her to travel with Woods to England, not only to care for the children during the family's time abroad but also to find a cure while there. "I thought that by going [to England]," she notes, "I should probably get cured of my rheumatism and should return with my master and mistress, quite well" (31). The destruction that the working environment of the Caribbean wages over Prince's body, according to this thinking, can be cured with a voyage to an entirely different environment, far-removed from the chilling freshwater and the abrasive salt water. While in England, Prince hopes, she might find relief and release from her bodily suffering, and regain her mobility in order to return to Antigua.

For some time before Prince's arrival, England represented a space of freedom for slaves in British colonies. Though the Somerset case of 1772 was largely ambiguous in its language, it perpetuated an image of England as "free soil," and revoked support of

slavery within national boundaries while still maintaining its legality in many British colonies.⁷³ The ruling in part inspired English poet William Cowper to pen these lines from Book 2 of *The Task*:

Slaves cannot breathe in England; if their lungs
Receive our air, that moment they are free;
They touch our country, and their shackles fall (84).

The metropole, in opposition to the bondage of the colonial islands, here becomes not just free soil but free air, as if the mere intake of breath enacts the transition from slave to free. Yet Prince's arrival upon English soil and her intake of English air contradict the inevitability of this transition. As her ship approaches England, she recalls that "the rheumatism seized all my limbs worse than ever, and my body was dreadfully swelled" (31). English shores become a location of continued imprisonment and immobilization, pain "worse" than that in Antigua. Prince carries with her to the imperial center the very constraints that Cowper distanced in his vision of colonial slavery.

In the final pages of her narrative, Prince's embodied state in some ways mirrors her legal and social condition: though technically free, she is a stranger in London, and is for the most part unable to work and unable to support herself outside of the Wood household. The Wood family ignores her ailments and threatens to throw her out onto London's unfamiliar streets if she does not resume her work. Yet the debilitating reaction between water and Prince's body continues when she learns how "to wash in the English way":

In the West Indies we wash with cold water – in England with hot. I told my mistress I was afraid that putting my hands first into the hot water and then into the cold, would increase the pain in my limbs. The doctor had told my mistress long before I came from the West Indies, that I was a sickly body and the washing did not agree with me. But . . . I grew worse, and I could not stand to wash. (31-2)

The water of England, like the waters of Turks Island and Antigua, continues to disable Prince's body, and though she is technically free in London, her body and her confinement within the Wood household do not permit her to enact this freedom. Prince's narrative suggests that the physical ailments that slavery incurs not only cross the Atlantic with her, but also are continually generated in and by an environment that condones and profits from enslavement.

Thus the environment of freedom, as pleasant and as negotiable as Douglass's narrative found it to be, feels quite different to a woman whom even free soil (and free water) disables. Even legal emancipation could not rescue and release the bodies of women upon and within whom the violence of slavery was most forcefully inscribed. In one of several supplements to Prince's narrative, Pringle echoes Cowper's version of freedom as he proclaims "NO SLAVE CAN EXIST WITHIN THE SHORES OF GREAT BRITAIN" (63). Prince's experience demonstrates that remnants of slavery not only exits but can be amplified in the very water that delineates these shores. Prince's narrative closes the distance between self and other to suggest that the "other" is in closer proximity and indeed produced by the seemingly unblemished center. Rather than agency or autonomy, then, the writings of the intimate Black Atlantic during the era of emancipation register most clearly the failures of abolitionist discourses of freedom, and their attempts to narrative its achievement. This recognition, however, does not register entirely as defeat. Prince's narrative is able to communicative what the early nineteenth-

century Anglo-Atlantic world tried to deny: that dominant definitions of freedom, articulated as they were rhetorically and materially in direct opposition with slavery, were not sustainable in a world that defined freedom as the ability to move, to act as an agent, to live unimpeded. Impediments will always arise. In the environment of the Black Atlantic the same waters touch England's coastlines as Bermuda's. The genre of the slave narrative collapses the distance between these spaces, undoing the environmental, textual, and embodied structures meant to keep them apart.

Perversions of Feeling: Sympathy and Substitution in Civil War Medicine and Poetry

In the second of two consecutive short stories by Herman Melville, published in *Harper's Magazine*, an unnamed narrator travels deep into New England mountains in search of paper. The paper is a secondary product in the narrator's trade, meant only to serve as envelopes for shipping the seeds that are the source of the narrator's prosperity. The massive scale at which the narrator has undertaken the "seeds-man's business" propels him deeper into the mountains for more economical, mass-produced paper. So successfully has this narrator embraced the business that "(. . . at length my seeds were distributed through all the Eastern and Northern states and even fell into the far soil of Missouri and the Carolinas)" (674). The farther the narrator travels into the northern mountains, it seems, the farther his seeds will be spread, from Northern states to Missouri and surrounding territories.

In 1855, when "Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids" was published, "the far soil of Missouri" was more than just a fertile receptacle for the narrator's seeds. In January of 1854 and throughout the following years, the Kansas-Nebraska Act made of Missouri and its neighboring soil an embattled space marked by conflicts over the extension of slavery into U.S. territories. Historians emphasize the ways in which the conflicts surrounding the Kansas-Nebraska Act involved not just the residents of these territories and bordering states but also the interests of eastern U.S. residents embroiled in their own proslavery and abolitionist debates.⁷⁴ As Missouri "border ruffians" crossed slave-state lines to vote on the issue of extending slavery into Kansas territory, Northern liberals recognized in this wave of voter fraud a threat to popular sovereignty and to their own largely antislavery interests.⁷⁵ These Northerners eagerly "distributed" their own interests into western soil. Massachusetts physician and future governor of Kansas Charles L. Robinson even traveled to Lawrence to deliver a Fourth of July speech in which he used antislavery rhetoric to denounce unstable territorial government: "We must not only see black slavery . . . planted in our midst, and against our wishes, but we must become slaves *ourselves*."⁷⁶ Having bridged the distance from northern state to western territory, Robinson asks his audience to make another crossing: that of the self to the other, from the body of white settlers threatened by the proximity of black slavery into the racially unmarked body of "slaves ourselves."

Robinson's involvement and forceful rhetoric may have stemmed from legislation in his home state that threatened to "enslave" northern free states to the rhythms of slavery that were kept at a safe distance in the south. The strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Law in the Compromise of 1850 permitted the pro-slavery tenets of slave states like Missouri to extend into the free soil of New England (McPherson 71, 121). Indeed, the same issue of *Harper's Magazine* that put Melville's brief, parenthetical meditations on Missouri soil into print also reported on "a debate of considerable interest" in the Senate, about resistance to a bill "on the ground that it was designed to aid in the execution and enforcement of the law for the restoration of fugitive slaves." Northern states increasingly made "laws to prevent the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law," seeking to render it effectively unenforceable and thereby preserve their liberal free-state identity ("Monthly Record of Current Events" 686).

In the same way that the new and unfamiliar territories of Kansas and Nebraska threatened the ideologies of popular sovereignty and antislavery for geographically

distant northerners, the Fugitive Slave law required the identification, capture, and return of runaway slaves, defamiliarizing free soil to make northerners complicit in the slave system. And in the same way, the narrator of “Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids” too must confront the ways in which the familiar can appear in unfamiliar settings, and the ways in which unfamiliar spaces can make what once seemed familiar distant and foreign. The two stories, often referred to as diptychs, at first seem to juxtapose two vastly different and self-contained worlds.⁷⁷ The by-invitation-only London cloisters of “Paradise of Bachelors” involves only a handful of men in intimate conviviality far-removed from time and from the rest of the world, measured only by the “wine chronometer” that also sets the pace for the story itself. The Devil’s Dungeon Paper Mill, by contrast, seems an anonymous, almost hostile space frozen in the repetitive rhythms of labor driven by market production. Yet upon closer look, the two stories together perform the work of defamiliarizing and dismantling any assumptions the narrator – and the reader – may make about the worlds to which we are introduced.

For instance, the terrain that the narrator must cross to “discover” the paper mill seems foreign in comparison with the homosocial warmth of the bachelor’s dinner described on the neighboring page of *Harper’s*. The narrator follows an unfamiliar pass called the Mad Maid’s Bellows’-pipe, a “purple hopper-shaped hollow,” and a “brick colored stream” called Blood River, led only by the sound of the mill. In order to navigate a space that disorients the narrator by its treacherous terrain and its resemblance to female anatomy, the narrator falls back on what has been made familiar both to him and to the reader in the previous story:

when, I say, turning from that bustling main-road, I by degrees wound in to the Mad Maid’s Bellows-pipe, and saw the grim Black-Notch beyond, then something latent, as well as something obvious in the time and scene, strangely brought back to my mind the first sight of the dark and grimy Temple-Bar. . . the very counterpart of the Paradise of Bachelors. (674)⁷⁸

The narrator “strangely” returns to London streets that wind toward the Paradise of Bachelors. And later, when the narrator learns that the rags that the mill processes into paper come from near and far, from “the country round about” and “from far over sea—Leghorn and London,” he muses that “among these heaps of rags there may be some old shirts, gathered from the dormitories of the Paradise of Bachelors” (676). The Tartarus of Maids may be the “counterpart” of the Paradise of Bachelors, but the narrator witnesses the defamiliarization of the London retreat. For in the rags on the floor of the paper mill, bachelors’ lives – maybe unlike “bachelors’ dinners” – can “last forever,” they just do so in a completely unfamiliar and unrecognizable form.

This process of defamiliarization does not end with the unbuttoned bachelors. Mesmerized by the mechanical work of shipping in the bachelors in the form of rags and shipping them back out in the form of paper, the narrator realizes that the distance represented is not that of the transatlantic economy, or even his own economy spreading from New England to Missouri, but a distance within the self. As he watches the “great machine” transform rags into paper, he admits that “machinery of the ponderous, elaborate sort strike, in some moods, strange dread in the human heart.” The narrator turns then to his own “heart”: “A fascination fastened on me” as “I stood spell-bound and wandering in my soul.” The distance in the two stories is that which the narrator finds

within himself, a metaphysical “wandering” that makes the inner recesses, the craggy depths and winding streets of the narrator’s own “soul,” detached and unfamiliar (676).

Coupled with the repeated use of the term “strange” – an adjective that does not describe so much as it further disorients the narrator and the reader – throughout the story, this alienation of self speaks to an underlying conflict of 1850s legislation and resistance: how different areas and demarcations of the nation – state, territory, slave, free – make each other strange, can impinge upon the solidarity of one another, and make an unlikely “union” out of the United States. “Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids” may be read in part as Melville’s contribution to the debates of the 1850s, a recognition that attempting to make states and territories both near and far into a unified nation only serves to alienate the individual because of the “strange” locations and practices that the concept of “united” and of “union” seek to make familiar. These concepts perhaps, to Melville, are fundamentally alienating because they strive to make even the most distant spaces familiar. The stretching required to make the connection between the pile of bachelors’ rags and the paper is a “miracle of inscrutable intricacy,” while the “strange tour” of the paper mill only makes the narrator realize how much is required of the self to make the connection between distant materials and places. Confrontations between the individual and these spaces can distance the familiar and can disorient the individual from the larger collectivity of union or united states.

In the context of 1850’s rhetoric of inserting the self into the space of the other, of crossing vast distances to maintain individual and collective sovereignty, “Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids” highlights the inability to become “slaves ourselves,” suggesting that the harder one tries to imagine, to “discover,” the feelings of another, the more one realizes the very un-familiarity of the self. Melville’s story sequence may also register the failure to do what Harriet Beecher Stowe – herself writing largely in response to the strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 – urged of her (largely white, unenslaved) audience in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852): to “feel right” (299).⁷⁹ As Franny Nudelman argues, in asking an audience to “feel right” Stowe is essentially asking one of antebellum literature’s most pressing questions: “how can one feel for strangers over great distances?” (644). In response both to Stowe’s urging and to this overall question, Melville’s story sequence may ask how nineteenth-century audiences could become “slaves ourselves,” how they could cross the distance between individual location and collective union, when the very concept of union may alienate the self.

The distance – demographic, geographic, and experiential – that suspended Stowe outside of the intimate recesses of slavery and that Melville characterizes in his story sequence actually served, maintains Nudelman, as fuel for the “necessity” of imagining and representing slavery. This interpretation of sympathy and its relationship to nineteenth-century sentimental literature more broadly contributes to conversations about the effectiveness of sympathy as a strategy for social and political critique change. Specifically, critics continue to debate what Nudelman calls the “principle of substitution” of self for other that demarcates sympathy, differing on the effectiveness of the first term of this relation (644). In discussing the role of the self in sympathetic structures, for example, Elizabeth Barnes writes that sympathy is in fact “a self-regulating process,” a “narcissistic model of projection and rejection” in which novels like *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* make “diversity virtually unrepresentable” because the concept of humanity relies on the concept of familiarity (18, 92). Nudelman argues that sympathy operates as a

“closed circuit” that produces “a particularly acute experience not on the body of another, but of one’s own body” (645-6), suggesting the futilities and frustrations of attempting to substitute the self for the other in order to “feel right.” Cindy Weinstein argues that the sympathetic self could be mobilized to form relationships outside of the familiar, in particular outside of the biological family, thereby entering into potentially self-empowering contracts (6). The various arguments about the role of the self in the structural relation of sympathetic substitution accept the self as a familiar, stable space, no matter how far stretched (or reduced) in its imaginative capacity: the self stands as a known realm and subjectivity that is by definition a familiar one.

Yet as the 1850s spirit of compromise gave way to declarations of war in the 1860s, wartime violence done to the individual body does what the “Tartarus of Maids” did to both narrator and reader in 1855: it dislodges the self as a familiar, known quantity. In response to critical directives to historicize the role of disability in U.S. literature, scholars have focused in on the canon-defining and nation-defining event of the Civil War as a moment during which the meaning of disability – both its representation in literary texts and its lived experience – significantly changed for Americans. The scales of mass violence and technological innovations in the medical field that marked the Civil War era made disability a concern not only of the bodies that suffered in the war but of those who simply saw these bodies, who came into daily contact with family and community members whose bodies were drastically restructured by wartime violence and its aftermath. The most frequently cited symbol of disability and the Civil War – the prosthetic limb – exemplifies what is essentially a new dynamic occasioned by disability. A veteran returned from war with an amputated appendage finds bodily rehabilitation and restoration in the form of new advances in the science and technology of “artificial parts,” while the community welcoming him home and rebuilding a nation witnesses both the price of national union as well as the redemption of the state in the form of government-subsidized prosthetics.⁸⁰ So strong was the link between impairment and its witnessing that disability, as Colleen Boggs argues, became not an exceptional or extraordinary state, but rather a “prevailing social condition.”⁸¹ Indeed, Boggs observes, it was during and after the Civil War that the concept of “disability” as we know it today adhered as an “official” descriptor of impairments like the loss of a limb.⁸² Like sympathy, prosthesis requires the image of substitution of sorts: witnesses to disability view the suffering of another in the form of an artificial limb substituted for an amputated one, while also incorporating themselves into the body of the disabled soldier, one whose individual suffering stands in for the redemption of all.

Such studies of disability in the Civil War context rely on the visibility of impairment, on the material and symbolic content of the artificial appendage that can be witnessed by both the self and the other. Disability, in official standards set by postbellum federal provisions for impaired veterans as well as in contemporary critical accounts, takes shape on the surface of the body as a set of visual cues. Yet the visual ascriptions of disability fail to account for the ways in which the implementation of a prosthetic device – one that could restore a fragmented body to a state of wholeness and of bodily integrity – cannot restore feeling to the suffering body. No matter how closely the prosthetic device came to imitating the appearance and integrated functionality of the original limb, the fact remained that the prosthesis was not sentient, that it could not feel.⁸³ The arrival of “disability” as both a dominant “social condition” and an officially

recognized bodily category also took the form of the recognition that the disabled self could no longer “feel” the way one once had. If the prosthetic device sought to make the body more intelligible, more familiar, in both shape and operation, this same device also may have defamiliarized the source of feeling. And, given Stowe’s best-selling advice of over a decade before to “feel right,” inanimate prostheses and overall wounds to nerves and sensory appendages during the Civil War render the center and meaning of feeling, in particular that of the feeling self, unstable and, ultimately, unfamiliar.⁸⁴

In this chapter, I examine the ways in which feeling, broadly defined, during and after the Civil War became not a pathway for understanding the plight of another, and not even a pathway that circles back to the self, but instead became a source of self-alienation. These predicaments of feeling find form in both Civil War medical writing and poetry, two seemingly unrelated bodies of literature that nonetheless coincide in their attempts to understand the nature of feeling—attempts that do not result in greater understanding of or sympathy for another, but in an estrangement and unrecognizability of the self. Though sympathetic bonds and feeling for another often depend on a kind of appropriation, of knowing the other through the self in a “closed circuit” that returns to the self, the medical and imagined characterization of injury during the Civil War undercuts any assumption that the self is, in fact, familiar.

The destabilizing of a known self, in turn, ruptures some of the most familiar rhetoric and models of “union” that were available to doctors and poets alike. When seeking to bridge the gaps between far-flung geographical spaces like London and New England, Massachusetts and Missouri, wartime rhetoric relied on channels of feeling that were seen as ubiquitous, as normal and normative, in order to enact connections between disparate locations, beliefs, and individuals. Part of the “strangeness” of “Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids” is the way in which it makes what should be the most familiar thing – the self – unfamiliar, “wandering” and inscrutable. But the stories also defamiliarize a feeling also supposed to be familiar: that of familial feeling. For example, Melville makes an overdetermined connection between the work of the paper press and reproduction, characterizing the former process as beginning with “white pulp” poured into “one common channel,” processed for “nine minutes to the second,” complete with a “scissory sound . . . as of some cord being snapped” as falls the paper, “still moist and warm” (677). These descriptions only serve to defamiliarize the process of reproduction because they externalize feeling into a mechanized, non-sentient “iron frame-work . . . with all sorts of rollers, wheels, and cylinders” (677). In the same way that prosthetics stood in for lost limbs, here the machine attempts to compensate for a lack of connection between the bachelors of England and the maids of New England. But lacking in both, no matter how overdetermined each is, is the quality of feeling that is supposedly the motivating factor behind the normalized behaviors of reproduction, or of walking on two legs instead of one. Melville asks what these behaviors would look like if they were devoid of feeling, and here seems to conclude that one of the most familiar of processes – reproduction – is ultimately unfamiliar, calling into question the feeling behind “that one common channel” as well as the feeling dimensions of one’s own existence.

During the Civil War, literature, in particular poetry, stood as “one common channel” through which feeling could be routed and disciplined as “right,” as affirmative and normative in order to combat dissent and doubt about the causes and purposes of the war—and to galvanize support in the face of the violence and destruction so apparent in

the figure of the disabled soldier.⁸⁵ Yet in reaction perhaps both to the injuries of war and to the injuries represented on the pages of the popular press, Walt Whitman and Herman Melville produced volumes of Civil War poetry that investigate injuries of feeling and the ability of literature to act as a binding force to so diverse and measureless a U.S. reading public. Their Civil War collections demonstrate the ways in which crises in wartime feeling do bring one back to the self, but in a way that reveals the inadequacy of feeling as a pathway to knowledge of the other *or* of the self. Self-estrangement muddles “that one common channel” of feeling transmitted through text, and, according to these poets, can inspire or foreclose alternate possibilities for feeling – and for reading – in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Indeed, it was exactly this sort of self-alienation that mid-nineteenth century poetry sought to cure.⁸⁶ In identifying one of the most significant shifts in American poetic form, Mary Louise Kete writes that mid-nineteenth century readers desired poetry that was not the “escape from the particular contingencies of the self that characterized the formalist, classical poetry” of decades before but that represented the “unique subjectivity” of the individual (22). During the Civil War, poetry’s role as a unifying device, in its dissemination in popular periodicals, anthology forms, and even the schoolroom, assumed a heightened imperative to cross and re-cross the distance not only between the individual and the collective, but also that between the battlefield and the home front. The Civil War, Eliza Richards observes, gave added impetus to envisioning the feeling of another as it took up the problem of “how to feel when strangers die for you . . . how to visualize invisible suffering” (114). This sentimental quality of Civil War poetry flourished in the hands of women and of men; indeed, the Civil War brought into relief the “man of feeling” that had dominated eighteenth-century literature of sympathy in the form of sentimental poems that crossed gendered lines as well as battle lines.⁸⁷ Men and women alike tested how to “feel right” by reading and penning sentimental poems, and in doing so called upon the “principle of substitution” that characterized nineteenth-century sentimentality.

Editor Frank Moore began to anthologize fictional, nonfiction, literary, and military documents “almost immediately after the first shots of the Civil War,” and the following years witnessed its growth into a twelve-volume compendium (Roberts 173, 176). A selection from an 1862 volume of the *Rebellion Record* demonstrates the extent to which the principle of substitution structured the representation of physical and emotional feeling. “The Shattered Locket,” attributed to John Atchison, was published in the section entitled “Poetry, Rumors, Incidents, &” of the second volume of the anthology. The violence and animosity of “The Shattered Locket” ruptures the lyric form; indeed, one of the prominent structuring devices of the poem is the contrast of reverie and combat contained both within the poem and within the battlefield the poem depicts. The speaker retreats from the fray of battle to gaze upon the likeness of his “sweet,” seemingly kept safe in a locket, only to find that a bullet has “dared seek” the image, rendering the locket and the face of his “sweet” “shattered, and smashed, and broken.” Indignant, the soldier addresses the bullet: “You’ve torn from my eyes her sweet image,” he accuses; “could death wring my soul with more pain?” No longer, laments the soldier, “in our quarters can I steal away/from the boys . . . to sit me down in quiet, and taking that from my breast/Look, love, and kiss the sweet image—so long and/fondly caressed” (12). The bullet, it seems, has taken from the soldier the one solace worth fighting for: the

ability to protect a loved one, to leave the battlefield even if only in spirit to reunite with her.

Structuring this poetic narrative is an underlying dynamic of substitution that shifts even the identity of the poem's speaker. The speaker, covered in sweat and soot with a "gaping gash on my cheek," rues that his sweetheart would hardly recognize him: "Oh, what if my Sweet could see me, as I lie here/smarming with pain?/Do you think she'd believe 't could be me—would/she call me "Her Handsome" again?" (12). The speaker becomes unrecognizable almost to himself as he attempts to see himself through the eyes of a sweetheart far away. In turn, the unrecognizable image that meets his face when he glances into the locket – an image that has accepted a bullet perhaps aimed at the speaker – to find it shattered. "Smashed and broken," the face of his sweetheart looks back at him, mirroring in its damage the speaker's own marred appearance. The inability to recognize the self also points to the disorienting capability of sympathetic substitution when, for example, Robinson and other antislavery activists urge an audience to become "slaves ourselves." "How the sweat pours down my forehead," exclaims the soldier; "I'm black/as a 'contraband.'" The experience of sustaining wartime injuries and subsequently becoming unfamiliar to the self also disrupts one's racial self-identification and one's status as free or enslaved in the divided nation. For the speaker not only sees himself as "black" but also as a "contraband," or one of many enslaved runaways who joined forces with the Union army (McPherson 355). The soldier continues: "Face blood besmeared and horrid—look, ain't that a dainty hand." Externalization of his blood renders the speaker "black" and "horrid," and it also severs his bodily appendages from his speaking perspective. The "dainty" hand contrasts with the "horrid" gore of the wound the soldier has received, and the soldier speaks of himself as if he is a witness to the violence and its injuries, rather than the object of them.

This convolution of racial "selves" that manifests in the externalization of the self in the form of seemingly detached and dissonant body parts also predicts the obliteration of the white subject – in particular, the white female subject – that may occur when black "contraband" "pass" as Union soldiers. For if the reader follows through with the formula of substitution that is established not only by the shifts and exchanges that structure the poem but also by the sentimental culture of Civil War poetry at large, what occurs in this poem is the replacement of the white body with an unfamiliar black one, and the implementation of a cross-racial alliance. The most "shattering" damage done in this poem is not that of Confederate on Union soldier, but of the disintegration of white male bodily integrity and its threatening confusion with black contraband. Shattered along with the locket is the integrity of racially "pure" heterosexual union. This fear, here only subtly voiced in the early years of war, demonstrates how the presence of injury, bodily fragmentation, and disability can threaten the security of racial identity and the relationships that reproduce the self.

The term "shattered" echoes throughout the *Rebellion Record*, frequently repeated in other poems and anecdotes of the second volume of the *Rebellion Record*'s "Poetry, Incidents, Rumors, Etc" in reference to the human body. "The rest—Where are they," attributed to Laura Elmer in response to the Battle of Bull Run, visualizes the injuries of war: "That poor shattered limb, with none caring/A mother once clasped as her own" (10). One anecdote describes the final words of a dying soldier, "ordered to fall in rank": "He answered quietly: 'I will if I can.' His arm hung shattered by his side, and he was

bleeding to death” (10). The speaker in the anecdote “The Wounded at Bull Run” exclaims: “And what a scene it was! Here a poor fellow with a shattered arm, imploring the early attention of the surgeons . . . shocking spectacles to behold” (92-3).⁸⁸ Many of these wartime injuries fell under the category of what Civil War doctors termed “nerve injuries,” an “all-encompassing rubric for a variety of ills and symptoms ranging from burning neuralgia to phantom limb pain to depressed or resistant behavior” (Long 29). As the speaker of “The Shattered Locket” eyes up his “dainty hand,” as shattered limbs and arms populate the pages of the *Rebellion Record*, these injuries, in the words of Lisa Long, “foregrounded the tenuous distinction between ‘feeling’ like oneself and enduring a growing sense of alienation from one’s injured body” (30). The figure of the mother clutching the shattered arm and the figure of the shape-shifting soldier clutching the shattered locket illuminate crises of the physical sensations of nerve feeling and of affective familiar and familial channels of feeling.

The motivation guiding one of the most influential physicians of the latter half of the nineteenth century, Silas Weir Mitchell, and his case studies of nerve injuries collected in the influential *Gunshot Wounds and Other Injuries of Nerves* (1864), was not that different from the impulse behind collections of poetry and other documents in the *Rebellion Record*. In the same way that Frank Moore sought to catalogue the war through a compendium of documents lifted from their original context, intended in their new format to establish coherence and community out of different sentiments attached to the war, so did Mitchell hope to make of his text a comprehensive study of a kind of injury that had until now gone unremarked.⁸⁹ “Never before,” Mitchell began his text, “in medical history has there been collected for study and treatment so remarkable a series of nerve injuries” (10). Nerve injuries and, more broadly, injuries to feeling as represented in both Moore and Mitchell’s accounts became, according to Long, the “perfect vehicle” for literal and metaphoric discussions of the physical and psychological wounds of war” (42). “Nerve injuries” became a catchall term for the infinite variety of the effects of bullets. Long focuses on the changes that this sense of alienation inaugurated for the medical profession, but *Gunshot Wounds* also records the ways in which injuries – like those occasioned by the personified bullet in “The Shattered Locket” – disrupt the channels through which people attempt to communicate feeling. More estranging than the injury itself, according to my reading of Mitchell’s study, is the inability to communicate what it feels like.

In *Gunshot Wounds*, Mitchell and fellow physicians George R. Morehouse and William W. Keen record 120 cases of nerve injuries “of every conceivable form,” including those garnered by “shot and shell, sabre cuts, contusions, and dislocations” (9, 12). As Mitchell describes individual cases, it becomes clear that one of the only similarities among these cases is the way in which bullet wounds radically destabilize the wounded’s sense of self. One of the few generalizations that Mitchell can make about nerve wounds attests to their disorienting capacity; of his case studies,

the larger number felt, when shot, as through some one had struck them sharply with a stick, and one or two were so possessed with this idea at the time, that they turned to accuse a comrade of the act, and were unpleasantly surprised to discover, from the flow of blood, that they had been wounded. (14)

So sudden and sharp is the bullet that the patients under Mitchell’s care literally do not know what hit them. So disorienting is the damage that soldiers are more likely to accuse

their “comrades,” those closest to them, rather than the enemy, of perpetrating the injury. Bullet wounds can confuse friend and foe in their initial impact; only the presence of blood indicates enemy fire. This initial shock passes only to give way to “the loss of voluntary control of sensation” that, according to Mitchell, accompanies nearly all gunshot wounds.

While all 120 injuries in *Gunshot Wounds* may be categorized as “cases,” each brings with it a loss of control unique to the individual. S. Johnson, for example, when shot in the neck, “says he was confused, though conscious, and felt as if he had been struck in the ear, and then lifted up in the air. He also felt instant pain the back of his neck, and in all of his limbs. . . . He now became aware of the total motor paralysis of the arms and legs. He is not sure whether sensibility was also extinct” (23). This account registers several of what Mitchell would, by the end of his study, label “perversions of feeling,” the most comprehensive term he can assign to the variety of effects of nerve injury that he witnessed in the hospital. Perversions of feeling, as Mitchell’s description of S. Johnson’s account suggests, indicate both feeling that does not correspond with the source of injury (the deferred pain Johnson felt in his extremities though shot in the neck) as well as an overall uncertainty of feeling (“He is not sure whether sensibility was also extinct”). Perversions of feeling may also comprise the lack of bodily sensitivity in areas untouched by a bullet; Charles Cleland, for example, when “shot in the throat,” found that he “could not move any of his limbs” (28). When shot in the back of the neck, Thomas Carroll found not only that his legs were both paralyzed and numb, but that he was “unable to feel the bed on which he lay” (31). Although Kilian Gray was “shot in the thigh” and paralyzed in “all of the flexors of the foot,” he could walk while dragging the paralyzed foot, “or else carr[ying] it in a long sling” (92). As the cases of Carroll and Gray suggest, perversions of feeling also mark a “disfigured” relationship between one’s body and the surrounding material world, and choreograph alternate ways of moving through this material world, such as carrying an appendage that does not operate in concert with the larger body.

Even when sensation returns, muscles need to be rehabilitated in order to re-direct sensation and expression through normative channels. Mitchell devotes several pages of *Gunshot Wounds* to the case of John C. Dyre, shot behind the ear. “Sensation is perfectly normal on the paralyzed side,” Mitchell observes in Dyre, but “motion is . . . utterly lost in all the muscles of expression” (48). A lengthy footnote describes the rigorous and drawn-out rehabilitation that attempted to restore Dyre’s pre-injury speech patterns. By the time of the textbook’s publication, Mitchell reports, Dyre still “pronounced a number of sounds” inaccurately, but “in common conversation it was not so noticeable that it would have been thought anything more than an ordinary particularity” (49). Mitchell’s preoccupation with Dyre stands as a kind of footnote to *Gunshot Wounds* as a whole. For though *Gunshot Wounds* aspires to describe and catalogue “injuries of nerves” as a reference for future physicians, Mitchell finds that his own “muscles of expression” are limited in their ability to describe what “perversions of feeling” actually feel like. For example, in attempting to define the type of pain that is characteristic of gunshot wounds, Mitchell admits, “it assumes all kinds of forms, from the burning, which we have yet fully to describe, though the whole catalogue of terms vainly used to convey some idea of variety in torture” (100). Elaine Scarry demonstrates how the “unsharability” of pain attests to the “absolute split between one’s sense of one’s own reality and the reality of

other persons” (4). Mitchell catalogues pain’s “resistance to language,” but more broadly catalogues the way in which “one’s sense of one’s own reality” can be distorted by any number of sensations, by even the lack of sensation.

Throughout *Gunshot Wounds*, the “unsharability” of pain and of other feelings generates unlikely forms of communication involving alternate “muscles of expression.” J. L. Calvert, shot in the spine, had such an “interesting” case of hyperesthesia that Mitchell asks him to locate the exact spot on his body from which this excessive sensitivity radiated. “Unaided by sight,” Mitchell reports, Calvert “marked the limits of the hyperaesthetic spaces . . . by drawing a pencil point across the boundary between the healthy and the overexcitable regions” (37). The patient uses a pencil not to “write” in the conventional sense but to delineate the location of sensitivity on the skin. Calvert relies on sensation alone – “unaided by sight” – to demarcate feeling. Perversions of feeling, then, may take the form not only of, for example, excessive physiological sensitivity, but also of “perverse” or unexpected channels and methods of *expressing* feeling: here, blindly putting pencil to flesh, relying not on sight but on the contact between writing utensil and skin. Feeling’s “unsharability” sets in motion alternate ways of describing the body and new uses of the conventional tools of representation and communication.

It is the unconventional channeling of the senses, the project of recording the “unsharable” feeling of the body, that structures the poetic project of Walt Whitman’s 1865 *Drum-Taps*.⁹⁰ Considered “the only enduring literary work about the Civil War based on firsthand experience,” Whitman composed the collection based on and in reaction to his experiences as a nurse in the Washington, D.C., area for soldiers who suffered exactly those injuries described in *Gunshot Wounds* (Kramer ix). Whitman finds in these “perversions of feeling” alternate configurations of the self and other that may actually generate models of sympathy beyond that of substituting self for other. In his study of Whitman’s nursing years and the hospital’s potential as a redemptive space, Robert Leigh Davis finds a “compound doubling” in writings like *Drum-Taps*, in particular in Whitman’s portrayals of bodily suffering. In the idea of a “convalescent democracy,” Davis argues, Whitman found a space that existed “between pure oppositions” of sectional divide and of right and wrong, a “convalescent structure of crossing and suspense” (3, 5). Of selections from *Leaves of Grass*, Peter Coviello argues that Whitman figures the nation more broadly as “an entity not of institutions and abstract strictures but of relation,” affective relation that makes of strangers intimate citizens. This “poetics of attachment,” Coviello argues, leads Whitman to envision the United States as “united” and “given coherence” by bonds of affection that link stranger to stranger, near and far (87). In *Drum-Taps*, after coming into contact with the bodies fragmented and disoriented by the wounds of war, Whitman offers a poetics of re-attachment that incorporates the body of the healer and the injured. This poetics operates not through the process of substituting a stable, coherent body for a suffering one, but by fragmenting the bodies of both caretaker and patient and offering alternate configurations of sensory and affective capacity within the space of the hospital and the space of the book. I suggest that in *Drum-Taps* Whitman transcends the boundaries of self and other not to remain suspended in a liminal space “between the living and the dead,” but instead to collapse the poles that structure these boundaries, to create new ways of feeling out of the “perversions” that afflict both healer and patient in Civil War hospitals (Davis 7).

These configurations begin first with storytelling, with a collective language that wartime builds. “The Centenarian’s Story,” an earlier poem of *Drum-Taps*, represents the creation of a poetic voice particular to the moment in which it speaks and transcendent of generational time. A “volunteer of 1861” takes the hand of an “old Revolutionary,” and together they gaze upon the palimpsest battlefield of Brooklyn’s Washington Park. Where the Revolutionary War veteran’s aging faculties obstruct clear vision on the drilling exercises in the park, the volunteer’s fill in. But Whitman does not characterize this prosthetic vision as straightforward substitution. “You can walk, old man,” states the volunteer, “though your eyes are almost done;/Your faculties serve you, and presently I must have them/serve me” (21). The volunteer describes “what the crowd around us means,” calling upon the veteran’s hearing to compensate for his waning eyesight. Even though the veteran’s conventional faculties may be impaired, he feels, feeling that exceeds the capacities of eyesight and hearing, channeling as it does the past into the present. “What comes over you now,” asks the volunteer, “why do you tremble, and clutch my hand so convulsively?” The veteran “sees” and “hears” his surroundings through an embodied memory, one conditioned by wartime and one that at first surprises and confounds the volunteer. The veteran clutches the volunteer’s hand, it seems, not only to steady himself but to channel this embodied way of interpreting his surroundings. Triggered by the sounds of war, the veteran recalls things that feel more immediate and real than the routine mustering below.

When the drill ends, the veteran and the volunteer exchange voices. “When I clutched your hand,” the veteran admits, “it was not with terror,” but because “came again and suddenly raged . . . a battle, which I took part in myself.” Visual cues accumulate as the veteran describes this Revolutionary battle, as his “blind eyes . . . behold it re-peopled from graves” (22). The veteran recalls how George Washington’s sword “glittered in the sun in full sight of the army,” how as Washington witnessed the British advancing the veteran saw even the “moisture gather in drops” on the General’s face, and remembers the day when, at sunrise, “these eyes rested on him for the last time” and “I saw something different from capitulation” (24-5). The veteran describes not only scenes from the American Revolution, but the way in which the exchange of stories, from the volunteer in the present to the veteran of the past, does not so much restore the senses as it does reveal just how much individuals rely on normative channels of perception – seeing, hearing, speaking – to convey feeling.

Separate, the volunteer’s view on Washington Park and the veteran’s view of the past seem incomplete, unfamiliar to the listener. The final section of the poem, labeled “Terminus,” represents the creation of a poetic speaker from these two voices, a perspective that speaks not from the replacement of one soldier for the other, or even of poet for subject, but as a new creation that has sprung from the combined attempts to see. “I must copy the story, and send it eastward and westward,” exclaims this newly created poetic speaker, “I must preserve that look.” “Terminus” preserves a *way* of looking, a collective means of seeing, one that can look at once “eastward and westward.” “Perversions of feeling,” like blindness or blunted faculties, can actually bind people together through the collective ways of seeing and speaking that result not from individual reclamation of sensory capacity but through interdependency. “The Centenarian’s Song” disrupts the notion of a solid, bounded, and reclaimable self that *Gunshot Wounds* assumes as a normative state from which feeling is “perverted.” When

Whitman writes that “the words of my book [are] nothing,/The life of it everything;/A book separate, not linked with the rest,” the volume becomes a living record of feeling, not transferred between self and other but circulated, constantly shifting hands and in motion, as together the veteran, the volunteer, and the poet offer a collective way of seeing (7).

In the following poems, Whitman’s speaker begins to detail the object of this sight. In “The Dresser,” the speaker is now the “old man bending,” a former Civil War nurse, who like the centenarian answers the questions of younger generations. Of all his wartime experiences, they ask, “What stays with you latest and deepest? . . . what/deepest remains?” (36). As the poem discloses, what “stays deepest” within the speaker becomes analogous to the “deep, deep” wounds of the men he nurses, as the speaker’s own body begins to break down alongside that of the injured soldiers (38). In his vision, the nurse re-enters the hospital with “hinged knees,” knees still repeating the actions and physical configurations of caregiving. Moreover, as the speaker approaches the soldier’s bedside “with hinged knees and steady hand,” his body becomes confused with those he tends, the “fractur’d thigh, the knee” he saw in the hospital. His “steady hand” at first contrasts with the “poor crazed hand” of his patient, but the work of various hands throughout the poem begins to disassociate the hand from its “owner.” The “amputated hand” may refer also to the “impassive hand,” the “soothing hand” that carries out the work of the dresser, separated as all three are from the larger body (37, 38). Even when the poetic speaker assumes more directly the role of the healer that Whitman himself assumed during the Civil War, the poet continues to break down the distance between self and other not by bringing the two into closer proximity, or by substituting one for another, but by breaking down the integrity of both. The parenthetical longing “(. . . I never/ knew you,/Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you, if/that would save you)” has been read as Whitman’s most direct contribution to the Civil War culture and rhetoric of sympathetic substitution (37).⁹¹ But the “if” resounds, indicating not so much a longing to die for the wounded stranger, but instead a questioning of whether substitution or sympathy is the purest way of feeling for another. Through the poetic speaker, Whitman accomplishes the loss of bodily center in the self and other and transforms violent fragmentation into healing not through a reunion of the whole, but through a disaggregation of self.

Later in *Drum-Taps*, Whitman tests how these new patched-together entities travel beyond the battlefield and the hospital walls, how the words and wounds that fragment the body into “knees” and “hands” might translate to new “life” for the book and for the body. Whitman’s role as Civil War nurse also entailed penning letters from soldiers to their families at home. In a biographical study of Whitman’s wartime writings, M. Wynn Thomas argues that in this context Whitman realized “what a letter really means and the vast psychological distance it has to cross” (31). One such letter arrives on the homefront in “Come up from the fields, father.” Interrupting the rhythms of pastoral domestic space, “all calm, all vital, all beautiful,” the letter from an enlisted son triggers “something ominous” that pulls the laboring parents from their work. Before she even removes the letter from its envelope, the mother realizes “O this is not our son’s writing, yet his name is sign’d/O a strange hand writes for our dear son (48-9). The “strange hand” – perhaps the reattached and collectively “owned” “amputated hand” from “The Dresser” – communicates Pete’s death not through narratives or words but through form, through the handwriting that does not look like “our son’s.” The collaborative act of

hospital letter-writing appears on the home front in a jumbled, incoherent form as “all swims before” the mother’s eyes, and as it “flashes with black,” “she/catches the main words only;/Sentences broken” (48). The “life” of this piece of writing brings news only of death, not of the acts of caregiving that created new ways of feeling in the hospital of “The Dresser.” Interdependence of “self” and “other” appears only as strange fragments in contexts outside of the hospital.

“Come up from the fields father” also reveals the destruction that sympathetic substitution can wage on the uninjured yet feeling self. The poem concludes with the image of a mother who “needs to be better,” “with thin form . . . by day her meals untouch’d---then at night fitfully/sleeping, often waking . . . weeping, longing with one deep longing” to be with her son, to step in to his place (48). Fixed in the threshold spaces of the homefront, the mother suffers the inability to take the place of her son. Whitman’s proposed alternative to sympathetic substitution – the “perversions of feeling” that dissolve the poles of self and other in order to re-attach through the redemptive power of these very “perversions” – does not make sense within conventional registers of feeling, like the home or the biologically reproduced family. For only in these spaces are “perversions of feeling” defined, as *Gunshot Wounds* suggests, as “perversions,” as undesirable deviations from a whole, normative self. And only in the space of the hospital can these “perversions” be defined as redemptive, as an alternate way of feeling for another that does not rely on attempts to feel or to save by substitution

Increasingly in *Drum-Taps* the poems betray the sense that as the war comes to a close, these attachments and reattachments of self and other may not be possible in life beyond war. In “The Veteran’s vision,” a poem nearing the end of *Drum-Taps*, the poetic speaker merges with a veteran returned home from war. The “action” of the poem takes place solely in the veteran’s mind, an expansive yet disorienting space that defamiliarizes both the battlefield and the home front. Even in the tranquility of domestic scenes, “while my wife at my side lies slumbering, after the wars/are long over,” and while he can “hear, just/hear, the breath of my infant,” a “vision presses” on him. The bulk of the poem is a multisensory “vision” that seems at first a cacophony in contrast to the slumber and infant’s breath of home. The veteran can “hear the irregular snap! Snap!,” the “short *t-h-t!*/*t-h-t!* of the rifle balls,” the “shells exploding,” breathes the “suffocating smoke,” envisions the ebbs and flows of battlefield chaos. Yet the sights and sounds of war mingle with those of home. Skirmishers “Crawl cautiously ahead,” the speaker “hear[s] the cry of a regiment charging”—crawling and crying that perhaps shadows that of the infant’s waking hours. Just as the poem seems to give itself over completely to war, the “infantry” returns,” “shifting in its position.” This shift is not just the collective motion of foot soldiers but a shift back to the domestic space in which the war poem and war within the poem take place.

The “patter of small arms” brings the speaker back to the room and to the wife and baby within. “Veteran’s vision” suggests that those “perversions of feeling” from the hospital are not sustainable within normative spaces like the family, and that it is in fact normative spaces like the family that make one’s feelings – visions, emotions, sensory capacities – seem “perverse.” Hospital spaces may offer the possibility for new attachments and re-attachments, but the discharged or returned self seems strange, unfamiliar to himself, able neither to maintain the interdependent, patched-together self of the hospital nor to call upon this self to make sense of the experience of war. The self

seems most unfamiliar when re-coupled with the family and home, and Whitman argues that it is these “familiar” domestic registers that fail to account for the vicissitudes of the self, and especially of the self that has experienced war. Beyond questioning the sympathetic structure of substitution, in “The Veteran’s vision” Whitman also questions the stability of the self in relation to the supposedly familiar world. Where Mitchell’s patients report that when hospitalized for gunshot wounds they often could not detect a clear boundary between their bodies and the material world around them, Whitman’s poem suggests that the boundaries between material world and the self, between the past and the present, often collapse not in the strangest of setting, but in the most familiar, in those that cannot incorporate the experiences that the self brings home from war.

If Whitman advocates a relationship between self and other in which the physical fragmentation of one can be “re-attached” through a corresponding – and at times indistinguishable – fragmentation of another, another collection of Civil War poetry by Whitman’s contemporary Herman Melville seems at first to suggest the opposite, that the relationship between the self and other will always be one of *de-tachment*. Critical discussions of Melville’s 1866 *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* both in its time and today seem to agree that if one encompassing thematic unites the collection, it is the multilayered detachment in terms of its point of view, of its composition, and even of Melville’s own relationship to the war. Glenn Hendler notes such “distancing” on a micro and macro level in *Battle-Pieces*, arguing that in the details of “spatially indexical shifters” as well as in broad scale “temporal” distancing, Melville’s poetic speaker seems to be viewing the violence of war “from a distance” (215, 217). Commenting on the ambivalent stance that Melville stakes on the ethics and morality of war throughout the collection, Ian Finseth writes that the collection reflects Melville’s “sense of [the war’s] uncertain meanings for American history,” an uncertainty that remains suspended throughout *Battle-Pieces*, refusing to decide on the question of “right” or “wrong” in favor of moral diffidence (71). Elizabeth Renker convincingly argues that in *Battle-Pieces*, as elsewhere in Melville’s work, the scene of warfare that the poems “most fundamentally record is the scene of their own composition.” Melville, she maintains, “depicts that scene of conflict and struggle in terms of war, and in this sense the Civil War is only of secondary importance to his volume” (101). Renker’s reading further distances Melville from the war, placing him instead at war with the material process of composition.

Even a contemporary review of *Battle-Pieces*, written by William Dean Howells and published in *The Atlantic Monthly* a year after the volume appeared, notes both the mental and physical detachment that critics continue to highlight today. “Is it possible,” Howells asks after reading “these celebrative, inscriptive, and memorial verses,” that there really has been a great war, with battles fought by men and bewailed by women? Or is it only that Mr. Melville’s inner consciousness has been perturbed, and filled with the phantasms of enlistments, marches, fights in the air, parenthetic bulletin boards, and tortured humanity shedding, not word and blood, but words alone? (252)

Battle-Pieces perhaps has been regarded as a kind of anomaly of Civil War poetry, inspired by the conflict and even at times directly references dates, scenes, and major actors in specific Civil War events. But so at random and, in the words of another contemporary reviewer, so “vaguely” are the impressions and representations of these

figures, even when marked by place, date, and in some cases time, that they seem more a product of an individual's piecemeal impressions of various occurrences than they do of attempts to connect these events to a coherent narrative.⁹² Whereas the "I" of *Drum-Taps* serves as poetic speaker and as an orienting positional device throughout the collection, an encompassing first person and almost omniscient perspective, Melville rarely uses the first person. His project seems more a war envisioned within the mind that makes events look out of place and disjointed on the page.

Rather than viewing detachment as a perspective, point of view, or mystifying feature of *Battle-Pieces*, I suggest that the poems use detachment as an active process. Detachment acts as a poetic device through which the poet explores the same relationship that concerned *Drum-Taps* and other Civil War-era narratives of feeling: the relationship between self and other, in particular the detachment that holds the self apart from another, that makes direct substitution ultimately impossible. Like Whitman, Melville is interested in what it means to feel for another and in the redemptive potential – or failure – of sympathetic feeling. Whereas Whitman steps outside of normative structures of feeling to find redemption and even healing in feelings' "perversions," Melville examines the symmetry and equivalence that the structure of sympathetic substitution implies. To feel for another, to become "slaves ourselves," presupposes a direct equivalence, an unquestioned symmetry between "slaves" and "ourselves," between other and self. In questioning the symmetry and equivalence that structure sympathetic substitution, and that structured the material dimensions of prosthetic substitution in the war's aftermath, *Battle-Pieces* also problematizes the structuring principles of literary devices – or "scruples," as Melville calls them – of the relationship between reality and representation, and between feeling and its imitation (259).

When he urged that "we must become slaves ourselves," Charles Robinson asked members of his audience to put themselves in the place of the enslaved, to mobilize based on what it might "feel like" to inhabit the body of a slave and to experience the constraint of bridled popular sovereignty. Robinson asks his audience to imitate within themselves the conditions of slavery, to allow their imaginations and capacity for understanding feeling to transform the metaphor of slavery into material conditions. In *Battle-Pieces*, especially in poems appearing early in the collection, Melville takes up the distance between metaphor and material to ask if the sympathetic self is truly capable of diminishing it. The two halves of "Apathy and Enthusiasm," for example, demonstrate the distance between metaphoric and material feeling. Within the first half of the poem, descriptions of the "winter white and dead" heap upon each other with the "clammy cold November," the "terror dumb with stupor," the "sky a sheet of lead," and the "intensity of frost." These images accumulate without actually moving the poem forward, repetitive descriptive phrases that like the winter itself remain "frozen" in place. Further inhibiting the progress of the poem is the "paralysis of arm" that persists even in the face of the "anguish of the heart" (19). Renker attributes this "frozen" arm to a kind of paralysis of Melville's own hand poised above "sheets" either "leaded" with pencil or blank and expansive as ice (114). Yet when read in a material, physical context, especially in light of S. Weir Mitchell's classification of paralysis as a "perversion of feeling," these lines might also suggest the divide between affective feeling, or the "anguish of the heart," and physical feeling, or lack of it, in the "paralysis of arm." The "muscles of expression" –

those that move the arm across the page in attempts to channel affect – fail to do so adequately or even at all.

In these lines, Melville also suggests that metaphors of feeling, like the “terror dumb with stupor” and the “paralysis of arm,” might be the true “perversion of feeling,” that the metaphors that the reader, writer, or even Robinson’s audience uses to channel material feeling and experience, not the paralysis or other effects of physical suffering, actually distort feeling. For in the second half of the poem, the rigidity of the first half is revealed a metaphor for physical suffering and death. As the “winter died despairing,” the spring returns and with it the “youth . . . all elation” as “Sumter’s cannon[’s] roar” announces both the rebirth of spring and the first sounds of civil war. The second half of the poem changes how we read the first; whereas the images heaped upon each other in the first half seem to be metaphors for the depths of winter, the firing on Fort Sumter detaches these earlier metaphors from their material implications. The “cold,” “clammy” and corpselike November of the poem’s first lines and indeed the “paralysis of arm,” when read in the context of April 12, 1861, speaks less to the bleakness of winter and more to the actual death and wounding that comes with war.

Echoes between the two halves of the poem expose the shadowy attempts to connect feeling and its imitation, material and its metaphors. The “thunder-cracks of massy ice/ . . . Bursting one upon another” reverberate in the firing of cannons over Fort Sumter. The parting of brothers, rendering the “fissure in the hearth” wider and wider, prefigures the “tomb of faith” “rent” with return of spring and Easter as well as the generational gap between the “striplings” and the “elders.” These echoes perhaps suggest the ways in which poetic metaphors attempt to replicate by imitating the destruction from which they – and this poet – remain detached. “Perversions of feeling” occur not in wartime destruction but in attempting to imitate these feelings through poetic representation. In “Apathy and Enthusiasm,” Melville lays out a poetic project of detaching metaphor from material, imitation from experience, in order to expose the distance between, for example, “slaves” and “ourselves.”

Indeed, the final lines of the poem reveal the distance between the cannon and its echoes. “Apathy and Enthusiasm” closes with an “Iroquois old saw” that reflects the generational divide between the “graybeards” and the “young Indians” who “lead the war” (21). Whereas “saw” to the paralyzed crafter of poetry may mean the italicized phrase that concludes the poem, to a soldier who found himself in the care of doctors like Mitchell or in army hospital tents after the cannon’s fire, the “saw” may mean something quite different. Beyond a repeated and echoed “forest proverb,” this “saw” also indicates instances of “fissure” and fracture that structure the content and form of the poem. The “saw” splits apart the family, the nation, and its generations; it splits “winter” and “spring” from a cycle of changing seasons to starkly different moments in time, while also bifurcating the poem itself. With the poetic device of the “saw,” Melville also splits open the difference between feeling and its echoes, between reality and its representation. To become “slaves ourselves” or to invoke metaphors of paralysis is to take on a false symmetry or equivalence between experience and its imitation. The double meaning of the word “saw” – and the ways in which the battlefield or compositional context may affect its interpretation – suggests that no symmetry exists even within the same word.

The motif of reflecting echoes become a kind of structuring device throughout the battle pieces following “Apathy and Enthusiasm.” “Donelson,” one of the longest poems

in the collection, attests to the attempts at communication between the poles of the homefront and the battlefield. Eliza Richards demonstrates how the lines of this poem parallel the lines of communication from the battlefield to the homefront and “imagin[e] new individual and social relations to networked information” (147-8). Similarly, Faith Barrett argues that in “Donelson” Melville experiments with the layout and typography of his own poetic lines in a “reflection of changing technologies of communication like telegraph lines” (263). Echoes between the battlefield and homefront highlight wartime communication and its failures; indeed, “Donelson” proves that an echo does not constitute a direct, symmetrical match. The battle of Fort Donelson takes place on the border between Kentucky and Tennessee, a “dreamy contrast to the North” (34). As bullets assail Northern soldiers, however, the hazy quality of this “contrast” radiates closer to the poem’s homefront. A group of Northerner civilians congregate around the bulletin board to read of the struggle, a group that includes one man who carries an umbrella “riddled with bullet holes (holes that match the “bullet-dents” in Tennessee trees) to ward off the elements that assault both the homefront and Fort Donelson (39). As a “flag, deemed black” flies over Fort Donelson, a storm’s “black flag” hurls snow and sleet onto the bulletin board and its audience (43, 44). Frozen corpses rest at Fort Donelson, “each a stone,” waiting to be transformed into a death list on Northern paper that looms like “some storm beaten grave-yard stone” (43, 47). Even the bullets that fly at Fort Donelson find a kind of mark in the bulletins aimed home.

These echoes do not enact exact matches or direct correspondence between the battlefield and home, a recognition reflected most clearly within the individual “hearts” of Northern civilians. As the Northern audience reads of what seems more and more like Northern defeat, they turn not to each other but inward: “Yea, many an earnest heart was won,/As broodingly he plodded on,/To find in himself some bitter thing,/Some hardness in his lot as harrowing/As Donelson” (46). In order to try to understand what is happening on the western theater, especially in the blank face of an unyielding news bulletin, civilians turn inward, to the self, as an alternative source of “news” or of some way of gauging the severity of the battle. Here, Melville demonstrates the limits of the self’s ability to experience the conditions and reality of another. The self is a required – and limiting – reference point for understanding the conditions of another; indeed, in these lines, Melville seems to reward only the “earnestness” of these efforts to “find in himself” some equivalent to the “harrowing” of Donelson. The self can only attempt to reflect, to find something “as harrowing as” the experience of another. These attempts, Melville again suggests, are the true “perversions of feeling” of war: the “plodding” inward, searching, and coming out empty-handed. The echoes of war without and within the homefront – not combat injuries and their aftermath – are the perversions of wartime feeling.

The paper on which the news is communicated registers these failed attempts to feel exactly. Exposed to Northern elements, the paper is “washed . . . every shade of streaky blue,” ink like blood running blue through its veins (35). After one of the most harrowing days of battle, “flitting faces took the hue/Of that washed bulletin-board in view” (46). As in “Tartarus of Maids,” paper begins to take on the characteristics of those who view it, and begins to reflect back those who seek it.⁹³ This paper reflects the limits of the self: as the winter precipitation that blankets both Tennessee and the northern states attempts to blur the distance between the two, the borders of the paper limit this blurring

to foreclose the merging of experience with the communication of experience. Yet we also find on this paper – though perhaps not in writing – the only meeting point of experience and its representation, of war and home. By the end of the poem, only “wife and maid” seem to care about this formerly all-consuming paper, abandoning indoor celebrations to venture into the night in search of the battle’s death list. The death list makes the paper “damp” as it “like a river flows” down the “pale sheet.” As the foggy snow, the running ink, flowing death list, and perhaps even the tears of the “wife and maid” intersect on this piece of paper, Melville marks the point of intersection between battlefield and homefront, between other and self: “and there” – in the poem’s final lines and in the blurred lines of the list – “the whelming waters meet” (52). These “whelming waters,” flowing in multiple directions, fluid in metaphor and material, do to the paper what Melville cannot do to his own. For despite all of Melville’s experimentation with typography and with the appearance of the poem on the page, he cannot recreate the intimate “meeting” of these two spaces. Ink, blood, tears, snow, and names all blend together as the space that both recorded these names and reflected the self becomes almost unreadable, pale, bloated with tears and rain, and streaked with vein-like ink. Only in this confrontation with mortality can the wartime perspectives of civilian and soldier meet. The paper, earlier described as a “wafered square,” effects the transubstantiation of the bodies of the viewer and the dead, suggesting that the only communion between the two occurs across the body and with the recognition of mortality. Until this recognition and this “meeting,” all other attempts to feel and to write have been “perversions.”

As the mingling of elements on the bounded pages of “Donelson” begin to suggest, the direct, one-to-one relationship of substitution that sympathy proposes between self and other becomes too complicated for symmetry to account. Even the relationship between representation and reality may not be a polarized, oppositional one. Certainly, critics point out Melville’s doubts and frustrations with representation, arguing that his shift to poetic writing represented his “increasingly sophisticated awareness of the problematic nature of language” and indeed the “limits of language.”⁹⁴ Yet throughout *Battle-Pieces*, as the poet remains seemingly detached from the war and as different scenes and phases of the war seem detached from one another, Melville may be arguing that the correlation between representation and reality, between feeling and its imitation, between self and other is more complicated than direct substitution. In “Shiloh,” for example, Melville circles in closer to the scene of battle, but does not land. Hendler notes that the viewer’s perspective in “Shiloh” continues to be a detached one, marked both by the spatial detachment of the swallow’s view and by the temporal detachment of viewing a battle only after its destruction has come to pass (221). While Melville might deliberately stage this detachment to further the distance between wartime events and their poetic representation, he also suggests that distance may be a precondition both for representing and condoning violence.

As the casualties of battle “lie low” around “the church of Shiloh,” the rustic church collects and redistributes the relationships between the fallen men. The church “echoed to many a parting groan/ . . . of dying foemen mingled there” (63). Yet by the evening after the battle, these “foemen” are transformed into “friends” by the prayers “mingling” within and “echoed” by the church. Michael Warner writes that the line “foemen at morn, but friends at eve” is “framed only by a structure of sympathy,” a substitution enacted by the resounding line that follows: “(What like a bullet can

undeceive!).” Warner suggests that the truth-bearing transformation of “foe” into “friend” effects this direct substitution, of men united by “their own former state of deception” in believing in these polarizing designations in the first place (49). Physical injury – the effect of what Warner terms “state-sanctioned violence” – generates this realization, revealing that the distance between self and other, while vast, may also be one deliberately constructed and enacted to further violence. For even though the bullet deactivates state-sanctioned designations such as “friend” or “foe,” these men are the same men that they were at the start of the battle. Only their relationship to each other, between self and other, has changed.

Yet the process of substituting “friend” for “foemen” rearranges not one’s actual identity but rather the identities ascribed to individuals by a third party that “Shiloh” introduces into the substitution relationship: the state. As the “log-built” church echoes back and mingles the dying prayers of the foemen, it also unites them within the structure of the church itself, a space pieced together from the limbs and trunks of trees and one that is separate by design from the state that designates the identities of “friend” or “foe.” Whereas in “Donelson” Melville illuminates the difficulty of the civilian substituting himself for the suffering soldier and the perversions of feeling that arise from civilians’ attempts to feel the “hardness” of battle within themselves, in “Shiloh” Melville suggests that the principle of sympathetic substitution, more than a literary device, is also part of the operating principle of state-sanctioned violence. The bullet strips away the distance between the designations “friend” and “foe,” and exposes the state’s original investment in maintaining a distinct separation between the two, in defining the doubling and substitution motifs as “duels all over ‘tween man and man” rather than as war waged by a detached state (*Battle-Pieces* 45).

Indeed, as *Battle-Pieces* continues Melville begins to suggest that detachment is itself a position of violence and perhaps even the most effective position through which violence is waged. “The Swamp Angel” tells of a cannon of the same name, a Parrott gun that, according to Melville’s endnote, was “planted in the marshes of James Island” outside of Charleston, South Carolina, and was “employed in the prolonged, though at times intermittent bombardment of Charleston. “Our soldiers,” Melville continues, gave it the name “Swamp Angel” (250). This name and the eponymous poem in turn give the weapon human and racially typified characteristics. The “coal black” cannon has a “thick Afric lip,” a “face” aimed at the city of Charleston, and even “breathes” a fatal “breath” (107). These characteristics naturalize the displacement of violence away from “our soldiers” and the state that deploys them to consolidate the source of violence into the figure of an African or African American poised in defiant opposition to the white southern city. Indeed, the cannon’s position in “a swamp” like “the hunted and harried” evokes images of runaway slaves hiding along the margins of the city.

The space of the swamp, “where the green frogs dip” seems to transform the “blastment” of the cannon into a wild, almost lawless form of warfare disconnected both from the agent and target of violence. State-sanctioned attacks on southern cities like Charleston occur through multiple layers of substitution: “our soldiers” are tucked into Melville’s endnote and behind the cannon’s “face”; the cannon itself is transformed into a black body in direct opposition to the “pale” faces “whiten[ed]” with fear in Charleston. Figuring the black body as a vessel through which the state conducts – and cloaks – violence almost attempts to redeem the North of this violence; if African-American

freedom in the name of democracy and union is the true “cause” of the war, then any violence waged occurs in and is justified by their name. Melville perhaps argues that substitution redeems the self – the soldiers and state behind the cannon – only by distancing the self from the violence that it inflicts. “The Swamp Angel” stages a war not between North and South but between black and white, “the face against the City” and the “pale fright of the faces.” In doing so, the formula of substituting “self” for “other” allows the “other” figuratively to wage violence in place of the self, to act as a remote weapon of the self. Representation, here, can distort the source of violence, can detach the weapon from the arm that wields it. In transferring the threat of violence onto the black body unbound, lurking in the lawless space of the swamp, “The Swamp Angel” proves the formula of sympathetic substitution to be capable of detaching the self from violence and of diffusing the self’s responsibility for the violation of another.

In “The Swamp Angel” Melville also calls upon the complicity of the postbellum reader – seemingly the most detached from scenes of war – in the violation not only of the south but of the black body through which Northern violence operates. Melville does not display sympathy for the disfigured southern town of Charleston so much as he interrogates the complicity of sympathy *with* violence. In her study of the relationship between witnessing and waging violence, Saidiya Hartman argues that reading a graphically violent scene does not allow the reader to imagine the victim’s pain but rather functions to exempt the reader from suffering, to hold the reader safely removed from the threat of violence.⁹⁵ Indeed, the reading self may even be implicated in the violation of another, positioned at a parallel to the agent of violence. In “The Swamp Angel,” the source of violence is located in the figure of the “Afric” cannon. But, as Melville’s endnote subtly reminds the reader, the soldiers behind the cannon are “ours.” The use of the first person incriminates a specific reading public – a Northern readership – who, though removed from the war like the storefront crowds of “Donelson,” cannot stand by as mere onlookers without recognizing their share in the suffering, their implication in the violence waged. For in the final lines of “The Swamp Angel” Melville suggests that collective guilt, not sympathy, might be a more appropriate unifying feeling for Northern audiences and for the nation as a whole. Here, the first-person collective “our” appears once again: “Who weeps for the woeful City/Let him weep for our guilty kind.” And if the seemingly distant destruction of the South evokes “joy,” then, the speaker implores, “Christ, the forgiver, convert his mind” (109). Admission of collective guilt and of the need for collective forgiveness, Melville suggests, may be a stronger binding force than sympathy, especially sympathy that functions to detach the self from violence it allows.

In this way, in its attempts to mediate between self and other, sympathetic substitution actually conscripts the self into harming the other and into complicity with the other’s suffering. The state deploying “our soldiers” mobilizes the substitution relationship in order to distract from and indeed cover up the state’s own role in the violation of the self and the other. Even as formalized functions of the state attempt to promote union and re-union through federal reconstruction and “re-establishment,” the individuals who attempt to enact reconciliation after the war are actually further alienated not from the once-foe with whom they try to square, but from themselves. In “Magnanimity Baffled,” a Northern soldier – the “Victor” – seeks to enact a relationship of symmetry with his former enemy, now attempted “friend.” He offers his hand in expectation of meeting its mirror image in the extended, reciprocated hand of the

defeated. “Man honors man,” the Victor encourages, re-affirming the significance of his own victory by acknowledging matching fortitude in the foe. His hand searches for its reflection in the other, a desire for symmetry heightened by the rhyming of “man” with “man” in the first stanza and “hand” with “hand” in the second. But the defeated remains unresponsive. Finally, after holding a one-sided conversation with himself, the Northern soldier declares, “Nay then I’ll have the stubborn hand,” and “snatches” it up only to find that “it was dead” (156).

The hand of the defeated does display symmetry with the hand extended—but not a living, voluntary symmetry. The hand may have been “dead” all along, but the aggressive act of “snatching” it, of forcing it to comply, may figuratively have brought death upon it. The lingering lack of reconciliation perhaps even suggests that the defeated himself was killed by such aggression in the first place, that the same man who snatched it may also have been the one who took the life and feeling out of it. What reflects back on the Victor is an image of the violence that the Victor himself has waged. Although “The Swamp Angel” and “Magnanimity Baffled” may at first read as Melville’s sympathies for a ravaged South, that he feels the war to be overall an attack on dissenting factions, “Magnanimity Baffled” in particular maintains that the Union’s victory might be met not with affirmations of collective, reunited strength but with the causalities of its individual members and components. Re-establishment, it seems, reflects back the Victor’s culpability and, indeed, mortality. For despite the Victor’s vocal and fraternal efforts in this poem, only his voice echoes throughout. When the self tries to find himself in another – in the form of a man honoring another man who also “strove stoutly” – he ultimately witnesses the destruction in which he engaged, death reflected back onto a silenced self.

In its seeming refusal to conclude, in its repeated attempts at an ending represented in the sections “Verses Inscriptive and Memorial,” the endnotes, and the Supplement, *Battle-Pieces* seems similarly resistant to neat closure.⁹⁶ One of the “Verses,” entitled “On the Men of Maine, Killed in the Victory of Baton Rouge, Louisiana,” creates a map in miniature of *Battle-Pieces* and of the “union” and “reunion” that the poems confront. The men of Maine (“killed” though the battle is listed as a Northern “Victory”) died “afar,” in Louisiana, “(a land how all unlike their own,/With the cold pine-grove overgrown).” The parentheses surrounding the description of Maine seem to close off the borders of the men’s northernmost home. Although Louisiana, in contrast, is the “zone/of fig and orange, cane and lime,” both are “still their Country’s clime.” Melville may suggest that this disjointedness is perhaps the nature of the “Country” itself. The “pieces,” “aspects,” and “verses” that make up Melville’s collection are not unlike the incongruent, unfamiliar “zones” that comprise the “Country.” No wonder, *Battle-Pieces* insists, the idea of “Country” seems an alienating space: the state unites a variety of “selves” in the space of the nation. Like the iron-jawed press of the Devil’s Dungeon paper mill, it brings together disparate worlds by disorienting and defamiliarizing them, by rendering them unrecognizable even to one of their own ranks. The abstract concept of “Country” brings together the contrasting worlds of bachelor and maid, Louisiana and Maine, but only by altering the original form, by transforming Bachelors into rags and “killed” into “Victory.” All must be pressed into sameness, into uniform paper and pages, in order to naturalize the often violent transformation required to cross the distance between self and other.

By the final poem of *Battle-Pieces*, we see how far the self has traveled, from what seemed at first like the familiar spaces of the hearth, wartime celebratory rituals, and the reassuring security of the book, to, in “A Meditation,” a funeral for two brothers, one who fought for the North and the other for the South. The poem is written in the perspective of a “Northerner,” “kinsmen” of the brothers. His meditations stray back to those closing battles, to the “truce” that “stilled” the guns and that left soldiers glancing “curious. . . from face to face” for “kinsmen spied, or friend—even in a foe.” The most familiar of relations – kinship ties, bonds of friendship – are distorted by the wartime designation of “foe,” yet seem to outlast the “sieging guns” of battle. As the Northerner meditates on the conflicting emotions of war, Melville performs a kind of substitution of his own in the image of the “god within the breast,” the “witness that is man’s at birth.” Melville may refer to Adam Smith’s “man within the breast,” a position staked in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), a text that remains foundational in defining and interpreting sympathetic substitution in both eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American literature and culture.⁹⁷ Smith maintains that the “Author of Nature” made man “the immediate judge of mankind” and “created him after his own image” to monitor the behavior of his “brethren.” But, Smith continues, men are to be held to a high, pre-existing standard of “the own conscience . . . to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their conduct.” Smith also calls the “man within the breast” the “demigod within the breast,” an originary authority who veers toward the “human” side of this demigod status by virtue of his mortality (220-222). Smith’s “man” is a divided one, one split between the approbation and censure of the man without and the response of the man within, yet “housed in a single psyche, one who “effectively renounces the need for an external authority even as it underscores the relational matrix at the center of identity” (Barnes 39).

In “A Meditation,” Melville rescues the “demigod within the breast” from his mortality with the phrase “the god within the breast,” one that stirs only at the conclusion of battle, as soldiers make sense of the appearance of friend or kinsmen – the familiar – within the foe. Melville locates within the self something distinctly unknowable. Where Smith views the evaluation of men’s actions in a split self within one “psyche,” Melville suggests that the greatest judge of men’s actions lies within a commonly held center, the “witness that is man’s at birth.” The basis of shared feeling, this passage argues, is not the ability to imitate the feelings of another, to become “slaves ourselves,” but rather to collectively confront the unfamiliar space within, the ways in which feelings like doubt, guilt, and “misgivings” can distort one’s sense of self. Bullets, according to both Mitchell and Melville’s accounts, have the ability to confuse friend and foe, to disorient the self’s relation to the other. But here, as the Northerner meditates on the existence of friend within foe, as he stands “wandering in his soul” and contemplating the mechanism of substitution in which both friend and foe are merged, the “god within the breast” acts not just as a conscience but as recognition of the other within the self. Substitution in “A Meditation” proposes that what unites men is not the external or spatial borders of “Country” or union but the ability to feel a collective share in the violence waged, a collective feeling that comes from confronting one’s own conscience, from looking further inward rather than ever outward.

Melville closes *Battle-Pieces* with an admission of his own conscience. “Were I fastidiously anxious,” he writes in his Supplement, “for the symmetry of this book, it

would close with the notes.” Like the distorted symmetry of “Magnanimity Baffled,” *Battle-Pieces* and its supplement resist the symmetry that “literary scruples” impose (259). Melville seems to diminish the demands of “literary scruples” in favor of addressing the questions of politics and patriotism posed by Northern victory. Yet in the same way that Whitman’s *Drum-Taps* envisions configurations of self and other directly out of the relationships brought about by war, *Battle-Pieces* envisions these literary scruples themselves to be reconfigured by wartime and the patterns, such as symmetry in sympathetic substitution, or a clearly corresponding relationship between representation and reality, it interrupts. “Claims overriding all literary scruples” – those of reconciliation, of joining disparate parts into a whole – also interrogate those “scruples” and literature’s role in perpetuating a version and vision of union that defines membership in terms of familiarity in feeling, and that attempts to distance the self from the violence in which he might be complicit. Unlike the asymmetrical, blurred pages of “Donelson,” where the “whelming waters” of self and other meet, literary scruples like sympathetic substitution in fact cover up this complicity, masking it in order to preserve the integrity of a detached, untouched self.

In the final pages of *Gunshot Wounds*, S. Weir Mitchell calls upon the reader’s own body to imitate wartime perversions of feeling. Mitchell references the case of a “very distinguished medical officer,” wounded near his spine, to illustrate the “defective power to localize a touch,” or to know where on the body one comes into contact with another. “I cannot tell you in words where I was touched,” the medical officer admits to Mitchell, “but it was here,” he says as he “put his finger upon a spot six inches higher up the limb” than where the medical officer was actually “touched” (116). In order to illustrate more fully this “defective power to localize a touch,” Mitchell involves the reader’s body. “Let the reader place his hands behind him,” Mitchell suggests, and “interlocking them, let a second person tap the fingers lightly, when he himself states what finger has been touched. He will be surprised when told that now and then he has mistaken one finger for another . . . [by] the baffled perceptive powers” (117-8). A few pages later, Mitchell ask the reader to “imitate on ourselves” the position of a patient’s appendages, or the experience of a certain sensation (122). Invoking the presumably uninjured body of the reader, Mitchell’s comparisons suggest that even “able” bodies may imitate upon themselves the “perversions of feeling” that characterize nerve injuries, and that they too may be unable to “localize a touch,” or to identify with certainty the exact spot where two bodies come into contact.

Yet it is just this act of “imitating on ourselves” in order to understand another’s feeling that Whitman and Melville argue *is* the perversion of feeling. Substituting one’s body for another’s does not bring one closer to understanding another’s feeling but rather reveals – as it does in Mitchell’s text – the inability to detect, locate, and identify one’s own feelings. *Gunshot Wounds* views these perversions of feeling as in need of remedy, rehabilitation, and cure, while *Drum-Taps* and *Battle-Pieces* make arguments for the redemptive power of perversions of feeling, for “perversion’s” ability to renovate literary conventions or “scruples” like sympathetic substitution and the relationships between self and other that they dictate. In her recent call to historicize the appearance and function of disability in American literature, Sari Altschuler urges scholars to “interrogate our explanatory paradigms about disability” in order to account for the ways in which understandings of impairment and its representation changed alongside changing national

conditions like those the Civil War signaled (267). Recent scholarship responds to this call, interrogating the new visibility that the Civil War granted disability in the form of disabled soldiers and prosthetic limbs. I have tried to argue that Civil War medical writing and poetry ask the reader to examine at how and what one feels in order to contextualize disability not just within its social history but also within the literary history of conventions like sympathy. Sympathetic reading – reading that urges the reader to “feel right” – seeks to reaffirm the integrity and functional capacity of the self. Yet as Whitman and Melville demonstrate, when we imitate within ourselves the feelings of another, these imitations are in fact “perversions.” The self, “baffled” in its “perceptive powers” cannot stand in for another because it cannot fully comprehend or control its own “muscles of expression.” Examining the “feeling” of disability also requires interrogations of the explanatory paradigms of American literature, such as sympathetic substitution and “literary scruples” of symmetry, as themselves normalizing devices that cannot solve the strangeness of the feeling self.

“Curiously Raised Letters”: Children’s Books for the Blind

In the final pages of *Little Women* (1868/9), Louisa May Alcott, “humble historian of the March family,” reflects on the family’s newest generation. Daisy and Demi Brooke are “the two most precious and important members of it,” the precocious twins who “walked at eight months” and “talked fluently at twelve months.” Demi, in particular, seems capable in both mind and body. By age three, when we see him in *Little Women*, he is learning his letters with his grandfather March, “who invented a new mode of teaching the alphabet by forming the letters with his arms and legs,--thus uniting gymnastics for head and heels.” A few pages later in the chapter find Mr. March and Demi “seriously absorbed” in the business of making letters from their legs; Demi proudly executes a “We” as his “legs took the shape of a pair of compasses.” Grandfather March completes the connection between Demi’s mental and physical development when, in response to the little philosopher’s question “What makes my legs go, Dranpa?” he replies “It’s your little mind, Demi” (487-8, 491).

Such “gymnastics for head and heels” could be found in pictorial representations of the alphabet dating back to the eighteenth century. The *Comical Hotch-Potch, or the Alphabet Turn’d Posture-master* was originally printed in 1782 in London before migrating onto the pages of nineteenth-century U.S. children’s primers. In it, a “comic set of fellows” forms the shapes of the twenty-six letters, including a particularly tricky “W” with legs pointed northward like Demi’s would be decades later. In her history of the alphabet as a genre, Patricia Crain writes that this eighteenth-century *Hotch-Potch* and its nineteenth-century legacy are part of a long tradition of inscribing the alphabet onto the human form and of contorting the body to shape the letters. As Crain reads this tradition, the body must “conform to the size and shape of the letters,” even the knotty W, “not the other way around” (90). Bodies like Demi’s must be not infinitely flexible to form these shapes, but rather disciplined and rigid in order to maintain them. The execution of this “human alphabet,” in turn, represented a rigid and direct correspondence between mind and body. The “little mind” makes the “legs go” into these shapes, both recalling the forms of the letters and signaling the movements and positions to enact and embody them.

As Alcott closes the curtain on the March family in *Little Women* and reopens it in *Little Men* (1871) on Plumfield, the Bhaer’s school and home for boys, we find that almost all of the children at Plumfield are encouraged to exercise both head and heels, though not always simultaneously. When the reader enters Plumfield through the eyes of the orphaned Nat, we see a house “swarming with boys” performing all sorts of gymnastics for the “heels,” as they play tag, read, sing, and slide down banisters. Nat only observes these antics; besides being a stranger, he is visibly ill from days spent in the streets. The young fiddler brings with him a cold that will not seem to go away, and Mr. and Mrs. Bhaer note his “thin temples and feverish lips, as well as the hoarse voice and frequent fits of coughing that shook the bent shoulders under the patched jacket.” Jo quickly administers cough syrup and a flannel bandage, “the first steps toward a cure” (527). Nat soon learns of another “cure,” those “gymnastics for the head” that are also expected and that may bring him closer to the romping specimens of boyhood that greet him at Plumfield’s door. Noticing that all of the boys at Plumfield seek Demi’s attention and approval, Nat asks his new friend Tommy Bangs about the “sober, conscientious

little fellow.” Tommy assures Nat that he and Demi will be friends as long as Nat “care[s] about reading as he does.” When Nat, blushing, admits that “I can’t read very well; I never had any time,” Tommy readily admits that he himself does not love to read, though betraying a face that “said as plainly as words, ‘A boy twelve years old and can’t read!’” (552).

In both “head” and “heels,” then, Nat seems most in need of the rehabilitation in the form of physical sustenance, reading lessons, and the nurturing of responsible independence, all of which seem abundant at Plumfield. Yet while *Little Men* in many ways tracks Nat’s “healing” as he strengthens his body and learns to read, other characters who land on Plumfield’s doorstep who are also seemingly “deficient” in mind and body seem exempt from these developments. The narrator introduces “Dick Brown and Adolphus or Dolly Pettingill” together, identifying them simply as “two eight-year-olds.” The two are often paired throughout the book, conjoined perhaps by the “D”s of their nicknames and the fact that “no one was allowed to mock” them.⁹⁸ For Dolly “stuttered badly” even though “Mr. Bhaer tried to cure it, by making him talk slowly.” Otherwise unremarkable, Dolly “went through his daily duties and pleasures with placid content and propriety” (540-1). Dick Brown walks with a “crooked back,” but he remains so cheerful and good-humored under this “affliction” that Demi comments that even he would like a “hump,” if it “makes people good-natured” (541). A third student, Billy Ward, once an “unusually intelligent boy” was transformed into a “feeble idiot” thanks to the strenuous and unending lessons pushed on him by his father. Billy avoids the “active plays” of the other boys, and all of Plumfield takes pity on and patience with him, aiming only to “make the boy less a burden and an affliction” (542).

Demi’s “human alphabet” might look slightly different if performed by Dick, Dolly, or Billy than by Demi. For even with Mr. Bhaer’s patient lessons, Billy “poured over the alphabet” daily, “proudly said A and B, and thought that he knew them, but on the morrow they were gone, and all the work was to be done over again” (542). While Demi and Daisy are walking and speaking by the age of one, this trio of unfortunate characters seems destined only to repeat stuttered syllables, “cheerful” burdens, and truncated alphabets. Indeed, the primary “lesson” surrounding these three boys is not one that they themselves will gain, but rather one that others may learn from and by them. “No one was allowed to mock” Dolly’s stutter, Jo hopes that “others will be as kind to [Dick] as my boys have learned to be,” and the apparent loss of Billy’s brilliance “was a terrible lesson to his ambitious father” (540, 541, 550). Their stalled development seems to mirror the rather flat characterization that Alcott affords them in *Little Men*. Their function in the novel seems to be to teach others to be tactful and charitable toward their impaired friends, never drawing attention to their differences but humoring them. The boys even turn these differences to their advantage, such as when Tommy decides, after some of his money goes missing, that Billy is the only boy he trusts to hunt eggs for him—the only boy who does not understand the monetary value of the property he guards.

Dick, Dolly, and Billy seem to be secondary characters in this “wilderness of boys,” serving largely to further the development of those more able-bodied and capable students around them. Critical focus on the role of disability in nineteenth-century children’s literature seems to conclude as much; in one of the first and few surveys of the subject, Greta Little writes that disabled characters “are protagonists only in the sense

that they are at the center of the story going on around them. Their role is a passive one, to inspire or influence the real actors in the story's plot" (181). Lois Keith writes that while deaths like Beth's in *Little Women* "may occupy just a small space in the novel," they are key turning points in the development of the plot and of more central characters like Jo March (33). Of Dick Brown and Billy Ward specifically, Hugh McElaney writes that the boys are "stock figures of the 'incurable,'" popular in nineteenth-century children's literature, who "accept their fates in good spirits . . . are incapable of meaningful work . . . and have the good taste to die before reaching adulthood" (141).⁹⁹ Underdeveloped in mind, body, and representational depth within stories like *Little Men*, such "stock figures" serve purposes both didactic and functional: they teach the able-bodied how better to deal with their comparatively lighter "afflictions," and move the plot along at key points while doing so.

The role of this secondary "stock figure" is one that has been attributed to disabled characters more broadly throughout literary history, American and beyond. In their overview of the relationship between disability representation and narrative devices, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder argue that impaired characters often serve two primary functions: as "stock features of characterization" and as "opportunistic metaphorical devices" (47). Disability, they maintain, functions as a kind of alphabet or grammar of its own; through the lack of substantive development, readers are taught to read and recognize not the social or political dimensions and implications of disability but instead simply its "stock features," its hunched back, persistent stutter, and undeveloped mind. As Mitchell and Snyder write, while stories may take up the symbolic potential of disability – or, in the case of *Little Men*, how it might function more broadly and metaphorically as a lesson to able-bodied and able-minded boys – they do so only to further the "ethereal projections of the mind," to develop the characterization and interiority of characters like Demi, whose mind and body operate in perfect alignment (48).

Situating the physically disabled figure within sentimental literary projects, Rosemarie Garland Thomson reads three mid to late nineteenth-century U.S. novels to demonstrate how these figures became the liberal and charitable "projects" against which white, middle-class, able-bodied women positioned their own aspirations for political efficacy and economic agency. Garland Thomson argues that through acts of "benevolent maternalism," women and even girls could achieve "transcendent embodiment" and "agency and invulnerability" by uplifting those characters who could never transcend their physical impairments. As female characters once bound by gendered restrictions on their mobility and productivity overcome these limitations to achieve a version of the self-government and self-determination inherent to nineteenth-century liberal individualism, Garland Thomson writes, they do so sometimes literally on the backs of physically deformed characters who are "muted" and relegated to the "narrative margins." As Mitchell and Snyder also argue, these characters function most prominently not to achieve any claim to agency or mobility of their own, nor to further their own character development, but instead to "generate rhetoric" of sympathy, sympathy that improves these "benevolent mothers" as well as those of appropriately benevolent readers (Garland Thomson 557).

These studies of disability maintain that stock figures like Dolly, Dick, and Billy are open to character development and larger analysis only to the extent that they play

supportive roles in cultivating sympathy of others—sympathy that may be leveraged to the advantage not of the impaired but of the able-bodied. In *Little Men*, these stock figures seem exempt both from literary mechanics of character development as well as from their own acts of reading and writing within Alcott's plot; Dick and Dolly “do not write,” not even for Plumfield's “Composition Day,” and Billy must relearn his alphabet each day. These characters are excluded, in other words, from the most important activity of character development that nineteenth-century children could perform: reading.¹⁰⁰ As Patricia Crain recently has argued, the very concept of childhood in the nineteenth century developed inseparably from the concept of immersive, autonomous reading. Throughout the nineteenth century, Crain maintains, reading and writing “became foundational characteristics we now identify with childhood,” as a means of achieving the kind of disciplined and self-possessed autonomy that, indeed, allows Demi's “little mind” to control his little legs (7-8). Throughout *Little Men*, Demi also reads in a style equally foundational to Crain's “reading children”: to escape the body, to achieve the “self-dispossession” that would allow him to supersede bodily concerns like hunched backs or stutters. Such reading permits the abilities to inhabit and transcend the body, abilities that are, perhaps, the final ambition of both autonomy and of reading.

The type of reading that Crain identifies as definitive of nineteenth-century childhood is at its base a type of able-bodied reading. It illuminates able-bodied investments in self-possession, autonomy, and agency in the reading process, investments that literary disability studies scholars continue to characterize as the individualistic traits of a nineteenth-century liberalism defined in opposition to the figure of physical, cognitive, and sensory impairments.¹⁰¹ Indeed, the goals of Plumfield's educational program are less the intake of knowledge through reading than they are the internalization of this knowledge and its reflection in the capacities of “self-knowledge, self-help, and self control” that should dictate students' behavior in and out of the classroom.¹⁰² In how we read them and in how they read (or do not read), the stock figure of the “incurable” seems denied the interiority and self-mastery of the able-bodied children swarming around them. Interpreting the “role” or “purpose” of these characters seems only to bring the reader back to the able body, to the norms and narratives for which these characters function.

Yet these analyses of nineteenth-century reading and its stock figure assume that “the book” is a neutral backdrop against which characterization and narrative do or do not play out, against which characters with able bodies and minds develop an interiority while others languish on the margins. When the “role” or “purpose” of the stock character of the “incurable” is defined solely in terms of how it relates to plot and character development, it may indeed be one-dimensional and resistant to analysis. But when this stock figure is positioned within an analysis of the act of reading a physical book, the “incurable” functions differently. At various moments in children's literature and in childhood reading during the mid to late nineteenth century, the stock figure actually reconfigures the relationship between the body and the book, calling into being different ways of reading and alternate strategies of literacy acquisition. Reading disabled children as themselves literary conventions, as plot devices or “prostheses” for normative character development, leaves unquestioned the able-bodied or normative underpinnings of the book and the narrative it contains.

Positioning this stock figure's relationship to the materiality of the book and to acts of literacy acquisition both represented and modeled in mid to late nineteenth-century literature for children, I examine this character not as a literary convention, one-dimensional and resistant to analysis, but as pushing against the very strategies of reading that would mark this figure as "stock." The stock figure of the disabled character in children's literature is not a static offshoot of a normative genealogy of childhood literacy, but rather helped create and transmit conventions of normative reading. In studying the books and reading practices designed for those "incurable" children perhaps most excluded from literacy – the blind or sight-impaired reader – I argue that scenes of the disabled child reading defamiliarize the book as well as conventional or normative reading strategies. Although the act of reading may be an able-bodied performance of autonomy and self-possession, in examining the relationships between the "incurable" and the book I find strategies of reading and literacy acquisition that transform the form of the book from neutral backdrop to active participant in compelling able-bodied standards and behavior.

Bringing the inanimate book to the fore as an "active participant" in mandating the physical conventions of reading and the literary conventions of narrative development suggests that the book, according to the methodology that Robin Bernstein proposes in her study of childhood and race, may be one example of a "scriptive thing" that compels certain responses and behaviors. Through this methodology Bernstein seeks to "understand how a non-agential artifact, in its historical context, prompted or invited – scripted – actions of humans who were agential and not infrequently resistant" to the "performances" these scriptive objects obliged (8). Bernstein observes that the remnants of nineteenth-century material culture "script" similar to how literary texts "mean"; the story composed for children, for example, is not "conscious or agential" in itself, but it may "invite behaviors that its maker did and did not envision" in the same way that the child's story may "produce meanings that include and exceed" its author's aim (12). Books written about and for children with impairments, I argue, blend both these "scripts" of material culture and the "meanings" of literary texts. Impaired individuals within and using books suggest that there may be a material dimension to literary "meaning," that literary meaning is welded to and even dependent upon material reading practices. The material culture surrounding reading for impaired individuals reveals the conjoined scripts of able-bodied narratives and able-bodied reading.

This argument also speaks to an ongoing anxiety in childhood studies: the so-called "détente" between the constructed category of childhood and the "actual," lived experiences of individual children (Bernstein 23). Especially in studies of the child in the nineteenth century, "childhood" exists as a disembodied, abstract category to which individual children have various levels of access and which they may support, resist, or challenge in various ways. Karen Sánchez-Eppler views "childhood" as "a rhetoric for the articulation of social norms," one that may conscript and even "betray" the child's individual positioning in relation to it (xxiii). Yet disability and impairment in and surrounding nineteenth-century children's books poses the impaired character as disruptive of both categories. Represented as confined to a perpetual state of "childhood," regardless of age, impaired characters may enact a "visual mismatch" between their own bodies and those "actually" defined as children.¹⁰³ Disabled individuals in children's literature trouble the category of childhood because often they do not develop according

to its prescriptive and sometimes precocious timelines (walking by eight months, fluent by twelve), because often they occupy the category of childhood while not necessarily being “children.” In this way, impaired children or impaired child-like characters complicate both the “rhetoric” of childhood and the experience of being a child.

Indeed, one of the most famous “children” of the nineteenth century – though perhaps not as well known today – was, because of her sensory impairments and her dependence on her teachers and the educational institution in which she lived, figured as perpetually childlike. Laura Bridgman, born in 1829 and by the age of two rendered deaf and blind by scarlet fever, entered the Perkins School for the Blind a few months before her eighth birthday, in 1837. She eventually defied even her family’s expectations when she learned to read, write, and speak at the school, where she remained until her death in 1889. Because of these achievements, Bridgman became an attraction for Boston’s tourists, including Lydia Sigourney and Charles Dickens. According to one recent biographer, it was even said that “with the exception of Queen Victoria, Bridgman was the most famous female in the entire world” (Gitter 4). Figured as perpetually and pleasingly a child, Bridgman also became a popular figure on the pages of children’s periodicals, a genre that expanded during the years of Laura’s celebrity.¹⁰⁴ In 1841, for example, the editors of *The Mother’s Monthly Journal* declared that no parent could read a description of Laura “without having her most tender sympathies excited; and we could not furnish a more interesting stories for children” (27). *The Youth’s Magazine* named Bridgman “one of the most touching exhibitions of early suffering that can well be imagined” (207). When inquisitive tourists came to visit Bridgman, administrators at Perkins made certain she conformed to the expectations groomed by print culture descriptions. As soon as Bridgman turned twelve, for example, her teachers were quick to deny evidence of any behavior that could be interpreted as sexualized or erotic; in the 1842 annual report of Perkins activities published for the public, one wrote that Laura “was as pure and spotless as a rose” (“Tenth Annual Report” 29). When Bridgman turned sixteen it became clear to her teachers that she would never acquire a soft, gentle voice. They allowed her to indulge in the deeper, frustrated sounds only in private.

Even at the time of her death Bridgman was figured as both a child and as ideal material for children and childhood reading. In an 1889 account published in *St. Nicholas Magazine*, Joseph Jastrow recalls that he met Bridgman when she was 57 years old, “though she looked younger” and “was very lively” (747). Bridgman did not even begin to learn the alphabet, Jastrow recounts, until “after she was used to the Home,” after she had settled into the Perkins School around age 8. For Bridgman, as he reminds his readers, “had never heard no read nor spoken a word since she could remember.” “Just think!” Jastrow exclaims, “she never knew her own name, nor even that she had one, until then—when she was nine years old. A year later, she began to learn to write” (749). Throughout her life, Laura’s teachers were her closest “bonds,” were “eyes, ears, and tongue for her” (752). These representations of Bridgman and her sensory impairments shift conventional timelines of childhood as well as the literacy acquisition that was seen as so crucial to tapping and shaping an interior self.¹⁰⁵ Represented as an eternal student, memorialized in one of the most popular magazine for children, and delayed in learning even the alphabet, Bridgman emerges, in this account, as disruptive of the “visual match” with “child” and within the “rhetoric” of “childhood.”

Such representations also characterized fictive accounts of blind children. In Jacob Abbott's 1856 chapter book *Elfred, or the Blind Boy and his Pictures*, impairment thwarts even the finest efforts at guiding children through the developmental stages of childhood. Elfred's parents

took great pains with his training. They first taught him to creep, then to walk, and presently they began to teach him to pronounce some words. He learned all these things very fast; and when he was, at length, about five years old, he was a very bright, and beautiful, and promising child. (25)

An accident involving a sharpened arrow and another boy's carelessness renders Elfred blind. Read according to Mitchell and Snyder's assessment of the "stock figure," Elfred's blinding may seem all the more "tragic" because of his model upbringing; indeed, the accident and subsequent impairment may be the "disruptive punch" that these authors view as the function of literary representations of disability (47). Yet throughout the story, Elfred's blindness serves not so much to further a plot or facilitate able-bodied development so much as it requires him and his sighted friends to develop alternate strategies of reading, strategies that ask the reading audience to expand definitions of and expectations for "sight." Indeed, although the book is suffused with the moralizing conventional to nineteenth-century children's literature, scenes of reading, writing, and "seeing" throughout the text suggest that readers might attend to *how* they read as much as to *what* they read.¹⁰⁶

On the surface, *Elfred* seems straightforward in the message it seeks to impart to its "actual" readers. The Preface acknowledges that while "all persons in such a world as this . . . are subject to their own peculiar privations and trials, the story of Elfred is intended to illustrate the spirit and temper of mind with which these evils should be borne" (10). Throughout the book the narrator praises Elfred's cheerful determination to value the senses he does possess rather than to become bitter about what he has lost. This lesson forms both the introduction and conclusion to the book; on the final pages, the narrator urges his readers to "learn from the story of Elfred that your happiness in life depends more on your temper and disposition of mind than upon your outward condition" (157). These lessons at first seem to confirm Mitchell and Snyder's argument that disability serves as a "prosthesis" through which other individuals – here, the individual reader – may benefit and indeed profit. These lessons also espouse the type of self-sufficiency and fortitude characteristic of Garland Thomson's brand of liberal individualism.

Yet woven within these pages and these explicit morals are another story and another way of reading this story besides simply absorbing the words printed on the page. After the disabling accident, Elfred's friends bring him pictures and toys to share. As the narrator points out, "Elfred liked very much to see these things. He called it seeing them, though, of course, all that he could do was to take them in his hands and feel of them" (55). The book's title announces a central tension of the seemingly straightforward text: the apparent contrast between a "blind boy" and "his pictures." *Elfred, the Blind Boy* is illustrated with over thirty engravings, some depicting scenes in the book and some that are reproductions of Elfred's own pictures, images that he receives as gifts and collects in his treasured scrapbook. Many who know Elfred believe that he will have no use for pictures; flat, smooth, and two-dimensional, a picture would be to Elfred "nothing but a sheet of paper" and may even make him self-conscious about his blindness. But Elfred's

young friend Josephine knows that he will appreciate the pictures: “I am sure he can see it,” she insists, “and he always likes to have me show him the birds . . . sometimes I take hold of his finger, and point to the exact place” (57). When Josephine brings Elfred his first picture, she sits beside him and begins to “show him the picture. She took hold of his hand, and guided his finger to the different objects, as she successively enumerated them.” The narrator then directs the reader’s attention to the book’s own pages: “Here is the picture itself, on the opposite page” (60).

In this way, the narrative operates on two different levels: the story of Josephine and Elfred looking at the picture, and the “actual” reader’s own experience of looking at the same picture printed in the text. These two levels also introduce and perhaps even compel Elfred’s method of seeing in Elfred’s friends and the “actual” reader. Elfred so enjoys Josephine’s picture that his friends start to bring more pictures, to describe them, and to direct his finger to different scenes within them. Elfred even begins to see the pictures more accurately than can his sighted companions. For example, when Josephine describes an image of two people “taking up a bundle of straw,” Elfred corrects her: “It is not a bundle of straw,” he remarks, “it is a sheaf of wheat. . . do you see a basket down on the grass?” Josephine nods and even “touches it at the same time with her finger” (64). The picture, entitled “The Two Little Gleaners,” is also reproduced within the book, and it becomes a kind of model for a shared reading and seeing process. Josephine learns to touch while Elfred learns to see. Although this collaboration might suggest the kind of charity or even “maternal benevolence” of sentimental fiction contemporary with this book, it also may indicate a moment of childhood inventiveness, of believing that a book and a picture might be more than “a sheet of paper.” Including the very image that Elfred is viewing within the pages of *Elfred* the codex proposes that sighted or sight-impaired readers alike may use multiple senses to see and in fact to read the book and its sheets of paper.

Even so, the narrator persists in offering morals that might situate Elfred as more stock figure than multisensory, inventive reader. Elfred and his pictures generate so much attention and pleasant companionship because Elfred does not complain about being unable to see with his eyes but rather “amus[es] himself with such pleasures as were within his reach” (72). Yet “The Two Little Gleaners” in its description and in the reading of its description suggests a divide in the text between its visible, direct didacticism and other possibilities for interpretation. If Elfred can see images within the picture that Josephine herself must touch in order to see, then perhaps this book, *Elfred, the Blind Boy*, too, may be read by means other than the eyes. For example, when Josephine reads out loud to Elfred, “she paid close attention to the sense . . . when she was reading, and a person who does so always makes the sense more apparent to the hearer than one who runs over the sentences in a rapid and careless manner, and without thinking of the meaning” (89). Reading with the eyes, the “moral” or “sense” of *Elfred* may superficially reveal narrative, moralizing asides that hold Elfred up as an example to his reading peers. But, as Elfred and Josephine demonstrate, seeing with the eyes is only one way of reading. The “sense” of the story may be the words visible on the page, the “bundles of straw” at first apparent to the eye. Yet scenes of reading with other “senses” besides sight in the book may also propose that morals may be gleaned not from words but from how we choose to read them.

Elfred's impairment, then, disrupts both the conventional timeline of child development as well as conventional didactic strategies and reading processes. By the end of the story, Josephine and other children deliberately bring their pictures to Elfred so he can explain them "in his own way." The children describe the visual components of their pictures to Elfred, directing his finger across the page, and in turn Elfred

[led] them to see a great deal more in the picture than they would otherwise have done . . . it was by conversations as these that Elfred explained to the children the pictures which they brought him, and enabled them to see a meaning and expression in the various groups of figures which they contained that they would not have discovered without. (149-154)

Elfred's manner of seeing imbues the picture with both depth and texture, with meaning beyond what is visually apparent. Describing, for example, the "thatched sheds, and the driving rain, and the trees waving in the wind, and . . . the three-pronged pitchfork," Elfred's method of reading transforms a "sheet of paper" to texture, movement, and sharpness. Though the moralizing words of the text march across the page in plain sight, *Elfred* proposes that "meaning" may exist simply in expanding one's capacity to see.

These dimensions of the page are perceptible only when reading occurs as a collaborative process of patching together senses, instead of as an autonomous, self-contained act. Midway through the book Elfred meets Park, a boy who cannot hear or speak. The two become friends—a friendship, however unlikely, based largely on reading together. Park and Elfred enlist the services of Josephine and another friend Jane Sophia, and "thus there was a sort of copartnership formed of four persons":

Whenever Elfred got a new picture, Jane Sophia would take it home and write . . . a story about it. Then she would paste the picture into Elfred's book, and transcribe her story . . . Then, once a week, Josephine and Park would go to Elfred's house, and have a meeting to read the story . . . It was always necessary that Park should sit where he could see . . . as to Elfred, it made no difference where he sat . . . [and] Josephine would always keep the place with her finger while she read [aloud]." (90)

This "copartnership" defies the image of the individual, autonomous reader not so much to benefit Josephine, the able-bodied reader, or Jane Sophia, the able-bodied writer, but rather to suggest that the "script" of a two-dimensional picture and its accompanying words may conjure reading practices that defy what the form book intends or even believe possible. Indeed, *Elfred, the Blind Boy and His Pictures* mirrors this co-authored and co-read partnership, inviting its audience perhaps to envision the reading process not just as the viewing of surface morals but as coming into physical, tactile contact with the book as a textured, layered, and collaborative object.

Actual books for sight-impaired readers in the nineteenth-century were also tactile objects. Evidence of these books appears in several instances of mainstream children's literature, as in the brief anecdote entitled "Mittie, the Blind Girl," published in an 1864 issue of *The Little Pilgrim*. The young, blind Mittie travels to the United States from London in search of an uncle, her designated custodian while her parents finish missionary work in India. Instead, Mittie lands in a school for the blind, "a beautiful retreat which nature and art have combined to adorn for those whose eyes tell not night from day, nor beauty from deformity" (344). At the school, Mittie "was well educated in all that the blind can learn. She was taught how to read the Bible, from which her mother

had read to her, by passing her small fingers over the curiously raised letters.” Mittie even learns to write: “Strange thoughts that small head used to frame, for that unsteady hand to jot down in its crooked wanderings over the page” (345). Mittie is reunited with her family when her mother visits the school and Mittie recognizes her voice.

The story of Mittie begins much like *Elfred, the Blind Boy* and like many other narratives for children: with a lesson. “Did you ever thank God for your eyes, dear children?” the narrator begins. These eyes are “two bright, clear, happy eyes that He has given to drink in the pleasant sunshine, the beauty of the flowers, the glory of the rainbow, and the sweetness of your dear mother’s smile” (342). “To drink” – not simply to “see” – the pleasures of one’s surroundings is the benefit and work of these “happy eyes.” The first lines of the story detach “sight” from “eyes,” suggesting that one does not just see with the eyes, but also incorporates that which one sees as part of her own constitution, her own being.¹⁰⁷ The ability to see may be such a sensory power as to allow a child reader to incorporate all she sees within her own body, but these opening lines may also suggest that there may exist other ways of seeing, of incorporating and internalizing the world within the body. For when Mittie learns to read the tactile books at her new school, she first “was taught how to read the Bible, from which her mother had read to her.” Her mother’s voice, like the “sweetness of your dear mother’s smile,” reads back these “curiously raised letters” to Mittie from within. Indeed, when Mittie’s mother arrives at the school, doubting she has really stumbled upon her daughter, it is Mittie who recognizes her mother, not the mother who identifies the face of the child. “At the lady’s first word,” the narrator reports, “Mittie had sprung from her position, and throwing back the curls from her face, turned wildly from side to side” (347). The reading process, beyond “opening” Mittie’s eyes to the world of the book, exposes to her what was already there: the sound of her mother’s voice.

At first, the internalized voice of the mother may seem to confirm what Richard Brodhead identifies as the “enveloping presence” of the parental figure, one who compelled behaviors such as disciplined, able-bodied reading from children and who was a key force in public school reform of the early to mid nineteenth-century (20). Mittie’s experience might seem an anomaly in this reform and the variety of literatures it generated. Orphaned and cloistered in an overcrowded school for the blind – not in the mainstream public school – Mittie’s achievement of some measure of literacy is portrayed as a “curious” and “crooked” path toward reunion with an originary maternal figure. Yet taking *The Little Pilgrim*’s brief vignette into account of nineteenth-century education reform for all children, even sight-impaired students, proposes that internalizing the maternal figure is less important than internalizing the normative “script” of the book. The intersections of blind reading and mainstream reading in children’s literature like “Mittie, the Blind Girl” and other texts suggests that the genre actively cultivated able-bodied reading practices not by segregating blind education and blind reading, but rather by using the figure of the blind reader to idealize standards of able-bodied reading.¹⁰⁸ Whereas the readers in *Elfred, the Blind Boy* form a “copartnership” of literacy far from schoolroom walls and even in opposition to what their mothers believed possible, the literature of blind education argues that one must read autonomously in order to truly “read.” In several texts throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, images of the blind learning to read appear in books written for seeing children, and these books use the blind reader to model ideal reading processes. Beyond standing in for able-

bodied reading, or facilitating able-bodied development, these books, “curious” though they were, actually contributed to the formation of a standard of reading, one that was made “natural” and “normal” only when individuals who could not see achieve it.

The very concept of educating the blind – and of teaching the blind to read – coalesced as part of the broader public school reform movement of the 1830s and 1840s. Horace Mann, the “greatest champion” of northeast education reform, was also a key figure in envisioning and establishing the first school for the blind, an “institution” designed not simply to house blind individuals but instead to prepare sight-impaired students to participate in and contribute to the seeing world (Trent 53). Inspired by physician and fellow reformer John D. Fisher’s visit to European schools for the blind, Mann presented the idea for a school for the blind to the Massachusetts General Court in 1828, and in 1829 the legislature approved what was then called the New England Institution for the Education of the Blind (Trent 54, “Annual Report” 5).¹⁰⁹ Samuel Gridley Howe enthusiastically took on the role of the school’s first superintendent. In an essay entitled “Education of the Blind,” published in the *North American Review* not quite four years after his appointment, Howe outlines his vision for the school and for a shift in perceptions of “the blind” in the United States. Reading, he maintains, is a key strategy of accomplishing both shifts. Howe argues that the blind are currently “crushed by a sense of humiliating dependence” on charitable donations and alms from a seeing population, who until now has taken minimal interest in the plight of this “unfortunate class of people.” For this “class,” Howe envisions an educational program that will “enable them to exert their own faculties, to develop their own powers” (21). Being able to read independently – not being read *to* by another – is Howe’s proposed, singular path to “ability.” “The books for the blind,” Howe notes, “have attracted much attention, and excited much observation”; indeed, he continues, “It is a beautiful and most valuable invention, which enables the blind ‘to look/Along the pages of a book’” (40).

Howe’s first order of business as superintendent was to raise funds to produce and standardize a format of printed books for sight-impaired readers. In 1833, only one book specifically printed for the blind, *The Gospel of St. Mark*, existed in the United States.¹¹⁰ Yet by 1839, two years after Laura Bridgman was admitted, the Perkins school could publish a brief “history” of U.S. printing for the blind in its annual report.¹¹¹ In this report, Howe describes a process of embossing a raised alphabet onto one side of heavy paper in order to produce books that sight-impaired students could read by touch. Of the sixty regular students at Perkins in 1839, fifty-two could read these tactile books by tracing each letter with one finger. Reading occurred not only through identifying the shape of the raised letters on the page but also through cultivating the sensitivity of the fingertips to be able to read efficiently. The shape of the letters themselves, however, also had to be altered to be more easily distinguished from one another. Howe developed a style of roman lettering, called Boston line type, that he argued was the most legible to touch because it offered the sharpest definition of the letters while also maintaining the greatest diversity between each letter’s shape. The alphabet, in this formulation, was conceived as a three-dimensional system, transforming the “sheet of paper” into rows of sculpture-like letters read in relief.

In developing his pedagogy and print for the blind, Howe also visited European schools and witnessed sight-impaired students reading tactile books, maps, and completing geometry problems. Institutions in Paris and Edinburgh, however, were more

willing to embrace a different sort of lettering: symbolic systems like that developed by Louis Braille in 1827 (Harris 1986, 24). Blind students in European schools – many of whom, upon graduation, became teachers in schools for the sight-impaired – reported that symbolic systems were actually easier to read by touch than the roman alphabet. The Royal Scottish Society of Arts in Edinburgh even hosted a competition to develop the most legible system of embossing for tactile printing. Contestant entries favored the “arbitrary,” symbolic system, making the claim that the roman letters “were unsuitable for tactile reading, and were made even more cumbersome by the quirks and idiosyncrasies of standard English spelling” (Harris 1981, 14). The larger aim of the contest was to use the winning system to supply the sight-impaired with a “permanent literature,” one that would be standardized in institutions on both sides of the Atlantic (Gall 18). Although the Edinburgh competition received more entries for a symbolic system, roman lettering pulled ahead in the end in both Europe and the United States. Education reformers and instructors like Howe made the argument that a symbolic system, one used only by sight-impaired readers, for which the seeing world supposedly had no use, would further isolate a population already marginalized by the designation “blind” (Harris 1981, 15).

Privileging the roman alphabet over the symbolic system seems also to privilege a dominant, able-bodied perspective on the alphabet that sought to standardize blind reading not only among all schools for the blind but also between seeing and sight-impaired readers. In the 1839 report, Howe admits that he weighed the advantages of a roman lettering system against those of a symbolic one, “hesitating” over “whether to use a new phonetic alphabet, or a series of stenographic characters, or the common alphabet.” He “adopted the latter,” he writes, with the condition that he would “reduce the bulk of each letter to the minimum size which the blind could read,” and continue to improve both the format and the shape of the roman characters until “the greatest possible diversity of shape” could “be given to the letters” (20, 23). In this way, the concept of a tactile alphabet slightly adjusted the shapes of the letters to the demands of their readers’ fingertips. Furthermore, as Howe notes, the roman letter also had the advantage of “being more easily read by seeing people” (23). A version of the New Testament and a book of Psalms were some of the first texts to issue from the embossing press. Howe decided which books were worthy of reprinting in such an expensive and bulky format, and selected popular texts like a copy of the New England Tract Society’s 1825 *Dairyman’s Daughter*, a mid-century version of *Guyot’s Geography*, and a copy of the 1886 printing of Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy*. Perkins disseminated copies to schools for the blind that had extended as far as Kentucky and Missouri (“Book Making” 121).¹¹² At requests of former students, Howe even sent copies of the books to individuals who did not have access to a “library for the blind.” In one published annual report, Howe reproduces a request from a former student now living in New Orleans in order to show “how the blind appreciate books” and the fact that, because these books represented the foundation of literacy for the blind, this former student was able to write this letter herself (“Fifth Annual Report” 15).

The tactile books seem an anomalous offshoot of standardized educational reform for seeing students, as well as of the larger “culture of reprinting” that dominated the U.S. press during this time period. Yet *Blind Alice and Her Benefactor* (1868), a book for seeing readers, suggests that tactile books served not as a contrast to seeing reading but as

a means of achieving able-bodied reading for the seeing reader, the sight-impaired, and for the “actual” child reader. Although the material of tactile books for the blind may have defamiliarized the shape, style, and form of the book, it is through their very “curiosity” that conventions of children’s literature were made familiar to able-bodied readers. *Blind Alice and Her Benefactor*, written by M. J. McIntosh under the name “Aunt Kitty,” begins by orienting the reader’s own view into the story: with a frame narrative. “Good morning, my young friend!” the story begins, as the narrator, Aunt Kitty, includes the reader into her group of little followers, Harriet, Mary, Susan and Lucy. “I am the very intimate and confidential friend of all these little girls,” Aunt Kitty assures her reader (7-8). Aunt Kitty invites the reader to take a walk past little stone cottage where the healthy young Alice and her parents live, and offers to tell the reader their story, “which I think will make you feel almost as much interested in them as we do, and you will then understand why we like them so well, and visit them so often” (9). The frame, similar to what Crain identifies as the “window-like page” of the book, not only organizes our view into the book, but also becomes a thematic way of looking and of seeing throughout the story (3). We first see Alice through a frame. When Harriet contracts scarlet fever, Aunt Kitty takes her to visit her grandfather, passing by Alice’s house along the way. As Alice waits to see her friend from the road, Aunt Kitty “raised Harriet from the pillow on which she was leaning in a corner of the carriage, to the window, that she might see Alice.” This view frames Alice’s “red cheeks and smiling face and lively motion” (11).

Yet the next time we see Alice, she too has contracted the fever, and Harriet, fully recovered, wants to lend her some books. Harriet receives a gift of money from her grandfather and at first plans to purchase an expensive wax doll. But she soon changes her mind, deciding instead to buy some editions from the Boys’ and Girls’ Library. She is certain that her decision will benefit her as well as friends like Alice who might borrow the books; after all,

I could only play with my doll now and then, and if I kept it all to myself I should soon grow tired of it, and . . . it would soon get spoiled or broken, and I should have nothing left for my money. But it will take me along time to read through so many new books; and when they get spoiled or torn up, if I remember what was in them, I shall still have something for my gold piece. (12-13).

The books, according to Harriet’s thinking, will be an investment more durable than any knowledge or experience gained from playing with dolls. In this economy the materiality of the books matters little – they will get “spoiled or torn up” – but by then Harriet will have internalized their contents.

But fever blinds Alice before she can borrow Harriet’s books. At first, Aunt Kitty suggests that the family disguise Alice’s blindness from the sick girl by tying a bandage around her eyes, imitating a perception of blindness as darkness or as closing one’s eyes. But as Aunt Kitty confides in Harriet, Alice “can see no more than you can of a dark night when you wake up at midnight with your windows shut and your curtains down” (22). The “windows” might be closed for Alice, but Harriet offers to read her new books to Alice while she rests with the bandage over her eyes. Harriet “will read for [Alice], and when [she] grows weary of listening,” Harriet “will tell you how anything looks which you want very much to see.” Rather than being dismayed by this new way of “reading” and of “seeing,” Alice is grateful: “I will see all that you see and . . . shall see [it all]

though your eyes. Will that not be pleasant?" (33). Harriet becomes a kind of frame for Alice's "reading" and "seeing" in a "copartnership" much like the one envisioned in *Elfred, the Blind Boy*. Frames become one convention that both organizes the narrative and organizes its reading. Alice sees her surroundings and reads Harriet's books through the frame of her friend, while the "actual" reader enters the book through Aunt Kitty's storytelling frame.

The frame becomes detached when the bandage is taken off of Alice's eyes and she realizes that she has indeed lost her eyesight. After the bandage is removed, Alice "kept her eyes shut for a little time, then opened them suddenly, and turning them first toward the window, looked slowing around the room." Still uncertain, Alice even asks the doctor if the windows are shut or the curtains drawn, preventing her clear vision. When Alice realizes her condition, "the smile had gone from Alice's lips, and the color from her cheek . . . she was looking very pale and very sad . . . her hands hung down in her lap, and she did not speak a word" (44-5). Upon removal of the bandage, Alice becomes an observed figure, not a reader or listener, through the "frame" of Harriet's own eyes, but a silent, colorless figure blocked from the light of the window. This scene links Alice's lack of sight to a conventional belief that blindness is equivalent to the lack of light, to darkness, and it also detaches her from the frame of narrative, transforming her not into co-reader but into that which is read.

It is only when Alice's blindness is revealed to Alice herself that the "problem" of reading also emerges. Alice was an avid and skilled reader before her illness, and after the bandage is removed Aunt Kitty makes plans to send her to "the Institution for the Blind in B---," under the care of "Dr. H---, the most benevolent of men." Alice is rendered illiterate; her "copartnership" with Harriet may no longer stand in the place of Alice reading "for herself." Here, Aunt Kitty also addresses her larger audience: "Perhaps my little readers never heard of these institutions for the blind . . . there those who are perfectly blind are taught to read, write, sew, and do many fancy works, which it would seem to us quite impossible to do without sight" (34). The acknowledgement of blindness brings with it the imperative to read. The "perfectly blind" are both those who have no eyesight, but also those who enact blindness perfectly, who do learn to read, write, and sew. Additionally, when the frame of the window is severed from Alice's view, and when the frame of Harriet's seeing perspective is detached from Alice's own subjectivity, Alice herself is transformed into a reader, or at least into a potential reader, one who learns to do so independently, "perfectly," and against all odds.

After spending several months at the Institution for the Blind in B---, Alice returns home, and we first view her "standing at the open window, looking healthy and happy" (51). Anyone gazing upon her, Aunt Kitty notes, "would never have believed they saw a blind girl," so completely has the Institution for the Blind restored Alice's vivacity and glow. Ironically, it is only when we see her reading that we are able to see her as a "blind girl." Alice is eager to show Harriet the books "they have taken the pains to make for poor blind people" that she brought home with her from the school:

There were only a few books – I was sorry to see so few – but they were so large that [Alice] could not well have carried any more. Having laid them on the table, she opened one and we saw that the letters were large, and so raised from the paper that the blind could feel their form, and thus distinguish them as readily as we can distinguish the letters in ordinary print by seeing them.

As part of the display of her books, Alice also reads them, show[ing] us how this was done, for passing her finger over the lines of a sentence on the page which she had opened, she read it as correctly as anybody could have done. (52-3).

Alice displays simultaneously her newfound version of literacy in the form of reading aloud “correctly,” and also displays her “perfect blindness” in the form of the books themselves, “so large” and containing letters “so raised from the paper” that they are easily distinguished from books for seeing readers. Alice can read just as well as “anybody” in part because of skillful tracing of the letters and lines, but also because these books, produced at the “pains” of “Dr. H---“ himself, put roman letters into print rather than the symbolic systems that were more legible to the fingertip. The narrative poses Alice’s literacy as just as important as the ability of her friends, family, and the reader to witness this literacy. The material of these books seems to matter differently than the material of the books that Harriet decided to purchase at the beginning of the story. Like the wax doll, the books for the blind required physical contact with the body in order to be used according to their “script.” Their pages, thick though they were, may have been more subject to the kind of wear and tear that might render a doll “spoiled or broken.” The physical contact that Alice must make with her book in order to read it – and to be seen reading it – attests to her autonomous reading, but it also attests to the way in which autonomous reading requires an individual, seeing or not, to come into contact with books, perhaps even eventually to “spoil” or “tear them.”

Another children’s book printed for seeing readers in the 1860s incorporated the tactile alphabet into its very codex. *George, the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Boy*, attributed to Eliza Osborn, tells a story similar to Alice’s, in which a young child becomes blind, deaf, and no longer speaks after suffering scarlet fever. Like Alice, George must again learn to read, and the material of his story and the binding that contains it represent the intersection of the physical and literary “scripts” of the book. The story begins on Christmas morning, an ideal day, it seems, for witnessing George and his siblings at their healthiest. The boys “beat their drums and marched about, pretending they were men”; the sounds, sights, and aromas of Christmas make of the first few pages of the book an abundances of sensory images. Yet by the age of five George becomes ill and “it was found that he must live in a darkness and silence of which none of his kind friends had once thought. He was blind, and could scarcely hear the affectionate words that were spoken . . . afterwards he entirely forgot how to talk” (7-8). George’s “affliction excited compassion,” and a Mr. Chapin of the Pennsylvania Institute for the Instruction of the Blind “became deeply interested in the deaf, dumb, and blind boy” and “felt anxious that he should be taught to talk and read with his fingers” (11).¹¹³ As with Alice, George’s impairments are immediately met with the imperative to regain a measure of literacy through remaining sensory capacities. Although schools for the deaf existed in the northeastern United States, including one established in Philadelphia in 1788, George is sent to a school for the blind.¹¹⁴ The narrator even compares him to “a little girl named Laura” who, “like George, can neither see, nor hear, nor speak” but who, thanks to a devoted teacher at the Boston “institution,” “was taught to spell, to read, and to talk with her fingers” (19). The narrator admits that the reader may be surprised to know that those who can “neither see, nor hear, nor speak” might learn the alphabet and indeed turn it into

a form of communication. But “presently,” the narrator assures us, “you shall learn how it may be done” (11).

In the pages that follow, we learn that students like George and Laura acquire literacy through a variety of strategies – not all of them confined to the schoolroom – and that literacy may be used for a variety of purposes, not just to read books. For example, when a teacher from the Pennsylvania school first visits George, he “could not play like other children,” but was

amusing himself with exercises of his own invention, and she stood a few minutes watching his movements. He moved fearlessly through the room, turning swiftly round, extending his arms, tumbled about on the floor, placed his feet together, and jumped backwards and forwards over the door-sill; leaped off from the chairs; turned himself round the arm of the settee, and climbed in and out of the kitchen window. (12)

In “Education of the Blind,” Howe notes his disdain for European schooling for the sight-impaired that does not seek to educate and reform all aspects of the student, including intellectual and social behaviors. Howe speaks openly of his distaste for various behaviors then associated with blindness that went uncorrected in Europe, including the “light staring” and repetitive rocking that further indicated disability (39). Howe viewed in the European institutions the failure to educate the “whole person,” and educational goal that the overall nineteenth-century school reform movement advocated. One of George’s first lessons is to channel this “energy,” these “exercises of his own invention,” into activities more common in his seeing peers, like riding a rocking horse and using a fork. George also learns tactile, “useful” activities, such as how to “wind cotton and make lamp-lighters and . . . [to] string beads without making mistakes” (12-3).

“Reforming” and rechanneling the behavior of George’s “own invention” is the first step in literacy acquisition as well as the first step in making George – who seems so “shut off” from his world and from the world of the text, so much so that the narrator assumes readers will not believe that he could learn to “talk and read” – legible to the “actual” reader. After George visits the Pennsylvania Institution, the narrator directs the reader to a set of inserts published at the end of the book showing “two alphabets”: a foldout illustration of the “finger alphabet” and a thicker page embossed with the alphabet “studied by blind children.”¹⁵ “It was necessary,” notes the narrator, that George “should learn both of these alphabets” (15). Then the narrator tells us how:

Now you will learn how he studied the two alphabets. The teacher would place the first finger of his right hand on A of the blind alphabet, that he might feel its shape. Then she would shut his hand, so as to form A as you see it in the deaf and dumb alphabet. When he appeared to know this letter she taught him B. (15)

George, the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Boy instructs the reader on how George learned to read, and asks the audience to try to read in the way that George read. The book invites readers to experience the alphabet not just as a sight-impaired reader might, but as a material, physical object that compels or “scripts” non-normative literacy practices in order to make them familiar to the seeing reader. The narrator asks the reader to envision other possibilities for shaping the body to the alphabet, another possible “gymnastics,” this time for head and hands.

But before George fully understands either alphabet, he loses both parents to illness. No longer able to fund his education, George lands in an almshouse. At this point,

the materiality of the book begins to matter for other literacy scripts, in particular on the level of literary “meaning.” The narrative breaks off when George is orphaned, only to reopen on another Christmas morning. Children find among their “topmost” present “tiny books with red and blue covers, on which, in gold letters, could be seen the words ‘George; the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Boy.’” The book references its own material as a gift copy, a “topmost” gift shaped for children’s hands and eyes, calling further attention to the physicality of this book and the way in which its physical matter intersects with its “meaning,” “sense,” or “purpose.” For after “the presents were distributed,” the story of George – the one we are reading in the present – “excited interest, and in the midst of Christmas merriment, tears of compassion fell for the afflicted orphan” (24).

These tears, assures the narrator, can be transformed into something even more useful: a “collection” that is taken up for George, one that funds his re-entry into the Institution for the Blind. The gift book demonstrates that the child reader, helpless as she might feel in the magnanimity of George’s plight, can actually do something: she can read. Moreover, she can treasure the gilt copy of her book and turn it into money by telling George’s story to those more capable of helping him: “I will tell them of his sufferings, and I will beg them to act for me” (22). Whereas Harriet views books as transitory vehicles for invaluable and inalienable knowledge, here we view the book valuable because of these materials, capable of teaching even the blind to read. For George returns to the school and learns to read and even write and draw on “the slates that are used by the blind” (29). The gift book reproduces some of his drawings, which are of building facades that he measures out on his slate. In this way, the book traces George’s path to literacy from the very first raised “A” to the “proof” of his accomplishments in the form of his drawings. “Do you think,” the narrator asks, “if you took pencil and paper into a perfectly dark room, you could sketch as well as he does?” (30). Like Alice, George becomes a “perfectly blind” student not because of his impairments but because, in the world of this book, he has enacted blindness perfectly, and left tangible proof in the book that taught him to read.

The gift copy of *George, The Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Boy* “teaches” George to read by funding his time at the Pennsylvania Institution. Like Alice, this fictionalized student may have seen the alphabet and even learned to read before becoming blind from fever. Yet other students – those whom Alice called the “poor children who never did see” – required books of their own to both learn their letters and learn to read them. At Perkins, Howe printed at least one primer designed specifically for these students. *The Blind Child’s First Book* (1852), printed in Boston line type, is divided into two parts, the first with large, widely spaced embossed letters and the second graduating to syllables, words, sentences, and paragraphs—a format not unlike that of popular primers for seeing readers printed during this time.¹¹⁶ *The Blind Child’s First Book* also seems to be an experiment in both teaching sight-impaired students how to read and in how to craft books for these readers. Howe developed the Boston line type to be as efficient as possible, defining “efficiency” as how many letters could fit in one line, and how many lines could fit on a page, while still being the size and shape most legible to students’ fingertips:

Having decided to use the common alphabet, slightly varied . . . I endeavored to reduce the bulk of each letter to the minimum size which the blind could feel.

With this view all the unnecessary points, all the mere ornamental flourishes were

cut off . . . the bulk was further reduced by using a thin paper expressly prepared, and by reducing the height of the face of the type. In this way it was found the books might be very much reduced in size. (“Sixth Annual Report” 25)

Because of such maneuverings – because “the book” was more than just a series of uniform pages – Howe even had to develop his own printing press for the embossed lettering, one that would allow him to experiment with different sizes, spacing, and legibility to his students. The genre of the primer for seeing readers began with the twenty-six letters splayed widely across the page, sometimes taking up its entirety. In *The Blind Child’s First Book*, however, this convention would have made the books unmanageably large. Instead, Howe begins with a larger version of the embossed alphabet on one side of the page, then gradually reduces the letters in size and places them closer together.

Once the reader “know[s] all the letters,” and “can spell some words,” it then it is time “to put the words together” (5). “Let us study as hard as we can. We must feel of every letter. We must remember how the letters are placed.” At first, the letters are widely spaced: “What is the reason that all the letters are not close together?” asks the primer, and answers “Oh! I know now; it is to show how many letters belong to each word” (7-8). After mastering these lines, the student turns to pages on which the letters become shorter and narrower, condensed on the page and requiring the kind of trained sensitivity that frequent contact with the book cultivated in readers’ fingertips. “The letters are close together,” observes the primer, “You must study them closer” (15-6). The pages and letters of the book imitate the reading practices that they “script” for the student. Before internalizing the book and the reading process, the reader must first conform her body to the shape, size, and organization of the book itself.

Understanding the order of things – where things belong – was especially important, in Howe’s view, for Perkins students. Remembering “how the letters are placed” may be “the way to learn how to spell,” but it is also, as a later lesson in *The Blind Child’s First Book* suggests, important that students transfer this way of ordering letters on the their surrounding world. “Have a place for everything,” the primer instructs, “& have everything in its place”—a lesson we might find in a seeing child’s primer, but one that Howe embellishes for his particular audience. “Blind children must always put their things in their place, then they will be sure of finding them” (16). Learning to read, for blind students, was also learning a way to order, remember, and “see” the world around them. The book acts as a device that allows the students to “see” the world as an arrangement of letters, of tactile things, that must be kept in place in order to make sense. In this way, students could approximate the sense that they lacked:

God gives men eyes, & ears, & nose, & mouth, & fingers, to learn about things.

These are called senses. To blind children God gives four senses; to seeing children five senses. Thank God that he has given you four senses; he might have given you only three; or he might have made you like the fools, or the crazy men, or the beasts. (16)

According to the logic of this book, blind children’s ability to read a passage like this is what may separate them from “the fools, the crazy men, or the beasts.” Books for the blind taught students not just to read, but also to order the world around them in a process akin to reading, to keeping things in the right order so that they spell a recognizable word.

The Blind Child's First Book, it seems, wavers between presenting the standard fare of mainstream nineteenth-century children's primers and such "lessons" designed especially for the sight-impaired reader. However, the primer does seem to rely on metaphors and devices that would, in a different context, assume a sighted reader. For example, in describing the animal kingdom, the primer notes that it will be easier to remember all of the animals since God has arranged them "in great families & classes"—a world also organized according to a correct "order" of members. But some animals are harder to comprehend because they "are so very small, that they can neither be felt by the hand, nor seen by the eye" but can only "be seen with an instrument called a microscope, & are of many different kinds" (30). At first, the primer seems to acknowledge the limitations of all bodies, some, though seeing, unable to see the smallest creatures on earth. The microscope may seem worlds away from a sight-impaired reader's comprehension, but in many ways perhaps functions much like the tactile books. The microscope, an assistive device for those who already see, enhances the sense of sight in the same way that the tactile books enhance a sense of touch, allowing readers to "see" the shapes of the world around them. In addition, the microscope, like the tactile book, scripts the physical shape of sight: unidirectional, gradually brought into focus, all while the viewer hunches over one or two individual lenses. Both the tactile book and the microscope give form to sight, and make reading visible. Both generate an internalized way of looking because they are physical devices that position the reader as the center of the organization of the material worlds around them, from raised letters to the animal kingdom. At the center of this order, the perspective around which all these things are organized, is the reading self.

This unexpected mention of the microscope might bring us, perhaps as unexpectedly, back to Plumfield. On "Composition Day," the Plumfield children present the wayward but admirable Dan with a microscope. Placing it proudly in his hands, the students watch as Dan's "face lighted up" as he fumbles over a thank you. Although the boys saved their precious egg money to buy the microscope, Dan credits the Bhaers with the gift, silently acknowledging that their pedagogical program of educating the entire self, head and heels, has made this gift possible. The students take turns looking through Dan's "spy glass," observing the "plumage on a moth's wing," a strand of hair, the "veins on a leaf, hardly visible to the naked eye," and even the "skin on their own fingers, looking like queer hills and valleys" (744). Putting their fingers beneath the "wonderful little glass," the children observe a self defamiliarized, a new texture and dimension to the seemingly most familiar of things. Like Elfred's pictures, Alice's tomes, George's alphabets, and *The Blind Child's First Book*, the microscope makes visible what was previously unseen. The microscope and tactile book ask what other "curious" ways of seeing and reading might exist in the nineteenth century. Like the tactile book, the microscope illuminates materiality where there apparently was none, bringing texture, dimension and roundly organized space almost in contact with the eye, so close that these curiosities just might seem to touch back.

Conclusion

January 2017 marked twenty years since the publication of Rosemarie Garland Thomson's *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature*, a text that has been foundational both to this dissertation and to the overall development of the fields of critical and literary disability studies. Focusing on the mid nineteenth century through the early twentieth, Garland Thomson's work establishes disability as a representational category of analysis. *Extraordinary Bodies* also examines a finer topic of disability analysis: how representation comes to be, how it "attaches meaning to bodies" (5). Studying disability in American literature, according to Garland Thomson, means examining how the concept of disability functions not only as an attribute of a character in a literary text, but also as itself a strategy of representation. Rather than a property of the body itself, "disability" is instead a "product of cultural rules about what bodies should be or do" (6). Only when bodies function "differently" from a perceived "norm" are they labeled as "disabled."

Critical and literary disability studies scholars have upheld in particular this aspect of Garland Thomson's argument, situating "disability" not as an individual bodily attribute but within culturally and historically specific mandates and regulations on normative or non-normative bodies. The most recent issue of *Early American Literature*, a special issue on Early American Disability Studies, is in part an example of the reach of Garland Thomson's formative study and of subsequent work in literary disability studies throughout the past decades. As editors Sari Altschuler and Cristobal Silva explain in their introduction, literary disability studies can reframe our approaches to the archives of early American literature as well as our methods of reading these archives. The "critical tools" that delineate the "intersection of early American literary studies and disability studies" allow us to view conventional and unconventional texts as examples of how "categories of ability and impairment" organize historical instances of community and national exclusion and inclusion (20).¹¹⁷ The issue as a whole illuminates the progress of literary disability studies over the past twenty years (or longer), reflecting on both on the "location" of disability in early American literature as well on the status of literary disability studies as a field.

The past twenty years of critical and literary disability scholarship, then, have seen revisions of *how* we locate and study disability. Indeed, where critical disability studies prefers the term "impairment" to describe the status of cognitive, physical, or sensory capacity, even this term may not quite mark exactly where disability exists in early American literature, or, in the case of this dissertation, in nineteenth-century literary history. Resistance to confining "disability studies" solely to identifying and contextualizing impairment perhaps stands as one of the field's greatest strengths. Altschuler and Silva cite Michael Bérubé's recent study of narrative form and intellectual disability, in particular his argument that, as the editors quote, disability studies "can involve *ideas about* disability, and ideas about the stigma associated with disability, regardless of whether any specific character can be pegged with a specific diagnosis."¹¹⁸ These "ideas about disability" may not be overtly stated or referenced in a narrative, and may emerge in their inverse, or when "ideas about ability" are also proposed, outlined, and disseminated in and through a text.

In this dissertation I have examined what I view to be literary and textual ideas of disability and ability in order to understand the ways in which these “ideas” are transmitted at the seemingly most innocuous of locations: the conventions that structure narrative and genre form. I have tried to demonstrate that attending to these conventions can expose and problematize larger structuring devices of literary history and analysis that define texts as “canonical” or “anomalous,” “representative” or “difficult.” In examining the conventions of narrative “meaning,” in Robin Bernstein’s words, I also attend to the conventions of the physical book itself to illuminate possibilities for a disability studies perspective on book history. Doing so reveals the ways in which the book in both content and form acts as a disciplinary device for the reading body. Doing so also opens up the study of “anomalous” or “difficult” texts to readings of how resistant compositional or narrative practices propose different “ideas” about “what bodies should do and how they should behave.” Indeed, a disability studies perspective has the capacity to explore how the representational strategies that make the book so familiar – its plot trajectories, compositional practices, structure, and syntax – may also be strategies of marking some bodies as familiar and of marking others as “anomalous,” as outside the parameters of community, national, or even literary belonging.

This perspective also may explain how the materials that make the book so familiar – its ink, pages, illustrations – may also “script” “anomalous” configurations of the reading body. As my final chapter demonstrates, nineteenth-century embossed texts for the blind defamiliarize the book, making “curious” and perhaps even “strange” both the physicality of the book and the physical act of reading. Boston line type and other versions of the raised roman alphabet transform the conventions of the codex from two-dimensional white paper and black ink to a three-dimensional blend of shadows and timeworn yellows. Embossed books also compel unexpected and unfamiliar reading behaviors; these books required sight-impaired students to cultivate their sense of touch, to trace delicately in order to read. In this way, these texts and their reading practices call into being unconventional relationships between the body and the book, asking readers to touch in order to see and removing the contrast between white and black that structured the conventional nineteenth-century book.

But, as I have tried to argue throughout this project, the conventional book was perhaps never a familiar object to begin with. Nor were embossed books the only ones to invite physical contact between the body and the book. Recent studies of the body and the book in American literary history highlight the affective, sensual, and erotic components of reading that bring the two into contact. Michael Milner, for example, distinguishes between nineteenth-century ideas of “good reading,” or of maintaining a “division between the body, or reading self, and the text,” and of “reading badly,” or of reading “addictively, desultorily, too bodily . . . with utter absorption, with a loss of distance, with a loss of self” (7, xiii). “Good” reading served to preserve the self, to hold it aloof from the form and content of the book. Similarly, Gillian Silverman seeks to reinvest the body into acts of reading, identifying the “sensual reality of the book itself” as a “necessary corrective” to a longstanding view of reading as a “disembodied” act (7, 9). Working more closely at the point of physical contact between the body and the book, Silverman argues that reading “evokes specific perceptual and motor responses that prepare the subject for interacting with concepts as if they were real objects in the world” (9). She writes that “the bodily correspondences and material interactions of reader and text blur

the boundaries between the two,” transforming the book into a “technology of intimacy” (11,19). In this way, reading has the power to initiate imagined closeness with distant and physically removed individuals and communities.

Milner and Silverman view the body as a stable point of departure from which to enact relations of reading with the book and with communities beyond the book. This point of departure is one from which an individual might choose to be misled by “reading badly,” or by enacting “fantasies of communion,” decisions all the more enticing because of the ability to return to a stable, rational self. Milner pits the autonomous, rationally reading self against the desultory, “utterly absorbed” self that is enveloped by the book, neglecting, for example, those child readers whose absorption became key to literacy and to childhood by the end of the nineteenth century. As I have tried to show, autonomy and self-control (or their perceived lack) may be tools too blunt for understanding the relationship between body and text. As my reading of the slave narrative, for instance, and of the production of nineteenth-century literature more broadly demonstrates, autonomous authorship and reading rarely were stable conditions of literary production and reception.

Silverman writes that “the book seems particularly appropriate for merging with the body: its bound heftiness and soft, hidden interior approximate the human condition, while its anthropomorphized qualities (spine, header, footnotes, etc.) create a plane for imagined bodily equivalence” (11). This equivalence, then, facilitates intimacy and indeed “merger” of body and book as well as of reader and broader reading community (Silverman ix, 62). Yet not all bodies and books “merge” so seamlessly. The spine of *Little Men* perhaps attempts to act as a corrective or contrast to the spine of “stock” characters like Dick Brown, but more likely attempts to disseminate “ideas” about ability and able-bodied reading for which such characters have apparently little access or use. In taking up those formal components, like the stock character, that seem too familiar to withstand analysis, I have tried to demonstrate that the same structuring principles that mark books as conventional may be analogous to those that mark the body as “normal” or able-bodied. And rather than examining scenes of “merger” between the body and the book as instances of the book’s familiarity, I have suggested that often when the body comes into contact with the materials of reading and writing – when, for example, an injured soldier touches a pencil to wounded flesh in order to (mis)identify the source of pain – the body and the text make each other unfamiliar. As Melville’s “Tartarus of Maids” narrator realizes, spellbound by the mechanical reproduction of paper at the mill, intimacy can in fact breed unfamiliarity.

Thus what perhaps seems most “familiar” about both form and content of the book – its shape and its conventions – are also those things that are most open to analysis from a disability studies perspective. In their recent studies of book history, Augusta Rohrbach and Andrew Piper position the nineteenth-century book not as an outdated, historically frozen antiquity, but rather as a crucial genealogy of “synergistic” expansions of what it means to read in the twenty-first century (Rohrbach 7).¹¹⁹ In each chapter here, I have brought canonical texts in conversation with “anomalous” ones to suggest that the conventions that make a canon may be revised when “anomalous” bodies read, produce, or come into contact with books. The “anomalous” books I discuss throughout bear traces of resistant and creative reading and writing practices that, I maintain, are not segregated from mainstream literacy or broader literary histories, but are integral to them. Moreover,

examining the contact between these bodies and books exposes “ideas about dis/ability” even when “impairment” may not be discernably present. Disability calls into being alternate physical configurations – alternate “perceptual” and “motor” behaviors – of reading, both during the nineteenth century and today. But literary studies also proposes more than one way of “reading” disability. From a twenty-first century vantage point on disability, we might view the nineteenth-century not as a discrete, chronological precursor to the technologies and methods of reading available today, but rather as part of continuous revisions of what and how we read.

Twenty years ago, *Extraordinary Bodies* asked us to consider the dependence of “normative” on “non-normative,” and today we might think about the ways in which canon-building also relies on some texts to be “conventional” or exemplary, marking others as anomalies falling outside its reach. But another legacy of Garland Thomson’s work also asks us to see the possibilities of those who wrote and who read both within and outside of this reach, whose “extraordinary bodies” generate extraordinary possibilities for how we think about the book. When Moses Roper dipped the strangely inked letters of his falsified passport in the river, he shows us not so much the fragilities of the text, but rather the ways in which life and death actually depend how a text is read. The document could signal at once a passport to freedom or a return to enslavement. Paper and ink do hold up to their dip in the river, just in a form that is unrecognizable to a literate person yet still can be “read” or interpreted by one like Roper, who at the time did not read. Like Roper’s body, represented as simultaneously “white” and “dark,” the submerged passport represents resistance to being read conventionally. This point of contact between Roper’s body and the text represents the eventual feat of reading for oneself, even if discernable letters, shapes, and colors have been muddled. Indeed, Roper’s narrative, like so many other coincidences of the body and the book in the nineteenth century, perhaps suggests that only when conventions become unfamiliar can we begin to read.

Introduction

¹ The story was reported in *The Virginian-Pilot* and on NPR and CNN. See Connors.

² In her introduction to the 2004 edition of *Revolution and the Word*, Davidson asserts that the book “follows Frederic Jameson’s work in understanding the ideological potentials of the novel *as a genre*.” For example, “if the convention of the seduction novel genre is an unhappy ending, then one could say that it is the unhappy ending itself that permits the exploration of desire—like the corpse in a mystery novel: without it, there’s no motivation for the plot” (37).

³ As Davis notes, “the constellation of words describing this concept ‘normal,’ ‘normalcy,’ ‘normality,’ ‘norm,’ ‘average,’ ‘abnormal’—all entered the European languages rather late in human history. The word ‘normal’ as ‘constituting, conforming to, not deviating or differing from, the common type or standard, regular, usual’ only enters the English language around 1840” (24). In discussing the relationship between statistical thinking and cognitive and bodily norms, Davis demonstrates that “a symbiotic relationship exists” between the two. “Both bring into society the concept of a norm, particularly a normal body, and thus in effect create the concept of the disabled body” (30).

⁴ Chronological delineations of the nineteenth century make take the shape of Eric Hobsbawm’s “long nineteenth-century,” ranging from 1789-1914. In terms of specifically U.S. nineteenth-century studies, literary critics have sought other organizing frameworks besides the temporal or chronological, arguing, for example, for a reevaluation of the conventional split between pre- and post-1865 American literature. See Hager and Marrs.

⁵ Although I examine texts in which impairment is not obvious or does not even seem to be present, I do not attempt to attenuate the category of “disability” by applying it to every configuration of “the body.” Defining “disability” in terms of its presence or absence in literature is a task that wavers between two extremes. For example, Altschuler avoids both narrow criteria for determining the “presence” of disability in a novel and the “flattening” and attenuating criteria that attributes disability to all corporeal variations (248).

⁶ For a detailed discussion of the relationship between disability and the kind of thinking and processing that the concept of metaphor implies, see Vidali.

⁷ Many studies of disability in literature rely on literary methods of analyzing representation. Garland Thomson “interrogates the conventions of representation” to “unravel the complexities of identity production within social narratives of bodily difference (5). Mitchell and Snyder begin *Narrative Prosthesis* by “address[ing] the meanings assigned to disability as a representational identity in narrative art” (1). Emily Russell examines texts that represent “the encounter between an anomalous physical body and the body politic” that require “narrative strategies to make sense of the unfamiliar” (3). Drawing on Garland Thomson’s definition of “extraordinary bodies,” Altschuler predicates her argument for historicizing disability on whether or not disabled characters are “present” or “memorable” in early American literature (251).

⁸ Michael Davidson argues that work in the field of critical disability studies published during the past five years is especially “characterized by alliances and intersections across disciplines and methodologies” (434).

Chapter 1

⁹ Warner writes that “national culture began with a moment of sweeping amnesia about colonialism” as “Americans learned to think of themselves as living in an immemorial nation, rather than in a colonial interaction of cultures.” See “What’s Colonial about Colonial America?” in *Possible Pasts*, 63.

¹⁰ Dillon writes that reading the novel “in relation to the singular frame of the nation state obscure[s] what is perhaps most interesting about the early American novel—namely, its complex relation to a variety of colonial, post-colonial, and transnational geopolitical formations that were constitutive with respect to the vexed and often less-than-coherent formulations of the ‘domestic’ in the early national period” (79, 98)

¹¹ See Dillon, “The Secret History of the Early American Novel,” Goudie, *Creole America*, and Berman, *Creole Crossings*.

¹² Tracing the term through the *OED* as well as the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, Dillon observes that the etymology of “creole” points to a shifting evaluation of the importance of geographical location of birth relevant to racial descent” (“The Secret History of the Early American Novel,” 95).

¹³ See Cathy Davidson, 128-130, 134, and 185.

¹⁴ Rosemarie Garland Thomson suggests western culture has viewed women as the ultimate and perhaps original disabled figures because their bodies are understood as “defective departures” from the valued standard of the male body. See Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*.

¹⁵ For a discussion of pregnancy, unfinished bodies, and the generative capacity of women, see, Rosemary Betteron, “Promising Monsters: Pregnant Bodies, Artistic Subjectivity, and Maternal Imagination.” *Hypatia* 21, Winter 2006, pp. 88-100.

¹⁶ The potential rearrangement of family structures can also be seen when Eliza facetiously suggests Mr. Boyer might be a better match for her mother than for her.

¹⁷ See, for example, Barnes, *States of Sympathy* and Davidson, *Revolution and the Word*.

¹⁸ Klepp writes that, even as the new republic transitioned from viewing childbirth and rearing as “procreation” to “reproduction,” readers would be familiar with terms indicated pregnancy euphemistically, such as “big with child” (110).

¹⁹ “Extracts for “Letters from an American Farmer,” *American Museum* 1 (March 1787), 239-241.

²⁰ See, for example, Jennifer Rae Greeson, *Our South: Geographic Fantasy and the Rise of National Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2010.

²¹ Discussed in Jeffery A. Clymer, *Family Money: Property, Race, and Literature in the Nineteenth Century*. Oxford UP, 2013, and Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*. U of Pennsylvania P, 2004, p. 93.

²² See McCrea, 126.

²³ Almost every discussion of Sansay's *Secret History* suggests that Sansay herself was something of a "coquette" in her extramarital relationship with Aaron Burr. What little is known of Sansay's biography comes largely from references to her character and her social status in Burr's own correspondences. See, for example, Michael Drexler, "Introduction." Sansay, *Secret History*. 10-57, Aaron Burr and Matthew L. Davis, *Memoirs of Aaron Burr with Miscellaneous Selections from His Correspondence*. New York, 1836, Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995, and Philip Lapsansky, "Afro-Americana: Rediscovering Leonora Sansay." *Annual Report of the Library Company of Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: The Library Company, 1993.

²⁴ Drexler explicitly states that in her usage of the term "creole," Sansay is referring to "white inhabitants of European descent but born in the colonies" (Sansay 65 n. 3).

Chapter 2

²⁵ Lucy Maddox has argued that that these two sketches offered proof to British readers of Irving's talent as well as of his mastery of a distinctly "American" topic with the "wonderfully striking and sublime" material provided by the history of the Indians" (40).

²⁶ Although some read Irving's sketches of life in Europe as themselves derivative of British forms, portraying Irving as "an American writer among the ranks accused of defiling the well" in his own "piece meal" book manufacture (Sizemore 157), I suggest that Irving sketches for readers not simply stories or images but also the process and methods of U.S. authorship.

²⁷ See Todd, 100-3, and Fluck, 118. In this chapter I read Irving's sketches as introducing the twinned projects of American literary nationalism and the racialized dispossession of Native American land and bodies, projects that Fluck views as almost conventional of historical fiction.

²⁸ As Martin Brückner notes, maps of America during the first decades of the nineteenth century only expanded in their representations of U.S. territorial holdings, never contracted (239).

²⁹ Black Hawk himself did not read, write, or speak English as his dominant language and likely had little exposure to the histories that Irving, Cooper, and Sedgwick narrated in the decades before the Sauk warrior dictated his. Black Hawk's narrative would not typically be considered within the genre of "historical fiction," yet might be figured as composed in response to some of the proposals put forth in the genre, countering dominant tropes like the "vanishing American" and the exclusively oral culture of Native American narratives.

³⁰ An 1835 review of *Life of Black Hawk* begins with the statement "This book is a curiosity; an anomaly in literature" (Art. IV, 68). Black Hawk dictated his narrative to an Indian/French translator, who passed it along to a white publisher, and the mediation of his text has generated critical controversy beginning with scholars such as H. David Brumble and Hertha Wong, who view such collaborations as barriers to textual analysis (Brumble 18). David Murray and Arnold Krupat focus instead on the collaborative process itself as an entry point into the text (Murray 1, Krupat 31-33). Susan Scheckel views "Black Hawk" not so much as a person but as a product of nineteenth-century textual collaboration and of the readership and celebrity it earned him (113). As I will

show in this chapter, I am less interested in attaching an “authentic” voice to Black Hawk’s narrative than in attempting to understand how the text represents and enacts processes of communication, narrative, and authorship in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

³¹ The power of the convention of “author as assembler” persisted into the nineteenth century and even seeped into U.S. receptions of “actual” histories, like Benjamin Drake’s 1836 *Biography and History of the Indians of North American*, which the *North American Review* praised not necessarily for content but for the author’s “skillful hands” that “collect and arrange” the “meagre and detached fragments” of Native American history (301).

³² Romero, 107. This convention gained currency in Dippie’s reading of G. Harrison Orians’s *The Cult of the Vanishing American*. In *The Vanishing American*, Dippie estimates that “some forty novels published between 1824-1834 included Indian episodes, constituting what Orians terms a “cult of the vanishing American” (21).

³³ See also Rasmussen.

³⁴ Also quoted in Fessenden, 25.

³⁵ Wald discusses “official” narratives of personhood that circumscribed native American bodies through legislation like *Cherokee Nation v. State of Georgia* (1831). Here I show how fictive representation of land regarding land possession seals Anglo-American early national claims to the land.

³⁶ Natty is “removed” only to reappear four more times, in the remainder of the Leatherstocking tales. Early national U.S. authors returned to the subject matter of the Native American in their work in part because of its “American” tone, but also perhaps because the Native American was, in fact, still there. I am not trying to suggest that the only way Native American voices could be heard and legitimated is through writing, but rather trying to demonstrate the priority that Irving, Sedgwick, and Cooper placed on writing as a form of communication. O’Brien demonstrates that “crucial work has been happening within the tribes themselves, and a burgeoning community of Native and non-Native scholars promises to recast our understanding” of the vanishing American trope (xv). Brooks examines Native writing to push against the vanishing American theory.

³⁷ Gould also suggest that Magawisca’s recital prefigures the massacre at Bethel (76).

³⁸ In his reading of Magawisca’s devotion to the Fletchers, Mark Rifkin observes that Magawisca embodies her emotion, “corporealizing her feelings [and] portraying emotional wounding as physical assault” (118).

³⁹ When Magawisca appears at the Fletcher household to arrange the meeting with Hope, she refuses to identify herself by her one remaining arm. The narrator notes that “a savage feels more even than ordinary sensibility at personal deformity” (189).

⁴⁰ As early as 1835 the *North American Review* questioned the authenticity of supplemental elements – including preface, dedication to General Atkinson, and some historical detail – of the *Life of Black Hawk*, but concludes that “no one but a Sac Indian could have written or dictated such a composition” (69). Brumble, Krupat, Murray, Scheckel, and Wong read *Black Hawk* through the tensions of “authentic” and mediated voice.

⁴¹ Hertha Wong and H. David Brumble agree that “Nativeness” is distorted through intervention of LeClare and Patterson, but maintain that a careful reader can find marks

of an authentic narrative within the text. Scheckel examines Black Hawk's narrative "as nineteenth-century readers encountered it," in order to understand how ideas of "the Indian" and of "authenticity" are constructed and deployed throughout the text (114).

⁴² See Wyss, 5 and Round, 160-165, and Scheckel Chapter 5.

⁴³ Karen Woods Weierman argues that *Hope Leslie* treats three Indian removals: that of the Pequot war in the seventeenth-century; the eighteenth-century removal of the Stockbridge Indians from Sedgwick's own hometown; and the Cherokee removal occurring while Sedgwick wrote *Hope Leslie* (63).

⁴⁴ Again, in these locations Sedgwick may be fictionalizing the Stockbridge settlements and the removal of its local Indian inhabitants (Weierman 63).

⁴⁵ See, for example, Emerson and Fetterly.

⁴⁶ See also Hurst, 657 and Traister, 113-4. As Michael Warner notes, "patriarchy" during both Irving and Cooper's time was a "frankly avowed system of hierarchy in which the normative order of gender and sex is oriented to the succession of fathers," thus characterizing the early national "home" as a masculine, not yet feminine, space ("Irving's Posterity" 776)

⁴⁷ Castiglia, chapter 6, Gould, chapters 2 and 3, Emerson, Hankins, and Strand

⁴⁸ Philip Gould, for example, argues that *Hope Leslie* renovates masculine republican ideologies of virtue via Puritan history by injecting an early national version of companionate marriage into a colonial setting and thereby "enacting female power through the disembodied ethos of female virtue" (131).

⁴⁹ In doing so, Sedgwick may be in conversation not only with the early male historians of colonial America but also with the historical fiction writers of her own decade. In particular, *Hope Leslie* responds to the Leatherstocking tails of Sedgwick's contemporary James Fenimore Cooper, historical fiction in which land exchange is often predicated on the exchange of Anglo- and Native-American female bodies.

⁵⁰ I hope that I can argue that Sedgwick's version of Hope's disembodiment is different from the ideology of "true womanhood." Marianne Noble writes that this ideology "implicitly idealizes a non-corporeal woman," but predominantly according to coverture (22). I hope to show that Sedgwick removes even marriage as necessary to "redeem" women from corporeality and into the "idealized non-corporeal woman."

⁵¹ Insko reads a connection between the jail from which Hope has just freed Nelema and the Governor's home as Sedgwick's narrator writes "we hold ourselves bound by all the laws of decorum, to give our readers a formal introduction to the government-mansion, and its inmates" (149).

⁵² Emerson and Strand.

⁵³ David Bernstein writes that "though the 'Black Hawk Wars' involved just a few of the Indians living along the Mississippi River watershed, these conflicts epitomize commonly held understandings of Indian-white relations in the region: a violent clash of cultures in which Indians valiantly, but unsuccessfully fought against Euro-American expansion" (606). The *North American Review* essay on *Life of Black Hawk* maintains that "the details of this petty, dangerous [Black Hawk War] are scarcely more important, inasmuch as they led to no important result" (71).

Chapter 3

⁵⁴ See Shakespeare, 216. The social model has its origins in the “Fundamental Principles of Disability” published by the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPAIS) in 1976.

⁵⁵ Scott, 137-8. Gayatri Spivak, however, concludes that the subaltern cannot speak at all. They are in fact the “mute” subjects that Scott suggests can be unearthed from the “dominant transcripts” of their oppressors. In “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988): 271-215.

⁵⁶ This bind is particularly difficult when studying the experiences of disabled, enslaved African-American women. Herndl’s work seeks to recover the “invisible history” of disability and the lives of enslaved African American women, paying attention to how these women “dealt with a cultural discourse that not only refused to recognize their illnesses, but in many ways denied their physicality, even as it paradoxically refused to grant them an existence that went beyond that physicality” (554).

⁵⁷ Kim Nielsen shows that “racist ideologies defined male and female African Americans as fundamentally inferior specimens with deformed bodies and minds who were best confined to slavery” (41).

⁵⁸ “Description,” 2.

⁵⁹ Foster cites Marion Starling’s influential study of the slave narrative, concurring that when referring to “the entire spectrum of writings commonly included under the rubric ‘slave narrative,’” there are, indeed, over six-thousand still in existence (21).

⁶⁰ Prince’s narrative went into three editions during the first year of its publication. For each edition, Pringle added new supplementary material. He posed this material in response to two libel trials in which he was accused of defaming the character of Prince’s final owner John Wood.

⁶¹ James Olney writes that “the narrative lives of the ex-slaves were as much possessed and used by the abolitionists as their actual lives had been by slaveholders” (51). Lindon Barrett writes that “the African American body becomes defined by spectacular physical pain, a circumstance that makes them appear in the [slave narrative] most fully confined within the limits of their bodies, bodies transformed into entirely self-referential, unbearably discrete and intensive artifacts, violently denied the possibility of extending into the world of the selves, the voices, the language, the mind that they house” (430). Of *The History of Mary Prince*, Rauwerda writes that the “agency ascribed to [Prince] in this narrative may be more representative of the agendas of external creators of the text than of Prince herself” (397). Todorova argues that the abolitionist voices in *The History of Mary Prince* “both silence and authorize her voice” in an example of Homi Bhabha’s concept of mimicry as “one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power” for representing its subjects in ways that silence them” (286). Whitlock writes that when we read a slave narrative “amidst its supplementation” the “authentic” author and her narrative design are less apparent. She suggests Prince’s voice be read relationally, as a narrative identity constructed in its interactions with her interlocutors (13). Allen writes that “although in his Preface [Pringle] attempts to emphasize Prince’s humanity to promote antislavery sentiments” ultimately he “fails to fully acknowledge

the humanity that he hopes the text will affirm” (510). Larrabee’s reading of *The History of Mary Prince* “desire[s] to recover the voice of Mary Prince [and] . . . to find what exists embedded in that voice—her agency and hence her lived ‘freedom’ even while bounded by the barriers and inhumanities of a slave system” (453).

⁶² See Sekora, especially pages 497-511.

⁶³ Though his first reading lesson with Sophia Auld is truncated by her husband’s assertion that literacy would “unfit [Douglass] for a slave,” Douglass realizes the value of this “accidental lesson”: “it gave me,” he writes in his *Narrative*, “the best assurance that I might rely with the utmost confidence on the results which . . . would flow from teaching me to read” (33). These “results” imply the freedom and “fitness” that illiteracy ostensibly prevents.

⁶⁴ Prince recalls that the results of learning to read with the Moravian missionaries mainly just makes her feel guilty for sins that she did not know she was committing, until she read the Bible. She notes she “never knew rightly that I had much sin til I went [to the Moravian church]” (29).

⁶⁵ Strickland’s name appears in print in Prince’s text only in a letter appended by Pringle in which a group of women, including Strickland, sign their names to verify that they have viewed the scarring on Prince’s back as verification of the severity of her treatment during slavery.

⁶⁶ “The Bechuana Boy” appeared in *African Sketches*, a collection of reflections on Pringle’s time in South America, and was published in 1834, the year of Pringle’s death.

⁶⁷ Finseth, 25-28. Finseth notes that the publication of Roper’s narrative “signaled a broadening of the American front in the campaign against human bondage” (25).

⁶⁸ Roper also “passes” several times as possessing Native American blood. Recalling a confrontation during one of his many escape attempts, he writes “I . . . [said] I was partly Indian and partly white, but I am also partly African; but this I omitted to tell him, knowing if I did I should be apprehended” (65).

⁶⁹ See Jackson, especially page 251-253.

⁷⁰ As seen in a first edition at the University of Virginia’s Small Special Collections Library (London, 1837).

⁷¹ It is interesting to compare Roper’s description to a scene from Douglass’s *Narrative* in which he recalls learning his letters in the Baltimore shipyards: “When a piece of timber was intended for the larboard side, it would be marked thus—“L.” When a piece was for the starboard side, it would be marked thus—“S.” A piece for the larboard side forward, would be marked thus—“L.F.” When a piece was for starboard side forward, it would be marked thus—“S.F.” For larboard aft, it would be marked thus—“L.A.” For starboard aft, it would be marked thus—“S.A.” I soon learned the names of these letters, and for what they were intended when placed upon a piece of timber in the ship-yard. I immediately commenced copying them, and in a short time was able to make the four letters named” (43). This “anatomizing” of the alphabet has liberating consequences for Douglass, helping him to learn to write the letters that he used to pen his own story. In Roper’s description, however, the letters almost become the “instrument[s] of torture”, as if, for example, when Roper recalls how his master “put me in the box *d*, and shut me down in it,” the letters themselves confining his body and his representation of this body within his narrative.

⁷² “Man” does appear in one entry under “Flogging” (“Flogging of a young man), but male bodies are never indexed on the basis of their gender under “M” or “B” (214).

⁷³ See Ward, 97.

Chapter 4

⁷⁴ As Etcheson demonstrates, the provisions of the Kansas-Nebraska Act not only allowed residents of these territories to vote on the issue of slavery (permission threatened by the pro-slavery interests of neighboring states) but also repealed the 1820 Missouri Compromise that marked Missouri as the northernmost limit of the extension of slavery throughout the United States (11-14).

⁷⁵ Even though Etcheson’s study suggests that slavery was only part of the platform mobilized by both northerners and southerners in the debates over Kansas and Nebraska territories, a superficial issue cloaking deeper concerns about popular sovereignty and diminished government involvement, slavery characterized much of the rhetoric of all parties involved in these debates (2-4).

⁷⁶ As Robinson urged his Lawrence, Kansas audience: “We must not only see black slavery, a blight and curse to any people, planted in our midst, and against our wishes, but we must become slaves ourselves . . . it is for us to choose for ourselves, and for those who shall come after us, what institutions shall bless or curse our beautiful Kansas.” (quoted in Etcheson, 3 and in Frank Wilson Blackmar, *The Life of Charles Robinson: The First State Governor of Kansas*. Topeka: Crane & Company, 1900.

⁷⁷ In the *Complete Short Stories of Herman Melville*, Jay Leyda categorizes “Paradise of Bachelors and Tartarus of Maids” as a diptych, viewing the two pieces as “morally contrastive pictorial pairs” (Winter 18). More recently, Aaron Winter argues that “we must view the diptych as a unified whole rather than a contrastive or reiterative pair” (31).

⁷⁸ The term “counterpart” may refer to the correspondence of the Tartarus of Maids to the Paradise of Bachelors or, in keeping with the material connections between the two locations, “counterpart” may also refer to the copy of a legal document, perhaps one of the Templar’s documents.

⁷⁹ Critics have noted that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *Dred* (1856) reacted not just generally to U.S. slavery and the slave trade but more specifically to 1850s legislation like the strengthening of the Fugitive Slave Law and, in the case of *Dred*, the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the resulting violent conflicts known as Bleeding Kansas. See Newman.

⁸⁰ Lisa Herschbach writes that one of the “dominant motifs” of the “literature of prosthesis” in the last decades of the nineteenth century is “disability as a moment of collective and individual rebirth.” The disabled veteran, she writes, “stood as testimony to the violence and pain caused by the war while at the same time he defined the redemptive aspects of suffering as understood by Americans on both sides of the conflict” (24). Though less has been written about Confederate veterans, Jennifer Davis McDaid’s research seems to confirm similar experiences in Confederate soldiers returned from war, in “How a One-Legged Rebel Lives”: Confederate Veterans and Artificial Limbs in Virginia,” in Ott, 119-145. Susan Schweik’s work develops the connection between disability and its visibility to a non-disabled audience; she writes that “in the

figure of the war veteran, manhood and impairment coexisted in uneasy conjunction” (149).

⁸¹ Boggs, 41. “Witnessing” disability could take the form of simply seeing a soldier with an amputation or prosthetic limb, or of testifying to the presence of disability in an “official” capacity, such as in reports required by the first military draft (1863).

⁸² Boggs notes that the Disability Pension Act of 1890 was passed “as aging veteran’s disabilities continued to increase, and introduced disability as a key term in the official federal lexicon” (41).

⁸³ Lisa Long argues that the prosthetic device and processes of rehabilitation that dominated postbellum medical research and advancements only served to expose the myth of an “original” bodily integrity (7-8). Herschbach’s study details the marketing and technological advances in manufacturing prostheses that made artificial limbs more functional and aesthetically pleasing.

⁸⁴ Although Stowe may have been referring more to the affective dimension of feeling, one that transcends physical entrapments and vulnerabilities of the body, I hope to show that Civil War injuries and resulting poetic figuring of feeling blur this separation between a feeling “self,” or center of consciousness, and physically sentient body.

⁸⁵ In their introduction to *Words for the Hour*, Faith Barrett and Cristanne Miller note that “an astonishing variety of people turned to poetry in order to respond to the events of the war” (3). That, as Alice Fahs points out, a nineteenth-century audience would not have noted the distinction between high and low or “popular” writing, only broadening the expanse of “Civil War literature.”

⁸⁶ Kete writes that the experience of reading poetry in the nineteenth century depended on the poet’s ability to “deploy the grammar and lexicon of shared emotion against what seemed to be the normative forces of things like alienation, in which individuals are otherwise separated by distance, death, or time” (23).

⁸⁷ As Glenn Hendler and Mary Chapman observe, standard literary histories assert that the eighteenth-century “man of feeling” gave way to “thoroughly feminized” sentimentality (7). Hendler and Chapman demonstrate, however, that men continued to participate in sentimental culture. Here, I focus on the ways in which a nineteenth-century version the “man of feeling” took shape through the historical and cultural particularities of the Civil War and the toll the war took on the feeling self.

⁸⁸ Uses of the term “shattered” abound in one section of one volume alone: “An anecdote entitled “Incidents of Fort Donelson Fight” reports that a “private in the Eighteenth Illinois Regiment was struck in the thigh by a twelve-pound round shell . . . the limb was of course terribly shattered, rendering amputation necessary” (82-4). A “Touching Incident” tells of a “young Wisconsin boy” who had his “arm shattered by a ball from our gunboats” (84).

⁸⁹ Roberts concludes that *The Rebellion Record* “animated and armed patriots with convention. . . by providing an easily identifiable and adaptable formula [that]. . . enable American citizens during the Civil War to become citizen-poets” (186). In the introductory pages to *Gunshot Wounds*, Mitchell remarks that with one exception “nowhere were [nerve injury] cases described at length in the textbooks and . . . their treatment was passed over in silence” (9)

⁹⁰ In his introduction to the first “modern edition” of the 1865 *Drum-Taps*, Lawrence Kramer remarks that the main difference between the April 1865 and October 1865 editions of the collection is the addition of the poem “When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom’d.” Even though several poems appeared in later editions of *Leaves of Grass*, according to Kramer Whitman “clearly conceived of *Drum-Taps* as a poetic monument to a unique historical event and therefore as a work that needed and deserved a place apart” (ix-x)

⁹¹ Boggs writes that “in putting himself in someone else’s place, Whitman walks a thin line between sympathetic identification and violent appropriation” (47).

⁹² A reviewer in *The New York Evening Post* writes that “a strong vein of poetic feeling pervades passages of these works, expressed some times rather wildly and even vaguely . . . often the thought of the author is too vaguely expressed (**page**). In *Donelson*, Melville uses temporal indicators like “later” and “Saturday morning at 3 A.M.,” indicators both specific and, indeed, vague that seem less to mark the passage of time in the battle but more to structure the pace of the poem.

⁹³ Faith Barrett writes that in *Donelson* and in “The Tartarus of Maids,” “Melville likens the deathly pallor of women’s skin to the whiteness of paper, here the ‘pale sheet’ streaming with tears” (266).

⁹⁴ Nina Baym argues that this “awareness” can be traced throughout Melville’s career.

⁹⁵ Hartman argues that Stowe herself presented scenes of extreme violence not to make readers see the horrors of slavery, but to distance them from these horrors.

⁹⁶ Bellis argues that reconciliation, for Melville, “has been blocked by the politicized struggle of Reconstruction, a continuation of the war in a different form. By 1866, the poetic form of *Battle-Pieces* seems not so much temporally incomplete as structurally flawed or defective, requiring a prose supplement to compensate for its deficiencies or omissions” (80).

⁹⁷ June Howard writes that “the notion of ‘sentiment’ as used in eighteenth-century texts is a crucial element of this modern moral identity,” and makes the argument that Smith’s work is essential in historicizing feeling well into the nineteenth century.

Chapter 5

⁹⁸ Throughout the novel, the phrase “Dick and Dolly” becomes almost a refrain, and Alcott rarely presents one without the other. The two are introduced within the same paragraph, and subsequently “Dick and Dolly” both fashion and present “Goldilocks” with whistles and “clamor” together to kiss her before she leaves (687, 678, 679), “Dick and Dolly do not write,” instead describing their observations of animal and insect behavior on “Composition Day” (739), grow carrots and parsnips together, and catch crickets and grasshoppers together while the other boys climb trees (722).

⁹⁹ According to *Jo’s Boys*, the sequel to *Little Men*, Dolly manages to leave Plumfield to study law in college, but “poor little Dick was dead, so was Billy; and no one could mourn for them, since life would never be happy, afflicted as they were in mind and body” (809).

¹⁰⁰ James Salazar briefly analyzes the relationship between nineteenth-century character formation and Demi's "human alphabet"; he argues that this scene makes "visible the ways that children were encouraged to imagine the formation of character as a process of reforming their bodies into the socially intelligible "characters" that comprised the orthographic and grammatical elements of a larger social language" (7)

¹⁰¹ I have referenced Rosemarie Garland Thomson's foundational assessment of the ableist dimension of liberal individualism, an assessment that continues to inform scholarship on nineteenth-century disability. In the context of mid to late nineteenth-century child readers, however, the liberal values of autonomy, self-possession, and self-government must actively be cultivated in the process of child rearing and childhood reading. Garland Thomson argues that these liberal values are not inherent at birth but must be inculcated through a larger social and cultural investment in the "normate" figure of liberal individualism. Childhood, then, provides a key site for investigating the methods by which these values are enforced. Reading, as Crain argues in a context outside of literary disability studies, is one of these methods.

¹⁰² Alcott concludes her description of Plumfield's students with the assessment that "boys at other schools probably learned more from books, but less of that better wisdom which makes good men. Latin, Greek, and mathematics were all very well, but in Professor Bhaer's opinion, self-knowledge, self-help, and self-control were more important, and he tried to teach them carefully" (544)

¹⁰³ Bernstein uses the term "visual mismatch" to describe a similar concept of the disjunction between "child" and "childhood" in "romantic racist" designations of African American individuals – regardless of age – as, in the 1844 words of Orville Dewey, "singularly childlike, affectionate, and patient." Similarly, Caroline Levander contextualizes discourse of the child within mid to late nineteenth-century evolutionary rhetorics that view the childhood development as progressing away from more "primitive" natures and indeed peoples. Both, however, view these timelines of childhood as racialized ones in which accurate and timely progress increasingly "whitens" the child and, at times, the individuals and materials with which it comes into contact.

¹⁰⁴ In a brief overview of nineteenth-century periodicals written for children, Diana Chlebek argues that "the physical format and the matter of distribution of the juvenile periodicals acted as a process of socialization" that especially flourished from the 1870s onward. The height of Laura Bridgman's fame – during the 1840s - anticipated the mid-century so-called "golden age" of children's literature, but accounts of Bridgman appeared in children's and other periodicals throughout her life. For a broader account of this "golden age," see Gubar, *Artful Dodgers*.

¹⁰⁵ The physician George Moore, in his widely read treatise on moral philosophy, even used Bridgman as an example of the creation of an interior self through the ability to read. His reflections on Bridgman even credit literacy with the "release" of her interior self from the material of the body. Referring to her in the 1845 edition of *The power of the Soul over the Body, Considered in relation to Health and Morals*, he holds up Bridgman as an example to all children: "How rapid the progress of this unshackled soul in divine learning! How rapturous its joy at the wonders of wisdom everywhere visible! . . . And what human child is not capable of the same expansion amidst the genial

influences of heaven, though here it may have been shut up in a body unfit for mind, or left at its birth apparently to perish” (51).

¹⁰⁶ Drawing from studies of British children’s literature, Claudia Stokes has called into question the critical observation that “nineteenth-century texts frequently constitute disability as a bodily marker of moral temperament, with the atypical body often serving either as a manifestation of a character’s moral depravity or as an expression of angelic unearthliness” (143). Stokes problematizes this observation in her reading of Maria Susanna Cummins’s *The Lamplighter* (1854) to make an argument with implications similar to the broader one I propose here, calling for a more developed concept of the representation of disability and the experience of impairment in nineteenth-century literature for and about children.

¹⁰⁷ Crain makes a similar argument about images of food and consumption associated with the letters of the alphabet, such as in the cliché “A is for Apple” (2000, 86-88).

¹⁰⁸ I am drawing this argument in part from a claim made standard by disability scholars like Garland Thomson, who argue that able-bodied practices like individual, autonomous reading are not “natural” or inherent in an individual but rather take shape in opposition to behaviors defined in opposition to the “normal.” As Garland Thomson writes, “the disabled figure” plays a “crucial role in establishing the boundaries of the normate American self” (41).

¹⁰⁹ Now the Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown, MA, and the Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia, PA.

¹¹⁰ Despite Howe’s energetic plans for the Boston school’s “library for the blind,” the first book of raised type for sight-impaired readers was printed at Philadelphia’s Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind. See “Sixth Annual Report of the Managers of the Pennsylvania Institution for the Instruction of the Blind,” 12.

¹¹¹ The history of U.S. printing for the blind more broadly is inseparable from innovations in tactile printing made in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe (see Harris), but here I will focus on the ways in which printing for the blind in the U.S. intersected with the material culture of literature produced for American children.

¹¹² In the 1860s, the various printing presses for the blind that existed in the northeast schools consolidated and relocated to the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky. Congress designated the Louisville location as the “official source of educational materials for blind students in the U.S.” in 1879. See “Dealer’s Description.”

¹¹³ William Chapin was principal of the Pennsylvania Institute from 1855-1872 (“Twenty-Second Annual Report” 22).

¹¹⁴ Throughout his writing on blindness, Howe views the sight-impaired as “better off” than the Deaf community; even an embossed primer, designed for young sight-impaired readers, includes the passage “a child who is born deaf, cannot learn to talk. It is better for you to be blind, than it would be to be deaf. You can hear your friends talk; you can talk to them; you can be happy in many ways” (*The Blind Child’s First Book* 9).

¹¹⁵ Before the Boston line type became the standard style of printing for the blind in the 1860s, the Pennsylvania school and the New York Institute for the Blind developed their own versions of the roman alphabet to put into press. Howe welcomed experimentation with legible embossed type outside of Perkins and indeed encourage sight-impaired

readers to familiarize themselves with a variety of different lettering styles. The Pennsylvania style is distinctive in retaining many of the curves that Howe purged in his Boston line type (“Tenth Annual Report” 25-7).

¹¹⁶ Compared, for example, to primers like *The Young Child’s First Book*, Albany, 1835, *The Young Scholar’s Primer*, Philadelphia, 1862, and *The Columbian Primer* printed throughout the nineteenth century. *A Cheap Primer for the Blind*, similar to *The Blind Child’s First Book*, was printed in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1874.

Conclusion

¹¹⁷ Altschuler and Silva read a two-page manuscript of a slave roster from Jamaica’s Somerset Vale Plantation, July 1787. The editors explain that “we are less interested in locating familiar forms of disability in the Somerset Vale roster than we are in understanding what the document’s organizational practices teach us about the appropriation of disability into the institutional structures of the Atlantic plantation economy as well as what this appropriation tells us about this history of disability” (20, 21).

¹¹⁸ Bérubé 19, quoted in Altschuler and Silva, 10.

¹¹⁹ In her study of the “material details” of nineteenth-century publications as well as the “form and content” of these literary texts, Rohrbach argues that *Thinking Outside the Book* is “as urgently concerned with the plight of literary studies in the twenty-first century as it is with the literature of the nineteenth-century” (7).

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