THE TRANSNATIONAL BODY IN AMERICAN LITERATURE, 1798-1846

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the City University of New York

2012

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the graduate faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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Post-revolutionary American authors, living under a relatively stable government and economy, turned their attention simultaneously inward and outward: inward to understand the strange workings of the human body, and outward to comprehend and control new territory. Focusing on the period between the Quasi-War with France and the U.S. War with Mexico, conflicts in which the United States asserted its international power, I identify several novels that dramatize the outward gaze toward new territory through an inward gaze toward the body. *The Transnational Body* puts embodiment into conversation with early American politics, not only because the body is a conventional symbol for the political sphere, but also because early U.S. policies, both domestic and international, were predicated on notions of race and sex, distinctions thought to be identifiable on the body. Flouting the expectation that embodiment is largely a personal, highly localized matter, this dissertation seeks a new route through early American

literature by interrogating what extraordinary fictional bodies express about early U.S. politics, particularly the politics of expansion and borders.

In each novel I examine, the author makes a spectacle of embodiment by representing unusual bodily events, such as dismemberment, cannibalism, metempsychosis, and mesmerism, that serve as indices of the young United States' uncertainty about its position in the world. By attending to the embodied domestic and international politics within each novel, I conclude first that anxieties about democracy, race, national stability, and expansion pervade early U.S. literature. Moreover, I argue that these novels help us trace a trajectory through the first half of the nineteenth century. I discern a shift from anxiety about the leveling effects of democracy in the late eighteenth century, through tentative experimentation with expansionism in the early nineteenth century, to anxieties about secession and faction that undergirded the rising nationalistic sentiments of the 1820s, ultimately to uncertainty about the imperialistic results of that nationalism. Throughout this trajectory, a constant remains: early U.S. thinking about politics, and especially about the relationship between domestic and international spheres, is intertwined with the body. *The Transnational Body* examines these imbrications between politics and the body.

Acknowledgements

I relish the opportunity to undertake a task I fear I have often failed to do enough in person: acknowledging the help I received as I wrote this dissertation and thanking those who provided it. My greatest debt is to my advisor, David S. Reynolds, whose scholarship has provided me with a model to strive toward and whose patient encouragement bolstered my efforts when I most needed it. Robert Reid-Pharr has the dual talent of putting me at ease with his humor, then unsettling my ideas with incisive questions, and I thank him for both. Duncan Faherty, whose course opened my mind to new possibilities in early American scholarship, has offered me tremendously valuable insight ever since; I am grateful for his mentorship and friendship. I could never have completed this dissertation without the insight and support of this inspiring committee.

I am also grateful for the assistance of many other members of the Graduate Center community. Hildegard Hoeller was generous enough to step in briefly as a thoughtful reader at short notice; Anne Humphreys and Marc Dolan also provided helpful feedback at critical moments. I also want to thank Steven Kruger and Mario DiGangi, whose stewardship as Executive Officers of our department made my time at the Graduate Center welcoming and pleasant. Finally, I thank my classmates for their cheerful company and conversation.

Also deserving of thanks are my colleagues at Baruch College, City College of New York, the Fashion Institute of Technology, Suffolk County Community College, and Duke University. Too numerous to name individually, those who have taught, tutored, and advised alongside me were a constant source of support and invigoration, both professionally and personally. I especially thank those who read and thoughtfully commented on portions of this dissertation. I am also grateful for the generosity and knowledge of the librarians at Mina Rees Library, the New York Public Library, the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Pennsylvania, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and Lilly and Perkins Libraries at Duke University.

Lastly, I deeply thank all my friends and family. They have supported and inspired me since long before my academic career began. My gratitude to my husband, Daniel Doogan, cannot be put into words. My brother, James; my sister, Theresa; and my parents, Susan and Charles, have sustained and loved me every day of my life. I dedicate this dissertation to them.

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Introduction

The U.S. Body Politic

Charles Brockden Brown was obsessed with doppelgangers. In a July 1804 issue of *The Literary Magazine, and American Register*, he explains his fascination, which he believes all people share. Resemblance, Brown claims, depends on the observer's familiarity with a given group. So, he explains, "a native African, before he is familiarized to white faces, conceives them all to be exactly alike, and confounds the Frenchman, the Turk, and the Chinese together" ("Personal Similitudes" 262). In the same way, people discern remarkable physical diversity among their neighbors and "countrymen" (261), while a "stranger, from a foreign country, sees nothing, at first, of this variety. Wherever he turns his eye, he discovers the national face; in every breath he hears the national accent; the gait and manner have an air of eternal similarity; but all this similarity vanishes on a closer inspection and longer acquaintance" (261-2). Physiological resemblance, in Brown's view, then, is not just familial and racial, as we might expect him to note, but also national—somehow the condition of being affiliated under the same national flag takes people from diverse hereditary backgrounds and renders their bodies identical. In his newspaper article and in the many lookalike characters that populate his novels, Brown offers a corporeal answer to what Homi Bhabha calls "the question of social visibility, the

power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression" (205).

Brown's preoccupation with bodily similitude speaks to two parallel concerns of the early republic: the consolidation of national identity and a fear of the leveling effects of democracy. On one hand, Brown's musings offer a corporeal correlate to Benedict Anderson's notion of "human interchangeability" (56), the condition through which unjust treatment by the metropole caused creole functionaries to begin identifying themselves as national compatriots. "Horizontal comradeship," identified by Anderson as a constant feature of national community (7), is represented in Brown's fiction as corporeal similitude.

On the other hand, while Brown sometimes uses resemblance to demonstrate affinities between characters, as with Constantia and her friend Sophia in *Ormond* (1799), physiognomic similarities just as often both initiate and symbolize the terror of losing one's individual identity, as in *Edgar Huntly* (1799). In *Edgar Huntly*, the title character slowly blurs into Clithero, an Irish servant whose behavior Edgar is trying to investigate. While Edgar appears to be surveying and scrutinizing Clithero, the line between the two of them gradually elides: everything that happens to Clithero in some way subsequently happens to Edgar. For example, Edgar happens upon the secret spring that opens Clithero's trick trunk. Just after Edgar violates Clithero's privacy by opening the chest, someone violates Edgar's privacy by opening his own very similarly operating trunk and stealing his letters. And, perhaps most obviously, Edgar begins to sleepwalk soon after hearing about Clithero's sleepwalking problems. As Sharon Cameron puts it, "a man chasing a sleepwalker becomes himself a sleepwalker" (9). Furthermore, both the man and the

sleepwalker are marked by class in *Edgar Huntly*. The privileged Edgar cannot separate himself from a troubled, foreign laborer, the very supposedly inferior suspect whose criminality Edgar presumes. Edgar's suspicions that a working-class foreigner is behind his friend's murder not only prove false but also precede his becoming indistinguishable from Clithero; in trying to isolate criminality within a class or nation of origin, Edgar inadvertently slips into criminality himself. His attempt to identify a killer results in the blurring of identities among classes and nations.

This slippage points to an anxiety about the social flattening Brown and his generation witnessed, or at least perceived themselves to be witnessing. Brown's post-Enlightenment era, according to political theorists like Louis Althusser, Antonio Gramsci, and Michel Foucault, achieved greater social efficiency and organization through popular sovereignty, that is, when power was diffused throughout the populace rather than consolidated within one ruling individual or hierarchy of aristocrats. As Foucault puts it, once the "kingdom" is displaced as the predominant system of socio-political organization, "The multiplicity of individuals is no longer pertinent, the population is. [….] The population is pertinent as the objective, and individuals, the series of individuals, are no longer pertinent as the objective, but simply as the instrument […]" (*Security, Territory, Population* 42). Brown's indistinguishable characters embody this shift from individual to population and reflect the social excitement and fear aroused by political revolution: when we can no longer distinguish people based on class status, Brown wonders, how can we determine difference? What remains of the individual after the ascendancy of the population? Brown's blurring of the lines between characters employs indistinguishability to embody the post-revolutionary restructuring of political and social hierarchies.

Charles Brockden Brown begins this study because he stands out as the most prominent early American novelist whose work has received ample attention for its treatment of bodies and politics—and for good reason. Brown's novels frequently defamiliarize the body through Gothic tropes and wild plot devices. In addition to his unruly number of lookalikes and characters who unaccountably merge into others, Brown showcases ventriloquists who can project their voices away from their bodies, bodies that spontaneously combust, and characters who hear disembodied voices. While on one level these corporeal defamiliarizations are staples of the Gothic tradition across national and temporal boundaries, scholars have insightfully charted their resonances in early U.S. politics. For example, Christopher Looby centers his reading of *Wieland* (1798) on the ventriloquism practiced by Carwin, the visitor who terrorizes Clara Wieland and her family by projecting his disembodied voice into their homes. Since Looby considers the "voice" the controlling metaphor of the emerging American republic, the lack of footing we have when invading each other's bodies and subjectivities through speech is an analogy for congruent political fears in the new republic. David Kazanjian focuses on a scene in which Carwin acquires the power of ventriloquism by hearing and mimicking the echoing calls of a Native American. Mastering the vocal iterations of what Brown calls the "Mohock savage" correlates with the early republican policy of Indian assimilation (Kazanjian 161). In Kazanjian's reading, Brown moves from the construction of a national identity (mastering the voice of the "Mohock savage") to America's entry on the international scene (Carwin's introduction to Ludloe).

This dissertation extends the insightful scholarship on Charles Brockden Brown to other authors for whom the body, the nation, and internationality are also intertwined.

Looby and Kazanjian graph the connections between the corporeal instability found in early American novels to the instability of early American domestic and international politics; not only does such work elucidate the body's interrelations with U.S. political concerns of the 1790s, but also this methodology can be usefully extended into the early nineteenth century, when U.S. engagement in the international arena became more confident, U.S. borders rapidly expanded, and the American sense of a national self began to solidify. This dissertation seeks to examine the imbrications between body and both domestic and international politics in a number of novels written and published in the United States, particularly in novels that have received little attention for their corporeal themes. For example, Carolyn Sorisio begins her interesting study of an American politics of the body as late as 1833, in part because of the shift from climate-based corporeal classifications in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries "to a classification of race based on invisible factors rendered 'real' by newer technologies and controlled by an increasingly elite group of specialists in the antebellum era" (17). This dissertation will demonstrate the importance of the body even prior to the ossification of biological notions of race and sex toward the mid-nineteenth century.

The start and end dates of this study, 1798 and 1846, represent watershed moments in both early U.S. foreign policy and early American literary culture. In 1798, the Adams administration publicized the XYZ Affair, which ended the young republic's historic coalition with France, justified the buildup of the American military, and marked the U.S.'s entry as a forceful player on the geopolitical scene. Incidentally, 1798 also marks the *Oxford English Dictionary*'s first record of the word "nationalism." The same year, Charles Brockden Brown, widely recognized as the first professional American novelist,

published his first novel, *Wieland*. Full of bodily allegories of early American national formation, Brown's fiction testifies to the overlapping concerns with the body and expansionist politics still relevant when Herman Melville, arguably the most celebrated author in the American pantheon, published his first novel in 1846, the year the U.S. began a war with Mexico over disputed territory. The gradual adoption of an expansionist international stance coincided with U.S. citizens' increasingly seeing themselves as national subjects rather than members of distinct but loosely related states. This dissertation mines the literature between Brown and Melville to unearth the ways in which strange fictional bodies represent the vicissitudes of simultaneous national consolidation and extra-national expansion.

To say the least, bodies that exceed the bounds of the ordinary—mutilated, identical, mesmerized, divided, and possessed bodies—pervade many works of early American literature. In the chapters that follow, I examine six examples of such extraordinary bodies: a self divided between two bodies in Leonora Sansay's *Secret History* (1808), amputations in the anonymous Spanish-language novel *Xicoténcatl* (1826) and in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827), metempsychosis in Robert Montgomery Bird's *Sheppard Lee* (1836), cannibalism and mesmerism in Edgar Allan Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), and disability in Herman Melville's *Typee* (1846). Flouting the expectation that embodiment is largely a personal, highly localized matter, this dissertation seeks a new route through early American literature by interrogating what extraordinary fictional bodies might have to say about early U.S. politics, particularly the politics of expansion and borders.

I have chosen to examine these six examples of exceptional bodies from among the many that populate early U.S. novels because these serve as particularly meaningful indices of early nineteenth-century American anxieties about democracy, racial identity, national stability, and imperialism. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century political discourse hinged on a series of related questions: how much power should be given to the individual, and how much power should a centralized state authority maintain? How can society maintain order if each citizen is empowered as sovereign? What is to prevent dissenting groups from duplicating the Revolution through secession? What is the status of adjacent territory, and what is the status of Americans who migrate there? The central assertion of this dissertation is that the extraordinary formulations of the body that recur in early American literature fictionalize these political concerns.

In addition to working through these concerns, constants in early U.S. culture, each novel fictionally reproduces a socio-political problem specific to its date of publication. In tracing the genealogy of bodily instability and containment across decades of American cultural production, this dissertation demonstrates, first, that anxiety about the boundaries among individuals and among nation-states is a constant in early U.S. culture. Secondly, comparing the works across time shows how the nuances of that anxiety and strategies for alleviating it changed with the sociopolitical landscape. By focusing on the body-as-nation trope, I discern major shifts in the abiding sociopolitical mood. Brown's fiction demonstrates the anxiety about revolution and national consolidation at the turn of the nineteenth century, while Sansay's novel reflects the watchful diplomatic position in the Western hemisphere around the War of 1812. The amputations in *Xicoténcatl* and *Hope Leslie* embody the fear of secession and fragmentation at the end of the so-called "era of

good feelings." Finally, Bird, Poe, and Melville register a range of reactions to the U.S. desire to acquire new land during and after the Jackson administration.

Just as the political anxieties of the era revolved around questions about the limits of individual power and the borders between sovereign territories, scientific and medical discourse concerned itself with the borders between individual bodies. European and American scientists and philosophers wondered, what distinguishes the human body from the nearly identical bodies of other primates? Why do the bodies of people who live in or come from distant regions look different from Europeans bodies? These empirical questions led them to consider: How does bodily difference influence or even dictate international politics and imperialism? How do empire and conquest impact bodily difference?

In examining literary answers to these questions, this dissertation rests on two principles: first, my scholarship assumes that cultural artifacts like novels are engaged, with or without authorial intentionality, in both reflecting and creating a political milieu. Secondly, this project is invested in the idea that the body, human existence as corporeally experienced and represented, is particularly significant to understanding the politics of the early republic. Leaning on these two premises, this project moves toward three intertwined goals: to illustrate early America's preoccupation with the body, to discuss the tactics of diplomacy and tentative imperialism practiced by the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, and to elucidate the ways in which authors in the early republic recruited characters' bodies into their novels' geopolitical themes.

In the first principle this dissertation rests on, that literature both reflects and creates its contemporary political context, I follow the profusion of recent early

Americanist scholarship that has highlighted the mutual resonances of early U.S. politics and early U.S. literature. Scholarship of early American literature and culture has increasingly turned toward the early republican political sphere, and especially imperialism as defined usefully by Amy Kaplan as "the multiple histories of continental and overseas expansion, conquest, conflict, and resistance which have shaped the cultures of the United States and the cultures of those it has dominated within and beyond its geopolitical borders" ("Left Alone" 4). Recent scholarship has convincingly shown that early U.S. political concerns permeate its contemporary literature. For example, in *Fugitive Empire: Locating Early American Imperialism*, Andy Doolan argues that early American novelistic tropes like the Gothic and the sentimental help expose the "ambiguous and terrifying *process* of power consolidation across borders" that characterized early American imperialist tendencies and bridged the British empire and the new United States" (xv). Michelle Burnham illuminates how "the very grammar" of colonial nonfiction, early U.S. novels, and early U.S. judicial decisions "works to secure the nation through a double strategy of bestowal and retraction" ("The Periphery Within" 140); the repression of colonized perspectives within texts meant to give them voice permits the legitimation of the American nation as both anti-colonial and dominant. Amy Kaplan's *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* argues that the production of American domestic culture is influenced or even produced by imperialist projects abroad; in other words, "cultural phenomena we think of as domestic or particularly national are forged in a crucible of foreign relations" (1).[1] These scholars challenge any notion of American

[1] Other examples of such scholarship that link early U.S. political anxieties to concurrent literary productions include Bruce A. Harvey's *American Geographics,* David Kazanjian's *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America*, John

exceptionalism that would imagine the United States' coalescing as a nation independent from the revolutionary politics and imperial ambitions of the wider transatlantic world. Their work has set the tone of early American literary criticism and established methodological models that my work seeks to follow. Like them, I examine literary and aesthetic authorial decisions—in this case, authors' representations of characters' bodies—and use them as lenses through which to read both broader textual themes and contextual contemporary political and social concerns.

Early American scholars have less emphatically argued my second assumption, that the experience and representation of embodiment is a crucial component to understanding early republican politics. Karen Sánchez-Eppler's *Touching Liberty* and Bruce Burgett's *Sentimental Bodies: Sex, Gender, and Citizenship in the Early Republic* have begun to meet this need to study the body in literature. This dissertation shares Sánchez-Eppler's interest in finding "crack[s] in the hegemonic rhetoric of political disembodiment" (1), and joins Burgett's examination of the ways in which that "[t]he nineteenth-century culture of sentiment emerges out of early Enlightenment discourses that focus on the body as both a ground and a site of political debate" (15). Burgett's emphasis is rather different from mine, since he is more interested in the body of the reader than in authors' uses of fictional bodies. *Sentimental Bodies* offers fascinating extended examinations of liberalism and republicanism but mostly focuses on mining the Enlightenment political theory embedded in the literature; indeed Burgett's monograph does not engage with the more spectacular, odd representations of embodiment that pervade early U.S. literature. Sánchez-Eppler

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Carlos Rowe's *Literary Culture and U.S. Imperialism*, Malini Johar Schueller's *U.S. Orientalisms*, Ed White's *The Backcountry and the City: Colonization and Conflict in Early America*, and Edward Watts's *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic*.

focuses on nonfiction, specifically abolitionist, feminist, and poetic challenges to the nineteenth-century notion that the default person is an incorporeal white male, while I will be treating primarily fiction whose relationship with that idea is more fraught.

Studying antebellum American representations of the body carries particular urgency for at least two reasons. First, the U.S. Constitution locates the prerequisites for citizenship in distinctions thought to be bodily—race and sex—since it guarantees the rights only of white males. For this reason, much of the intriguing scholarship on the body in early America focuses on the bodies of women and people of color.[2] This dissertation follows these scholars' insistence that, as Carol E. Henderson puts it, "the natural body is coded as a fleshy field of dreams—a projected and imagined representation of identity formations that reinvest the political and cultural objectives of the dominant power structure" (14). On the other hand, I do not circumscribe this inquiry within specific boundaries of race, ethnicity, sex, or sexuality. To study literary bodies without an exclusive focus on race, gender, or sexuality is not to denigrate the value of nor to dismiss the need for such studies; in fact, I hope it will be clear that such approaches have had a

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[2] For example, in "Emancipation and the Em-bodiment of 'Race,'" Joanne Pope Melish shows that the fiction and nonfiction of black Americans "turning white" and vice versa registered white anxiety that their racial status was imperiled, but ultimately intended to reassure the white audience. In *Conjugal Union*, Robert Reid-Pharr examines the process by which antebellum free black intellectuals peculiarized and singularized the black body in order to establish "a public subjectivity that is also black" but is not determined by the condition of being enslaved (6). Allison E. Francis's "The Culture of Sentiments and the Black Female Body" charts the ways in which nineteenth-century African American women seized the trope of sentimentality to gain control over a "textual body" during a time in which their physical bodies were threatened and unprotected. Essays in the collection *A Centre of Wonders: The Body in Early America* mostly focus on gender and race, since, as its editors note, "Political power serves as a primary means to regulate bodies [….] Thus, the cultural meanings projected onto bodies reflect a process of mapping: a political cartography that is demarcated by categories of difference, including race, gender, status, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality" (Lindman and Tarter 6).

strong influence on this work.[3] But it is worth asking what we might tend to overlook when we restrict our studies to such categories. By attending to extraordinary bodies, we are able to see the transnational concerns embedded in thematics like embodiment that might initially seem personal and local. The corporeal representations I want to study are noteworthy not necessarily because they are raced or gendered (although they sometimes are that too). Instead, what unites the bodies in this study is that they are all unusual; this departure from the quotidian body makes embodiment visible and thereby highlights the physicality of all human experience. Furthermore, unusual, extraordinary bodies serve as concrete metaphors for the drama of U.S. national emergence and international contact with foreign territory. The very strangeness of the bodies I examine reifies the uncertainty of the U.S. international position in the republic's earliest decades.

Indeed, another reason for studying corporeal representation in this period is to illuminate the nuances of that uncertainty. While the United States represented itself as an anti-imperial force during the early nineteenth century, and scholars have frequently seen Manifest Destiny and overseas imperialism as issues of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the United States in fact practiced rather aggressive expansionism from its very founding. Since this early expansionism rested on a false presumption of white cultural superiority sometimes seen as acquirable through assimilation but more often

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[3] Both the fictional bodies I will be examining and the fictional bodies of women and people of color are represented as the Other by the dominant culture. While not "extraordinary" in exactly Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's sense, the bodies I examine in this dissertation join in challenging "the logic that has become so familiar in discussions of race, gender and disability: male, white, or able-bodied superiority appears natural, undisputed, and unremarked, seemingly eclipsed by female, black, or disabled difference" (Garland-Thomson 20). Focusing on sites at which that logic is disrupted inevitably leaves me indebted to scholars who have elucidated the roles of raced, gendered, and disabled bodies in literature.

thought to be located in racial bodily distinction, I believe the time has come to link fictional bodies not just to domestic politics but also to early American imperialism.[4]

Toward the mid-nineteenth century, the idea that race could be biologically identified and reproduced was gaining wide currency in scientific circles and not incidentally underwriting some of the most repressive political measures both domestically and internationally. These simultaneous scientific and political developments have rightfully led scholars to an interest in bodies represented during and after the so-called American Renaissance.[5] This project instead sets its sights earlier, at the often overlooked period of the late-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries,[6] in order to examine the origins both body-based repressive domestic politics and corporeally justified expansionism–and ultimately in order to correct a lopsidedness in American literary criticism. Even though notions of race and gender were somewhat less rigidified, more fluid in the early nineteenth century, the body was still tied very closely with domestic and international political questions.

As the anthropologist Mary Douglas has observed, "[t]he human body is the most readily available image of a system" (xxxviii), and early U.S. thinkers and authors used the

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[4] I do want to be clear, however, that I am not claiming an uncontested position of authority for novels or suggesting that the six novels included in this study alone constitute a privileged window through which to view "American" subjectivity. These six novels are not, in Chandon Reddy's words, "the autonomous realm in which material history culminates in the production of a univocal moral subject of American modernity" (476). Rather, they provide insight into a specific relationship between the body and U.S. international policy; they help articulate a tension within a particular strain of U.S. self-representation.

[5] Sharon Cameron, Cynthia J. Davis, Samuel Otter, and Jennifer Putzi have each written insightful studies of bodies in American literature, and each begins his or her study just when the focus of my dissertation ends.

[6] In fact, my study emphatically ends just before 1849, the year in which the Fowler brothers published their *Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology and Physiology* and head-measuring and face-analyzing became a casual hobby of the reading public.

body as a concrete way of thinking through both nation-based political systems and international systems of economic circulation and empire-building. European settlement in the Western hemisphere and the subsequent founding of the United States brought the linked questions of biological and political science into direct conversation with each other; the extent to which the body and the nation are intertwined in the thinking of the early republic is attested to by the contemporary science that shows up in the popular press. Americans were fascinated, for example, by the writings of the Comte de Buffon, the French naturalist who pioneered an early version of evolutionary theory and labeled all New World fauna degenerate. Early American thinkers debated Buffon's findings in the pages of their weekly newspapers and magazines, and extended his thinking on the human body to matters of empire and nation-building. For example, the novelist, historian, and biographer Jeremy Belknap wonders, if climate and latitude determine a person's skin color, as was generally agreed upon by Buffon and other naturalists and philosophers, why do people in Africa have darker skin than Amerindians who live along the same latitudes? Based on Buffon's conjecture that "civilization" developed in the Americas more recently than to Africa and Europe, Belknap speculates that the skin of Western Hemisphere indigenes is not as dark as Africans' and South Asians' because the Amerindians have not been exposed to the heat and the sun for as many generations as Africans and South Asians have. He suggests that the population of the New World has relatively recently migrated to it, supposing that the Mexican and Peruvian empires probably originated from Korean or Chinese emigrants, who traveled across the Pacific—some settling on islands, but some ending up on the North American continents.

While Belknap's speculations might strike the reader at first as the product of mere quasi-scientific curiosity, his essay offers a striking example of the ways in which questions about the body become questions of evolution and population, migration, navigation, natural history, geology—and ultimately political policy. One of the legal underpinnings of Indian removal policy was the principle that Native American communities were impermanent and unrooted—subject to relocation in the interests of clearing the way for more "advanced civilizations" that require permanent settlement. So Belknap's declaration of the "newness" of Amerindian civilizations, based on his observations of Amerindian bodies, undergirds the legal justifications for Indian removal from a geo-anthropological standpoint. Euro-American settlement interests inform his science, and vice versa.

U.S. thinkers also used the body to debate the theories of polygenism, which held that human beings originated from multiple, separate sources, and monogenism, whose proponents believed that all humans share an origin and are of the same species—a biological debate with myriad implications for political and imperial policy. William Stanhope Smith, future president of the College of New Jersey (Princeton), in 1787 argues in favor of monogenism by observing that skin color and other supposedly racial characteristics are determined by climate and geography and are therefore mutable. He speculates that people currently considered racially distinct would become indistinguishable after many generations of living in the same climate. But he adds, in a footnote calculated to reassure the alarmed white reader, that

> Anglo-Americans, however, will never resemble the native Indians. Civilization will prevent so great a degeneracy, either in the colour, or the

> features. Even if they were thrown back again into the savage state, the resemblance would not be complete; because, the one would receive the impressions of the climate, on the ground of features formed in Europe—the others have received them, on the ground of features, formed in a very different region of the globe. The effects of such various combinations can never be the same. (125)

Thus, the body reifies a motley mix of climate, culture, and genetic history. Examples of the possible slippage among races are strongest among "natives of the united states," since "climate has not had time to impress upon them its full character: and the change has been retarded by the arts of society, and by the continual intermixture of foreign nations" (126). In his belief in the power of climate over the body—a commonly held view during this revolutionary period—Stanhope Smith argues *against* an inherent, inborn dissymmetry among races, but genuine racial equality does not necessarily follow these beliefs. Indeed, from Smith's standpoint, the extent to which climate operates upon the body depends entirely on the level of progress achieved by the society—and progress is measured in part by "arts" and in part by migration and conquest. He adds in another footnote that again hedges the radicalism of his claims, "In savage life, men more speedily receive the characteristic features of the climate, and of the state of society, because the habits and ideas of society, among them, are few and simple; and to the action of the climate they are exposed naked and defenseless, to suffer its full force at once" (126). Despite being an anti-essentialist case for the permeability of racial categories, this taxonomy also embeds a system of evaluative and ethnocentric hierarchy, first because he reads whiteness as the default, originary corporeal state, and furthermore because he considers culture, "society,"

and conquest the mechanisms for slowing down the effects of climate on the initially white body. Thus, due to what he perceives as more advanced civilization—in part marked by conquest—whites are privileged as disembodied. The body serves as a visible yardstick of civilization, with dark skin signaling socio-cultural deficiency—an inability to use culture and conquest to fortify the body against climate.

These overlapping concerns with the body and international politics have inspired the inquiry of my project. While a secondary purpose of this dissertation is to provide a provocative interpretive approach that could be usefully applied to a wide variety of other texts, the intersections between the body and foreign policy present a particularly apt area of inquiry within my chronological and geographical focus. A generation after the American War for Independence, the United States had achieved a relative measure of civic stability. With the basic framework of its government established by the Constitution and a burgeoning economy undergirded by slave labor, the American imagination—to whatever extent such a monolith can be said to exist—turned both inward toward the body and outward toward adjacent territory for other objects to understand and master. This dual gaze is reflected by and intriguingly commented upon in the emerging American literary culture.

From uncertainty about the borders between bodies and nations in Charles Brockden Brown discussed in this introduction, I move into the early nineteenth century to ask how the early U.S. novel uses corporeal representation to negotiate a position for the United States in the Western hemisphere. Leonora Sansay fills her 1808 epistolary novel, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of San Domingue*, with autobiographical details about her affair with Vice President Aaron Burr and her travels through the Caribbean during the

Haitian Revolution. But she divides these details between two characters, the sisters Mary and Clara. Mary and Clara, then, function in the novel as one person divided between two bodies. Clara, locked in a power struggle with her despotic European husband, embodies the rebelling Latin American and West Indian colonies described in the novel. Meanwhile, Mary's position toward her sister, aligned with her as an empathetic ally yet also strictly regulatory, reflects the U.S.'s simultaneous rhetorics of alignment with and regulation of other Western hemisphere democracies. Taken together, the sisters demonstrate the formation of both U.S. national and transnational identity; I argue that Sansay's divided self exposes the false dilemma posed by any scholarship on "transnationalism" that would ignore the power and influence of nationalism rising in the U.S. in the years leading up to the War of 1812.

After the war, living in a country more confident as a legitimized national entity, yet militarily weakened and torn by domestic factions, many U.S. authors and readers turned toward the colonial past for origin myths of national consolidation. The bodies in two of the period's historical romances manifest American anxieties about national fragmentation in particularly interesting ways. The anonymous *Xicoténcatl* (1826) and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827) are both historical romances set at crucial moments in the European conquest of North America, and both center their narratives on dramatic scenes of amputation. The amputees in both novels are transitional characters whose national and racial identities are conflicted and compromised. Both tales take an elegiac approach to Native American Indians, depict noble and heroic Native American Indian characters, and promote the potential of interracial friendship, but the two novels diverge in their depictions of interracial procreation. In *Xicoténcatl*, miscegenation

represents the only viable way forward for Western hemispheric nationhood; by contrast, in *Hope Leslie*, interracial relationships are pushed to the margin. While Sedgwick's downplaying of miscegenation reflects a wider trend of racial nationalism in the Anglophone historical romance, other corporeal metaphors in *Hope Leslie* complicate the novel's version of nascent U.S. nationalism. Although interracial heterosexual relationships either fail or recede from visibility in *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick actively resists the interpretive tendency that would privilege heteronormativity as either a marker of success or a harbinger of U.S. nationhood. Putting *Hope Leslie* into conversation with the similarly themed but lesser known *Xicoténcatl* elucidates the corporeal nationalist metaphors in each. Freed from the assumption that nation-building must be figured in the novel by heteronormative reproduction, we can see that *Hope Leslie* joins *Xicoténcatl* in valorizing hybridity. By eschewing sexual reproduction as the marker of female productivity, *Hope Leslie* also imagines wider possibilities for female participation in national politics. Both novels share a political context of imperiled national unity, both embody that political problem in a scene of amputation, and both use corporeal metaphors—miscegenation in *Xicoténcatl* and trans-racial, transnational, and transgender disguise in *Hope Leslie*—to propose hybridity as a viable solution to national fragmentation.

If anxieties about national fragmentation directed the American novel's gaze toward the amputated body, by the 1830s a buoyant expansionism had resurfaced in both the political sphere and in fictional representations of the body. With the election of Andrew Jackson, the trend toward universal white male suffrage, the continuation and streamlining of Indian removal, and the U.S. navy's policing of the Caribbean, in the

1830s the United States experienced unprecedented democratic latitude, renewed belief in citizens' potential for upward social mobility, expanding borders, and the development of new imperial instruments. Edgar Allan Poe and Robert Montgomery Bird negotiate the limits of these newfound powers through images of metempsychosis and cannibalism. In both metaphors, the characters' ability to incorporate the bodies of others mirrors citizens' ability to shift social positions. Furthermore, troping national territory as the individual body, both devices also negotiate the terms of U.S. expansionism. Just as their characters can survive or rise in the social sphere by inhabiting or ingesting the bodies of others, so too does the United States of the 1830s improve its economic condition through imperial enterprise.

Bird's satire, *Sheppard Lee* (1836), which I examine in Chapter 3, follows the adventures of a once easygoing Pennsylvania farmer who reanimates corpses by transferring his soul into dead bodies. The plot device of metempsychosis (the transmigration of the soul) literalizes the popular American consciousness that social and geographic mobility had become boundless. Scholars have considered *Sheppard Lee* both a parable of complete social mobility and a meditation on the constructedness of racial identity. However, I argue that metempsychosis evokes not just social and racial mobility, but also imperialism: Sheppard's bodily invasions dramatize the benevolent expansionism whose tentative practice was gradually becoming a matter of political doctrine in Bird's time. I also show that the novel not only treats race as a compelling but unstable category, but also deconstructs the suggestion that race-based paternalism offers a palatable alternative to capitalist competition. This chapter analyzes the ways in which Bird exposes both imperial and racial paternalism as attractive but untenable fantasies.

Cannibalism operates in a similar way in Poe's *Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), the subject of Chapter 4. In a crucial scene, Pym, Augustus, and Peters survive on a ship stranded in the Atlantic by eating their shipmate Parker. In Poe's symbolic retelling of the imperial process, the four sailors enter willingly into a contract under which one must sacrifice his body for the benefit of the others, and Parker offers no resistance to being literally consumed. Poe once wrote in a letter to his adopted father, "I must either conquer or die;" similarly, the microcosm of the ship suggests a Malthusian global community wherein territorial conquest is inevitable because of scarce resources. Within days of eating their shipmate, however, the cannibals find a cache of food on the ship; thus, Poe exposes the urgent underpinnings of Manifest Destiny—the belief that the United States needs to expand in order to survive—as fraudulent. This episode of bad-faith cannibalism sets the stage for the novel's concluding Antarctic scenes, in which the explorers try, but fail, to establish a colonial economy with the fantastic inhabitants they find at the South Pole. The episode exposes the exploitation at the heart of the colonizer's benevolence, along with the calculation and strategy behind the colonist's affected inferiority.

The skeptical exploration of U.S. expansionism initiated by Bird and Poe also pervades Melville's writings, especially *Typee*. *Typee* stages an episode of colonial contact as a disability narrative: the protagonist, an American sailor named Tommo, suffers a leg injury that persists throughout his stay on a Polynesian island, until his wound suddenly heals when he demarcates firm racial lines between himself and the "natives," attacks one of his erstwhile caretakers, and escapes. In other words, Tommo inexplicably suffers a vague disability while under the care of the Typee and equally suddenly and mysteriously recovers at the very moment he escapes and attacks the Typee. This seesawing corporeality

not only serves Melville as a convenient plot device, but also embodies the false dichotomy between vulnerable fragility and virile aggression that Melville indicts in American expansionism. In the epilogue, I briefly read this corporeal representation in order to suggest generative ways to extend my line of inquiry into the middle and late nineteenth centuries.

Focusing on the space between Brown's identical characters, who embody early U.S. worries about democracy and tentative steps toward national consolidation, and Melville's selectively injured character whose disability dramatizes the developing impulses of American empire, the chapters that follow examine the body's potential to concretize amorphous U.S. political and especially geopolitical concerns. In other words, I do not claim that early U.S. authors plotted transnational political themes with static corporeal allegories. Rather, as this introduction shows, conceptions of the body are always already intertwined in early American thinking with politics, and particularly with considerations about the relationship between nations. That the republic's earliest novels would reflect and contribute to the imbrications among body, politics, and internationality should not surprise anyone. This dissertation seeks to investigate those imbrications.

Chapter 1

Leonora Sansay's Divided Self, With a Squint at the West Indies

Leonora Sansay's 1808 epistolary novel, *Secret History; or, The Horrors of St. Domingo* amply justifies Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's suggestion that considering novels within "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). In Sansay's case, that mutually constitutive relation is manifested by the ways in which transnationally circulating women use their bodies in the domestic sphere to gain power and influence in the geopolitical. The novel follows two sisters, Mary and Clara, through Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti), Jamaica, and Cuba during the Haitian Revolution. Mary watches as Clara, who is married to a jealous and intellectually inferior French colonial army commander named St. Louis, seeks solace for her poor marital choice in meaningless flirtations. Her coquetry causes trouble when she flirts with Rochambeau, general-in-chief of the French force in Saint-Domingue, who seeks to control Clara's movements by prohibiting *everyone* from leaving the island. The sisters discover that the domestic sphere in no way provides a shelter from or alternative to

public, political power. Instead, the novel dramatizes how Clara reaches for public power within a transnational arena by deploying her sexual power in the domestic sphere.

However, the novel also complicates the notion that readings of the novel must choose between either the frame of the nation-state or the reciprocities of the geopolitical.[7] This most transnational of early American novels suggests that the so-called "transnational turn" need not entail a turn *away* from nation-based affiliation, identity, and analysis. The circulations and vexed transnational affiliations of Mary, Clara, and Sansay demonstrate that early American authors were concerned not only with American nation-building but also with the geopolitical context in which national identity is tentatively proposed and constantly reshaped by blurred transnational cultural and political boundaries. The models of the nation-state explored through bodily allegories emerge both in conjunction with and in contradistinction to the U.S.'s geopolitical situatedness as simultaneously post-colonial and proto-imperialist. In other words, the question is not whether the novel imagines the U.S. as a nation-state or instead imagines a transnational, postcolonial, hemispheric, and/or global identity or community. The question is, how does the early American novel do both at once? And my question more specifically is, how does the early American novel use the body to do both?

Throughout *Secret History*, the principal narrator, Mary, maintains an inordinate interest in the personal affairs of her sister, Clara St. Louis. "[S]he is twined round my

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[7] Dillon complains in a footnote, for example, that "critics such as Julia Stern, Shirley Samuels, and Elizabeth Barnes have discerned in the fractured tales of incest, seduction, and infanticide that typify early American fiction a meta-narrative of nation-formation in which the family and its difficult domestic formulations stand as figures for the new nation" (79). Beneath Dillon's reasonable complaint, however, lies an abiding sense in early American studies that any consideration of the nation-form is insular, short-sighted, exceptionalist, and ultimately misguided. I argue that the kind of allegorical and national thinking exemplified by Stern, Samuels, and Barnes need not be abandoned but enriched.

heart," Mary explains, "and I love her with more than a sister's affection" (136). Mary's description of the two women's closeness, in which Clara is literally contained within the body of Mary, is only a small exaggeration. Mary is present to witness nearly every moment of Clara's life; until Clara absconds from her tyrannical husband near the end of the novel, Mary mentions very little about her own interpersonal relationships and conversations, preferring instead to transcribe minute details of Clara's. As Mary narrates Clara's escapades, she makes precious little distinction between their lives and fates. As she says, "My fate is so intimately connected with that of my sister, that every thing concerning her must interest you, from the influence it has on myself: and, in truth, I have no adventures" (89).

From a biographical standpoint, the blurry line between the two characters is easily explained. Mary and Clara represent the split proxy of their creator, Leonora Sansay, who based the novel on her own letters, composed while she lived in the revolutionary Caribbean. The recipient of the letters, both in real life and in the novel, was Aaron Burr, Vice President of the United States at the time of the novel's setting, and recently acquitted of treason at the time of the novel's publication. There are certain very obvious reasons for Sansay to divide the drama of her life between two women. First, Mary's narration allows Sansay to lavish Clara (i.e., herself) with praise, without any breach of modesty. In delineating Clara's appeal, Mary declares, "It is Clara's fate to inspire great passions. Nobody loves her moderately. As soon as she is known she seizes on the soul, and centres every desire in that of pleasing her" (109). Mary finds her sister "so interesting [….] Those who have not seen Clara walse know not half her charms. There is a physiognomy in her form! every motion is full of soul. The gracefulness of her arms is unequalled, and she is

lighter than gossamer" (75). Without the distance of the third-person narration, such excessive praise could only have an off-putting effect on the reader. Even in her real-life letters to Burr, Sansay employs this self-division, casually slipping into the third person whenever she describes her own beauty and men's interest in her.[8] Michael Drexler suggests that this narrative device also marks a meaningful seizure of male power: "Writing of herself as another, Sansay reverses her own objectification by the male gaze" ("Introduction" 29).

More importantly, the separation of herself into two bodies permits her morally ambiguous actions to be viewed in a sympathetic light. Mary models for the reader Sansay's fantasy of an empathetic, caring attitude toward so-called "fallen" women—a generous attitude that, judging by Burr's suggestive condemnation that Sansay was "too well known under the name of Leonora," Sansay did not enjoy in her personal life (qtd. in Drexler, "Introduction," 30). Mary's forgiving outlook on Clara's partly self-induced troubles encourages the reading public's indulgence toward "fallen women" and gestures toward a female community united in sympathy against mainstream society's rigid moral dictates. As Cathy Davidson has shown, "much early sentimental fiction was forced into a difficult balancing act—not always successfully executed—between readerly demands (especially from the professional readers) for moralistic restraint and writerly demands for artistic license" (215). Sansay's "writerly demands" require both Clara and Mary. Clara's extramarital flirtation permits Sansay to draw a parallel between misuse of male power in

[8] For example, on May 6, 1803, she wrote of herself as Clara: "Apropos of Clara, you would not know her, positively not, the climate has had on her an effect quite miraculous, she has acquired a degree of enbonpoint that renders her charming, she has grown fairer and her black hair arrang'd a la greque gives her an air truly interesting her person even in your land of beauty was found passable but here it is regarded as a model of perfection" (Sansay, Appendix to *Secret History* 225).

romantic relationships and misuse of military power in political affairs. Sansay also needs the playfully yearning tone of Mary's letters to Burr in order to pique the interest of a reading public hungry for tales of Burr's indiscretions. In real life, Sansay alone was the unhappy wife, the flirtatious society girl, *and* the author of coy, sometimes downright salacious letters[9] to Burr. Sansay softens her moral deviations, balances morality and aesthetics, and attunes the novel to public mores by dividing Clara's extramarital dalliances in the Caribbean from Mary's suggestive history and flirtatious tone with Burr.

The division of Sansay into Mary and Clara also follows an important convention of the late eighteenth-century domestic novel. With her scrupulous but sympathetic overseeing of Clara's every move, Mary joins such friendly regulators as Sophia Courtland in Charles Brockden Brown's *Ormond* (1799) and Mrs. Richman and Lucy Freeman in Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* (1797). Regulating friends are fixtures of the early republican epistolary novel; they scrutinize every action of their sexually imperiled female companions and attempt to guide them onto the path of moral rectitude.

Sansay's weird division of herself into sensual, bodily agent (Clara) and detached, rational surveillance (Mary) roughly charts what Michel Foucault would call the rise of discipline. Put very briefly, if at one time the state controlled individuals by spectacularly demonstrating its power to destroy them if they disobeyed, the Enlightenment began a turn toward each individual's control of herself through self-regulation. Self-regulation is, in turn, a function of state control, since the state dictates its expectations of normalcy

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[9] On May 6, 1803, for example, Sansay writes, "Dressed with a licence [*sic*] which can be authoriz'd only by the heat (for she was almost naked) she was led round the room by an officer […]" (226). Even in these non-fictional letters to Burr, Sansay switches, with narrative grace, to a fictional proxy during scenes in which sexual self-aggrandizement is calculated to arouse her notorious lover.

through discipline, surveillance, and the production of delinquency. Thus power is dispersed throughout populations, and civic order is internalized within each individual through the functioning of self-regulation (*Discipline and Punish*). Mary embodies the disciplinary regulation of Clara in a fairly straightforward and conventional way.[10] Sansay furthermore gestures toward the internalization of this disciplinary function through her fictional fusion of Mary and Clara—ostensibly separate persons, but in every other way one and the same—functionally, since Mary is "obliged to follow" Clara for unspecified reasons (61); narratively, since Mary "ha[s] no adventures" of her own (89); and biographically, since Sansay divided her personal history between the two characters. Ultimately, Mary's disciplinary function alongside Clara's incorporation within Mary dramatizes the internalization of regulation.

In her formalist analysis of *Secret History*, Gretchen Woertendyke hints at the geopolitical implications of Sansay's splitting herself into two women, "the one, whose body gets bought and sold into marriage, the other, whose narrative distance functions to highlight her body as one part of a colonial exchange" (264). While at first Clara's body derives value on the marriage market, "her body transforms into a metonym for Saint-Dominguan resources after the French Imperial General Rochambeau's interest in her" (Woertendyke 264). While Woertendyke scraps that line of inquiry in favor of constructing a genealogy of the secret history genre, she establishes an intriguing proposal. I contend

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[10] An established critical convention connects early republican female friendship and sympathy to Foucauldian notions of discipline. Elizabeth Barnes summarizes this line of thought well: "In a move that articulates Foucault's study of modern disciplinary forms, sympathy is revealed to be a self-regulating practice" (18). See also Stern, Schweitzer, and Brodhead. Even a scholar like Claire Pettengill, who eschews "Foucauldian" readings (199), explains that early republican female friendship operates on an "emotional-disciplinary circuit" (194).

that the links between the female body and colonialism extend beyond the context of the Haitian Revolution, beyond the metonymic functioning as Saint-Dominguan resources, and beyond the first half of Sansay's *Secret History*. If Clara's body metaphorically suggests the resources of the West Indies, Mary's gaze represents U.S. diplomatic positioning vis-à-vis those resources. Mary Louise Pratt's history of European narratives of African exploration is extremely instructive here. Pratt points out that as of the early nineteenth century, accounts of African expeditions were personal, emotive, and novelistic, but by the second wave of narratives in the mid-nineteenth century, the presence of the explorer himself had been effaced. Like the indigenous population, the explorer is also, in a sense, depopulated from the landscape and appears only as "an invisible and passive eye looking out over a space, a conduit for information rather than a mediating agent. The reader is by their side, looking with them and not at them" ("Travel Narrative" 208). Sansay's ingenious narrative device, her divided autobiographical avatar, permits the reader to both look *with* the traveling explorer and *at* her. Through the narrative device of splitting herself into two characters, Sansay illuminates the United States' unique position in the transatlantic geopolitics of the revolutionary era. This concurrent looking-at-and-with mirrors deliberate U.S. positioning toward Latin America and the Caribbean, with which the U.S. claimed solidarity while simultaneously carefully monitoring throughout the early nineteenth century.

Sansay crafts explicit connections between the novel's romantic plot and its violent, revolutionary historical context. First, she narrates amorous relationships in economic, military, and geopolitical terms. As Michelle Burnham points out, Sansay represents "the violent spin and repeating whirl of colonial violence" by "plotting onto

each other the intimate domestic dynamics of sexual desire and the transcontinental economic relations of capitalist drive" ("Female Bodies" 178). To list every example of this plotting would be tedious. For a sampling, Clara's light flirtations are called "conquests" (72, 75, 76, 77) and are likely to "cost her too dear" if taken too far (81). The newly arrived French officers are said to be making "attacks" on the Creole women on Saint-Domingue (77). Clara's wealthy lifestyle is said to have been "so dearly purchased" since she lost her freedom and happiness when she married (80). In explaining Clara's motives with the general, Mary says, "the heart of Clara acknowledged not the empire of general Rochambeau" (88). Major B— advises Clara to stop being "so entirely governed by her husband" (100). St. Louis is referred to as a "tyrant" in the household (153). Most tellingly, Mary calls Clara and St. Louis's arguments "a contest for supremacy, which will decide forever the empire of the party that conquers" (81). All in all, Mary can barely describe her sister's domestic affairs without conjuring the language of politics and economics. As Joan Dayan puts it, Sansay's novel demonstrates that the "rigid categorizations" of "romance" and "history" are "hybrid and permeable" (*Haiti, History, and the Gods* 166).

Furthermore, Mary compares Clara's marriage to enslavement. Through this suggestive language, Mary draws a parallel between her sister's struggles and the cause of the half million enslaved and free blacks of Saint-Domingue, who, as Mary puts it, "broke the yoke imposed on them by a few thousand men of a different colour, and claimed the rights of which they had been so cruelly deprived" (77). Mary says that Clara's body has been "vilely bartered" in her marriage to St. Louis (64). St. Louis frequently locks Clara in a room or restricts her to their house; Mary wryly adds, "I believe Clara is not the first wife

that has been locked up at St. Domingo" (87). In the conventional language of marital confinement, Clara is said to be "bound" to St. Louis in "fetters" (102; see also 138), and while they are married she is said to be "in his power" (137; see also 128). By employing the language of slavery and confinement to describe St. Louis's controlling attitude toward his wife, Sansay reinforces the novel's anti-slavery position. When Mary passionately defends Clara's escape from St. Louis (128, 153-4), she implicitly throws a measure of support behind the analogous achievement of the Haitian Revolution.

But by no means are the connections between the novel's romantic and historical valences straightforward or unambiguous. Clara's struggles against the restrictions and violence of her husband highlight the novel's sympathy toward the Haitians' revolt against the French, but by the time the sisters have left Saint-Domingue, it is the black Haitians, "monsters, thirsting after blood, and unsated with carnage," who register more impressively as the power to be resisted (Sansay 123). The subtitle of Sansay's novel, "The Horrors of St. Domingo," plays to the U.S. audience's craving for episodes of black insurrectionist violence, and Sansay delivers.[11] In the memorable anecdote of Madame G—, for example, which Mary recounts to Burr without naming her source, Sansay

[11] As Drexler points out in "Brigands and Nuns," "[w]hile *Secret History* does relate anecdotes of black-on-white violence, it is important to note that none of these are witnessed by any of Sansay's narrators firsthand. The widely circulated and serially repeated tales of black violence are second-order relations in Sansay's text, a text in which the secret revealed is the comparative strength of black collectivity when measured against a Creole, New World community constructed on racial fantasy and communal perceptions of victimization" (189). Dillon avers, "Sansay's most explicit and chilling accounts of violence center on those effected by men against women without regard to race" (92); this is certainly a refutable claim, since a reader may consider a white woman's decapitating her black servant and presenting the head to her husband on a plate (Sansay 70) more explicit and chilling than Dillon's example of St. Louis's unfulfilled threat to mutilate Clara's face. Undeniably, though, Sansay counterbalances her scenes of black-on-white violence with equally disturbing white-on-black and white-on-white brutality; while her representations of violence are often racially inflected, they are not racially exclusive.

meshes her general theme of the cruelties of irresponsible power with the white fear of miscegenation. Madame G— is duped into a sense of security on Saint-Domingue by "one of the black chiefs, who had been a slave to her mother" (124). The chief assures her that the white inhabitants of the island, especially Madame G— and her three daughters, will be protected by Dessalines (124). But the chief soon demands Madame G—'s eldest daughter, Adelaide, as a wife in exchange for their continued protection. Mary recounts, "The wretched mother caught the terrified Adelaide, who sunk fainting into her arms. The menacing looks of the negro became more horrible. He advanced to seize the trembling girl. Touch her not, cried the frantic mother; death will be preferable to such protection" (125). All four women are summarily hanged.[12] Thus, while Sansay traces the imbrications of personal, domestic situations with the geopolitical setting, she adapts her political allegiances to condemn both French and Haitian abuses of power.

The novel does not adopt a straightforward pro-French or pro-insurrection stance, because its geopolitical purpose is not to take sides in already-existing conflicts but instead to discern new entryways to power. The most striking imagery of the novel matches the most salient feature of its revolutionary Western hemispheric setting: individuals' and collectivities' aspirations and spectacular demonstrations of power.

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[12] Archival evidence suggests that Sansay herself was not so terrified by the specter of miscegenation. She writes to Burr, "the lady who takes charge of this paquet is driven from this country by fear—in the last attack she made a vow to the blessed Virgin to throw herself into the sea if the brigands entered the town, so great was her fear that her person should be exposed to their lascivious desires. This was a rash vow, considering she is only sixty-four years old—there's nothing so diverting as the pretensions of the old women here" (230-1). Among the many fascinating sentiments concisely packed into this little anecdote (satire on Catholicism, the circumscribing of women's sexuality to the young, Creole stereotyping), Sansay ridicules the prevailing fear of being raped by the rebels.

While seminal scholarship from C.L.R. James to Susan Buck-Morse has successfully elucidated the importance of the Haitian Revolution and brought it to the attention of generations of literary and historical scholars, perhaps it is more often forgotten that less successful revolutions were taking place throughout the Western Hemisphere in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The *Comuneros* revolted against Spanish taxes in New Granada (Columbia and parts of Venezuela) in 1781. Túpac Amaru II led an indigenous uprising against Spanish presence in Peru in 1780. In Cuba, the free black Nicolás Morales led an abolitionist conspiracy in 1796; José Antonio Aponte followed with his own in 1811. Francisco de Miranda y Rodríguez, envisioning a republican empire that would unify all former Spanish and Portuguese colonies, led an unsuccessful filibustering campaign against the Spanish leaders of the Venezuelan colony in 1806, and eventually served as dictator of the temporarily independent Venezuela in 1812.[13] This very partial list helps to illustrate the point that Haiti, while singular in its success, was not alone in its anti-slavery and anti-colonial bid for independent nationhood.

For the countries of Western Europe, whose swelling economies were fueled in part by industrialization but in part by consumer demand for tropical goods like coffee, chocolate, tobacco, and sugar,[14] this period was characterized by a range of techniques for managing and retaining their Caribbean colonies. While nineteenth-century European-style imperialism is often associated with the blatant use of military force, "annexation by force was not the only alternative in the revolutionary climate of the times," as Harold Eugene Davis has pointed out (44). Great Britain, for example, experimented with several different

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[13] For a more detailed history of these movements, see Klooster.

[14] For a full-scale analysis of the economic, political, and cultural impact of the newfound European love of tropical goods, see Walvin or Mintz.

techniques for gaining influence without annexing territory. Sir Ralph Abercromby, commander of British forces in the West Indies, took possession of Grenada, Trinidad, Tobago, Demerara, Essequibo, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent in a series of military expeditions from 1796 to 1797. But in 1799 he advocated Brtiain's capturing the trade of Spanish South America not by force but by fomenting revolutionary independence movements there. In a remarkable essay called "On the Liberation of Spanish America from the Dominion of Spain," Abercromby writes, "Should Great Britain decline at this time to undertake this great enterprise, some other nation will attempt it, on principles less liberal and less advantageous to the happiness of South America and to the world at large" (270). Not only would Britain be the most principled leader of a Western Hemisphere revolution, Abercromby believes, but sparking such a rebellion would be easy: "It seems only necessary that we should remove the Spanish force, declare to the people what our intentions are, and the Spanish Government would fall to the ground" (270). With Britain's military forces busy putting down a rebellion in Ireland and opposing Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, Abercromby emphasized the relative ease with which such a dramatic geopolitical maneuver as inciting a large-scale revolution across a continent could be accomplished: British emissaries would assure the Spanish Creoles "that the British troops should not quit the country till relieved from the Spanish yoke" (272). After the revolution catches on, "All that would be required on the part of Great Britain, in the first instance, would be to furnish them with arms and ammunition, and to assist them in framing a form of government, best suited to the genius and temper of the people" (272). If not influential in itself, Abercromby's view was at least representative: the British published a bilingual newspaper in Montevideo beginning in 1807 called *La Estrella del Sur/The Southern Star*,

in order to influence Latin American Creoles to fight for British-protected independence from Spain.

Britain, then, in the face of an army, navy, and budget spread too thin across its many colonial interests, did not abandon its imperialist ambitions but instead changed tactics. The United States, on the other hand, employed very similar tactics in the Western hemisphere, but for different reasons. In the first few decades of its existence, too weak both militarily and economically to participate in the full range of imperialist tactics, the U.S. nevertheless shared Western Europe's interest in controlling or at least influencing the colonies of the Caribbean and Latin America. As Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Monroe in 1823, "I candidly confess, that I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of States [….] Yet, as I am sensible that this can never be obtained, even with her own consent, but by war […] I have no hesitation in abandoning my first wish to future chances, and accepting its independence" (Jefferson 1482-3). As one historian puts it, "The United States, a small struggling republic, could not be expected to swing the balance of power in the wars for independence […] But Spanish American independence leaders looked to the United States for sympathy, and frequently found support in the form of credits, ships, supplies, arms, and (volunteer) mercenary soldiers and sailors" (Davis 51). The word "sympathy" is telling here; the United States did not have the ability to be forceful so was instead sympathetically coercive—just like the sympathetic, critical friends of the early republican sentimental novel.

The U.S.'s role in Caribbean and Latin American independence movements was to encourage them, ostensibly in the name of democratic republican anti-colonial ideals but in

the ultimate interest of acquiring influence, if not direct government, over the successfully revolted states left weak without the economic and military support of their European metropoles. George Washington's injunction in his 1796 Farewell Address, "The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible" (26), proved extraordinarily difficult to follow in the revolutionary Caribbean, whose trade was essential to the U.S. economy,[15] and whose politics were inextricably tied to its trade policies.

Despite Washington's advice, the United States maintained an interest in anti-colonial revolutions in the Western Hemisphere that could result in territorial expansion. Francisco de Miranda, for example, solicited President John Adams's and Alexander Hamilton's participation in his Spanish American liberation scheme by offering both Britain and the United States colonial possessions in the Caribbean in exchange for their military and financial support (Davis 50). Hamilton replied in 1798 that while he could not guarantee the backing of the Adams administration, he personally approved of the plan, and encouraged Miranda to devise "a government for the liberated territory agreeable to both Co-operators," i.e., Britain and the U.S. (qtd. in Robertson 329).[16]

In 1902, John Atkinson Hobson, an outspoken critic of Britain's exploitative foreign policies, warned that the "term which is on everybody's lips," imperialism, "threatens to break down the political isolation of the United States" (v). It has become increasingly clear that such perceptions of nineteenth-century American isolationism were

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[15] According to Brian Loveman, "For the period 1790 to 1814, approximately one-third of American exports went to European colonies in the Caribbean and South America" (13).

[16] Robertson speculates that "the interest of Knox and Hamilton declined when the magnetism of Miranda was withdrawn and when political circumstances changed" (252); that is, they lost interest once Miranda's plan was obviously doomed to fail.

largely illusory, and that imperialism was a force at work in American politics long before the Spanish-American War of 1898.[17] In the U.S.'s earliest decades, a necessary interest in national security and anxiety about European encroachment often overlapped with desire for territorial expansion. Hamilton's outlook on the Miranda scheme is instructive: "Besides eventual security against invasion, we ought certainly to look to the possession of the Floridas and Louisiana," he wrote to Secretary of War James McHenry on June 27, 1799, "and we ought to squint at South America" (qtd. in Robertson 333). While in private correspondence Hamilton "looked to" possessing Western hemisphere lands, his 1788 mapping of revolutionary geopolitics proposes an alignment among all non-European peoples. In the *Federalist Papers* he writes,

> The world may politically, as well as geographically, be divided into four parts, each having a distinct set of interests. Unhappily for the other three, Europe, by her arms and by her negotiations, by force and by fraud, has in different degrees extended her dominion over them all. Africa, Asia, and America have successively felt her domination. (58-59)

Thus, Hamilton, himself an immigrant from the West Indies, espouses a bipartite vision of the United States' situatedness toward the rest of the Western Hemisphere: the U.S. is at once aligned with and "squinting at" the Americas as a whole—a part of and yet an overseer of Latin America, the Western North American territories, and the Caribbean.

The relationship between Mary and Clara in *Secret History* embodies this paradoxical positioning. Mary is at once a part of and yet an observer, regulator, and

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[17] Van Alstyne, Heiss, and Loveman, among many others, exemplify the strain of historical scholarship that make eigthteenth- and nineteenth-century American imperialism impossible to ignore.

controller of Clara. In the first half of the novel, Mary and Clara's time on Saint-Domingue is characterized by perfectly intertwined fates, symbolically intertwined bodies, and Mary's almost constant surveillance of Clara. Sansay's division of her autobiography into two bodies fictionalizes the U.S.'s seemingly contradictory geopolitical positioning: at once coincident with and observant of the rest of the Americas. When the two inseparable sisters speak with Rochambeau in Madame Leclerc's dressing room, Mary spots an apt symbol for the United States' panoptic surveillance: "On a table, in the form of an altar, which stood near the bed, was an alabaster figure representing silence, with a finger on its lips, and bearing in its hand a waxen taper" (84). Like the white figure over the bed, Mary quietly stands watch over Clara's intimate activities, seeing all; from the vantage point of the shared space of the Western Hemisphere, the United States "looks at" Latin America and the Caribbean. The geopolitical implications of Mary and Clara's relationship become even clearer once they leave Haiti, are physically separated for the first time, and begin to extend their simultaneous alignment and surveillance to other islands of the West Indies.

Mary's positioning toward Clara embodies the young United States' diplomatic positioning toward other Western hemisphere colonies and nations during the early nineteenth century. In the revolutionary half-century after it gained its independence from Britain, the young United States fashioned itself as the benevolent overseer of Latin American independence struggles. In order to bolster regional economic stability, it was in the U.S.'s interest to prevent the transfer of Caribbean lands from European nation to European nation. This interest was solidified into policy by January 1811, less than three years after the publication of Sansay's novel, when Congress passed the No-Transfer Resolution. A precursor to the more famous 1823 Monroe Doctrine, the No-Transfer

Resolution affirmed U.S. opposition to European nations' annexing Western Hemisphere colonies to one another. Of the Floridas, controlled by Spain but at risk of being annexed to England, the resolution stated that the U.S. "cannot without serious inquietude see any part of the said territory pass into the hands of any foreign Power" (United States Congress 114). The U.S. had already obliquely aligned itself with Latin American independence movements by permitting U.S. merchants to sell arms to rebels in the Americas.

Mary, too, supports an independence movement: Clara's dramatic escape from the rule of her husband. Her support, however, is notably conditional. After a lengthy justification of divorce, in which Mary defends Clara against the criticism she fears her sister will undeservedly suffer, Mary adds with jarring harshness, "but if [Clara] has sought protection with another, […] my heart renounces her, and she will no longer have a sister" (128-9). Mary lends unquestioning support to Clara's decision to leave her husband, but, with whiplash-inducing speed, withdraws that support if Clara leaves her husband for another man. Read in light of U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America and the Caribbean, Mary's initially confusing, almost self-contradictory opinion about divorce begins to make sense. To put it in terms of early nineteenth-century American diplomacy, Mary supports Clara's *independence*, but not her *transfer* from one power to another. Clara reinforces the diplomatic implications of this seemingly incongruous stance when she scolds, "I was so ill-fated as to meet that phenomenon of a jealous Frenchman, and with my wounds still bleeding, would I put my happiness in the power of a Spaniard?" (150). Independence, marital or political, can be supported only when it does not trigger dependence on a different European power. Together, Mary and Clara compose a romantic No-Transfer Resolution.

In national politics, the No-Transfer Resolution and U.S. support for Latin American independence—apparently pro-democratic and anti-imperial positions—were coupled with an alarming and widespread belief in Latin American and Caribbean cultural inferiority. For example, John Adams writes that "the people of South America are the most ignorant, the most bigoted, the most superstitious of all the Roman Catholics in Christendom" and suggests that trying to establish democracies in Latin America would be "as absurd as similar plans would be to establish democracies among the birds, beasts, and fishes."[18] These ideas were by no means limited to prominent early republican political leaders. A 1799 essay written by one William Tudor reflects the care taken to distinguish the United States from the apparently less civilized portions of the Americas.[19] Tudor calls for U.S. citizens to adopt a referent separate from "American," since

> the term American is of indefinite extent, and indiscriminately includes all the native inhabitants of this immense continent, from Patagonia to Baffin's Bay; and from the Caribbean Archipelago in the Atlantic to the shores of California, on the North Pacific Ocean. The Mustee and Creole of Cuba, or Barbadoes; the tawny savage of the Oronoque; as well as his fiercer brother of Lake Superior, are all Americans, as truly as the wealthy native of Maryland, or the sober citizen of Philadelphia. (281)

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[18] Adams wrote this in letters to James Lloyd, 27 and 30 March 1815. Quoted in Schoultz, 5.

[19] The essay, whose full title is "A letter from the treasurer of the Massachusetts Historical Society to the president, on the propriety and expediency of an appropriate national name, designatory of the Citizens of the U. States as a distinct people from the other inhabitants of the two vast American Peninsulas," was printed in 1800 in the annals of the Massachusetts Historical Society and reprinted in the Federalist-leaning semi-weekly Boston newspaper *The Centinel*, and in the Richmond *National Magazine* the following year.

Tudor's rather pragmatic demand for geo-semantic clarity mingles with the fear of a contaminating racial and social association with the rest of the Western Hemisphere. Tudor's essay was promoted by "J. Morse," probably Jedidiah Morse, whose 1789 *American Geography* claims that the West Indies are "the natural legacy of this continent, and will doubtless be claimed as such when America will have arrived at an age which will enable her to maintain her right" (534). The ideology of Latin American and Caribbean degeneracy strongly suggests that the endgame of encouraging these apparently inferior colonies' independence from Europe was to coax *de*pendence on the U.S. As one historian puts it, "The No Transfer Resolution clearly indicated American ambitions to expand territorially" (Smith 153).

By comparison, Mary's defense of Clara's revolutionary break with her husband, as well as Mary's relatively sympathetic outlook on the Haitian Revolution, must be read in concert with their observations on the landscape and inhabitants of Cuba and Jamaica. In the latter half of the novel, Mary's and Clara's respective complaints to Burr and to each other about the dirtiness, poverty, and mismanaged colonial governments on Cuba and Jamaica at first strike the reader as the finicky whining of fastidious society ladies. But when read alongside Mary's delineation of the Haitian Revolution and praise of American order, freedom, and affluence, these complaints emerge as a tempting portrait of a Caribbean power vacuum, with Cuba and Jamaica, at least, painted as promising but failing societies ripe for competent colonial management.

Secret History shifts focus from Saint-Domingue to other islands of the Caribbean at the exact moment the rebelling black inhabitants take over the island permanently. As Drexler points out, the Haitian Revolution represents for Sansay a model of effective

collective action ("Brigands and Nuns"). But while Drexler emphasizes Sansay's application of this model as a yardstick to measure the effectiveness of other collectivities in her later novel *Laura*, I would like to suggest that Sansay emphasizes the success of the Haitian Revolution in order to effectively end Mary's interest in the island as a possible site for colonial control. At the start of the novel, even though Mary is reluctantly compelled to Saint-Domingue by her inordinate attachment to Clara, she is easily lulled into fantasies of colonial domination:

> The arrival of General Rochambeau seems to have spread terror among the negroes. I wish they were reduced to order that I might see the so much vaunted habitations where I should repose beneath the shade of orange groves; walk on carpets of rose leaves and frenchipone; be fanned to sleep by silent slaves, or have my feet tickled by the soft hand of a female attendant. [….] What a delightful existence! thus to pass away life in the arms of voluptuous indolence. (73)

Annoyed that such an inconvenience as a political insurrection would interfere with her tropical pleasure, Mary exhibits a solipsism so extreme it verges on the comical and perhaps is intended as self-deprecating. The ultimate measure of success of the Haitian Revolution in the novel is the disappearance of such fantasies as Mary's dreams of "voluptuous indolence." The narrators' averted gaze after the massacre of the whites on Saint-Domingue indicates not just a change of scene but a shift in U.S. expansionist priorities.

In fact, only the first fourteen of the novel's thirty-two letters are written from Saint-Domingue, a proportion that has not been matched by scholars, who tend to

emphasize the novel's engagement with the Haitian Revolution. *Secret History*'s Jamaican and Cuban scenes reinforce, to some extent, the predominant contemporary viewpoint of the West Indies' inferiority. Mary and Clara describe the islands as dangerous and disorderly. For example, after she relates a story of two unprosecuted murders in Cuba, Mary adds, "Nothing is more common than such events" (121). Confirming the widespread disdain for Southern European Catholicism, Mary finds the Cubans and Jamaicans to be beholden to and misled by silly religious superstitions. For example, in St. Jago de Cuba, a merchant's wife has paid to have a splendid church built, because she believes St. Francis interceded in her prayers to be cured of a serious illness. Mary sarcastically notes, "Half the money expended in this pious work would have raised thousands of the inhabitants of this place, who are in greatest want, to comparative ease. But it would not if thus employed, have had such an effect on the minds of the people; nor would the lady have had any hope of becoming herself a saint, an honour to which she aspires, and which she may perhaps attain" (127-8).

Moreover, the sisters marvel at the extent to which the islands appear to be unproductive both economically and agriculturally, blessed with great resources but failing to efficiently capitalize them. Clara registers her astonishment, for example, that a Cuban rancher, "whose abode resembled the den of poverty, is the owner of countless multitudes of cattle, and yet it was with the greatest difficulty that we could procure a little milk" (143). Because of their deficient productivity, she reports, in Cuba, "the owners of vast territories are in the most abject poverty" (144). Clara echoes the "development mode" of landscape description Pratt has observed in European narratives of African travel, wherein the explorer-traveler "combines everyday visual vocabulary with specialized"—in Clara's

case, agricultural—"vocabulary that encodes the region's development potential" (206).[20] Mary and Clara have unusually sharp eyes for development potential.

Nevertheless, the problems of disorder, poverty, and religious superstition are delineated as contingent rather than endemic—a distinction made particularly emphatically by Clara. In a sympathetic defense of the natural but unutilized ability of the islanders, Clara declares that the poverty she has witnessed is "entirely owing to their vicious government" (144). Clara reports the paternalistic opinion of the Irish-Spanish governor of Bayam, which Clara calls his "little empire" (149): "He laughs heartily at his ragged subjects, by whom however he is regarded as a father and a friend," Clara claims. "He says that *with better laws* they would be the best fellows in the world; but situated as they are, their indolence is their best security" (149, emphasis added). Clara avoids the ideology of biological Caribbean degeneracy; she considers herself a witness to communities with great potential for improvement.

In the novel's romantic plot, Clara is a reflection of the island colonies of the Caribbean, since she, of course, is also locked in a power struggle with a despot—her husband. Clara is also linked to Caribbean and Southern European Catholicism through her interest in and admiration of the Virgin Mary basilica in El Cobre, Cuba.[21] Furthermore, Mary condemns Clara, however sympathetically, as a "coquette" (153). Clara solicits male

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[20] It's worth noting that Sansay's (via Mary's and Clara's) perception of Cuba's agricultural productive capabilities was spot-on. According to Luis Martínez-Fernández, Cuba's agricultural production exploded in the decades following Mary's observations about the fallowness of the land: "While in 1804, 586 coffee farms exported 1,250,000 pounds, in 1826, 2,067 farms exported 44,344,950 pounds [….] Sugar exports more than doubled from 35,238 tons in 1805 to 84,189 in 1829" (7), an output that would continue to skyrocket until Cuba provided nearly half the world's sugar by 1855 (12).

[21] The candles, statues, natural surroundings, and organ of the church, Clara promises in the letter to Mary, "fill the mind with awe" and lead her to "pardon the superstitious faith of the ignorant votaries of this holy land" (142).

attention without proffering actual sex; these nonreproductive sexual practices link her body to the fallow land and disorganized ranches of the Caribbean islands whose poverty she and Mary lament.[22]

But most conspicuously, Clara too is inadequately governed; whenever Mary's watchful eye strays from her momentarily, Clara almost immediately finds herself in grave trouble, violating the dictates of decorum and even marital law. In one representative example of many, Mary explains, "I had forgotten Clara *for a moment*, when, turning, I beheld the general [Rochambeau], who bending one knee to the ground, seized her [Clara's] hand passionately, and at the same time I saw St. Louis ascending the mountain" (102, emphasis added). Clara requires supervision all the time, by Mary's telling; even a momentary lapse in surveillance proves disastrous.

Like Clara, the islands of the West Indies and the colonies of Latin America require a watchful guide, according to early nineteenth-century U.S. hemispheric diplomacy. In late 1811, after calling for a buildup of the army and navy, President Madison added that it is "impossible to overlook" the independence movements "developing themselves among the great communities which occupy the southern portion of our hemisphere, and extend into our neighborhood" (494). The role of the U.S., he says, is "to take a deep interest in their destinies; to cherish reciprocal sentiments of good will; to regard the progress of events; and not to be unprepared for whatever order of things may be ultimately established" (494). Madison's directive here is almost excessively passive: Madison cannot even bring himself to use the word "prepare," but instead tells Congress "*not* to be

[22] In Dillon's persuasive reading, the very purpose of the novel is to resuscitate the value of Creole social reproduction in the face of a colonial world order that insists on Creole sterility.

*un*prepared." Of even more interest, Madison claims that the U.S. will "regard" the events—neither to regard them with some emotive content (to regard *with* joyful expectation, say) nor to regard them as some object (to regard *as* a fortuitous circumstance, for example)—but merely to regard. Careful surveillance, as in the No-Transfer Resolution's desire not to "see" territory pass from nation to nation and as in Hamilton's "squinting" at Latin America, is the diplomatic mode here. If Clara roughly embodies the independence-seeking colonies of the Caribbean, Mary models the watchful role of the U.S. in Western hemisphere diplomacy.

It's no coincidence that the recipient of Mary's linked observations about Clara and the revolutionary Caribbean is Aaron Burr. Burr had spent 1805 and 1806 on an expedition along the western border of the newly acquired Louisiana territory, very likely surveying its suitability to become a new empire under his rule. Sansay served as Burr's messenger at the time and possibly recruited Irish laborers for Burr's cause, as Drexler has speculated ("Brigands and Nuns"). At the time of *Secret History*'s publication, Burr had been tried for treason, had been acquitted, and was living in Europe. Sansay's addressing the letters to a powerful international political celebrity interested in personally creating and governing a new empire is more than a mere publicity stunt. Mary and Clara's portrait of Cuba and Jamaica as ripe and indeed desperate for strong leadership emerges as an open invitation for Caribbean filibustering. To put it another way, Sansay's *Secret History* is much more than a passive presentation of a tourist's experiences; it lays out the appetizing islands of the Caribbean like a tasting menu of colonial expansion. Just as Mary approaches Clara as "more than a sister," indeed circumscribed within her, the early U.S. proto-imperial approach to the Caribbean was what we might term "expansion by alliance": the U.S.

publicly elided the differences in experience and positioning between itself and the Caribbean, claiming shared interests, and encouraged independence from Europe in an effort ultimately to exert power. In Sansay's *Secret History*, disciplinary power exerted by individuals like Mary mirrors the geopolitical power exercised by weak but ambitious states, like the U.S.

While the novel does provide insight into the United States' earliest dabbles in imperialist tactics, one of the most immediately noticeable and unique qualities of *Secret History* is the inadequacy of the nation-form to encapsulate its characters' affiliations. Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse have claimed that the 1850s brought the first examples of "American fiction that seems to strive for a coherent, auto-generative account of the national community" (667); prior to the era of Hawthorne and Stowe, they explain, American novels "imagine a community in cosmopolitan terms" (668). Mary and Clara jointly embody that cosmopolitan outlook. Certainly Clara in particular exemplifies a kind of multilingual, omni-ethnic subjectivity; the sheer speed and facility with which Clara learns foreign languages—almost instantly—suggests a cosmopolitanism and adaptability that transcend the confines of the nation-state.

In other words, national allegory cannot sustain a rich reading of this novel. It is not satisfactory simply to point out that Mary is attached to and wants to control Clara in the same apparently benevolent way that the United States is attached to and wants to control the European colonies of the Caribbean. When read as separate characters, Mary and Clara resemble a surveying, internationally policing nation and a weak but rebellious colony, but when read together as the proxy for Leonora Sansay, this facile analogy falls apart. *Secret History* departs from the tradition of nineteenth-century American travel writing composed

and consumed primarily in order to articulate and consolidate American national identity.[23] In the narrative, Sansay corporeally divides the two discursive functions—the informational and the sentimental—that Pratt has identified in nineteenth-century travel narrative. Mary represents what Pratt calls "the landscanning, self-effacing producer of information," who "is associated with the panoptic apparatuses of the bureaucratic state" (*Imperial Eyes* 77); Clara, then, is the "sentimental, experiential subject" who "inhabits that self-defined 'other' sector of the bourgeois world, the private sphere—home of desire, sex, spirituality, and the Individual" (*Imperial Eyes* 77). Sansay's division of herself into two bodies permits *Secret History* to span the sentimental/private and the informational/panoptic functions of imperialist travel writing. Thereby, Sansay produces a narrative that neither parrots nor eschews the operations of the nation-state, that is neither confined by nor devoid of domestic, interpersonal concerns. Burr, Sansay, and the Mary/Clara fictional proxy for Sansay are neither American political agents nor West Indian colonial subjects. The lack of organization identified by Mary and Clara in Jamaica and Cuba indicates a power vacuum attractive for imperial predation, but the women's sympathy and affection for the inhabitants suggests some new kind of power—neither European nor American nor Creole, but something other, just as the successful revolution on Haiti resulted in a radically other kind of sovereignty and just as the Burr conspiracy could only be categorized as extra-national.

In fact, the sheer alterity of Burr's conspiracy was what so captured the public's and the government's attention: it was never clear, and remains uncertain to this day, whether Burr aimed at revolution, empire, annexation, or simple real estate speculation. A

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[23] This tradition has been traced by Larzer Ziff in *Return Passages*, Terry Caesar in *Forgiving the Boundaries*, and William W. Stowe in *Going Abroad*.

May 1807 pamphlet sent from attorney-general Caesar Rodney to Jonathan Clark (eldest brother of the explorer William Clark) in Louisville, requests that Clark interrogate local Kentuckians about Burr's activities in the area. The pamphlet contains an exhaustive list of over forty-five "INTERROGATORIES" and reveals the extent to which, even *after* Burr's acquittal, federal investigators lacked even the most basic knowledge about the alleged conspiracy. Rodney recommends that Clark ask, for example, such a basic a question as, "Was it a military expedition or enterprize [*sic*]? And if it were; what were the ostensible objects of the same?" (Rodney 2) The suspicions become ever more convoluted:

> [D]id they intend to revolutionize the territories of Louisiana, Mississippi or New Orleans, to put down the existing governments in all or either of them, to seize the shipping and plunder the banks at New Orleans, to seize on any arms, ammunition or warlike stores and provisions wherever they were to be found in the said territories or either of them, for the purpose of equipping themselves for the conquest of the Floridas or of Mexico? [….] Or was not their object to separate the western states and territories of the United States, from the Atlantic states, to establish by force of arms an independent government, of which the said Aaron Burr was to be the Monarch or Emperor, and the capital of which was to be fixed at New Orleans? Or did they extend their views so far, as ultimately to contemplate a complete and total revolutionary force, throughout the United States, so as to reduce them to subjection, under the government of the said Aaron Burr, and his associates? (Rodney 2)

Rodney demands to know whether Burr planned to assassinate the president, before he demurs, "or was their object merely to settle on lands situated on the Washita, said to have been purchased by the said Aaron Burr of a certain Baron Bastrop, or a certain Mr. Lynch?" (3) Burr's expedition was never definitively categorized as military, treasonous, or violent, and no one knew how many recruits he had accumulated, if any. All Rodney could assure himself was that Burr's plan was not "a patriotic task" (Rodney 1).

Sansay's involvement in the uncategorized, extranational Burr conspiracy sheds some light on *Secret History*'s unclear political opinions. As Matt Clavin has noted, early narratives of the Haitian Revolution "bifurcated: each text fell into one of two ideological camps"—proslavery or abolitionist (2). Clavin quotes selectively from Sansay in order to neatly fit her into the former camp, but in reality, as we have seen, *Secret History* contains elements of both sides of the bifurcation Clavin has identified. Sansay does not throw unambiguous support behind the French, the white Creoles, or the rebels on Saint Domingue because the novel avoids conventional national affiliation: the novel's American women are *themselves* contenders for imperial control.

Sansay's real-life letters to Burr most clearly articulate female imperial ambition. In a May 1803 letter, in which Sansay demands Burr tell her whether he has "raised an army to prevent the french [*sic*] taking possession of Louisiana" (230), she brags that "Clara" (i.e., herself) continues to have "some influence in public affairs" (229). In the same letter, she describes the extremely ambitious motives behind her flirtations with men of power, and she bitterly exhibits her frustrations that her small-minded husband has hindered her plans: "'[T]was power, 'twas place she ['Clara'/Sansay] aim'd at, and had she not been thwarted, she would have rul'd St. Domingue; at present she has sunk back to her original

nothingness, because she has a husband who would neither shut his eyes and profit by her powers, nor open them and join her to secure & it [*sic*] this husband she owes to you" (227). Sansay perceives seduction and colonial power as methods of control able to be mutually leveraged by both male and female transnational agents.

Sansay and her fictional proxies relate to national, imperial power in roughly the same way as filibusters—citizens of and loyal to the United States, but ultimately interested in personal gain. Transnational adventurers who nevertheless illuminate the workings of national power, filibusters—both military and sexual—embody the need to comprehend early American cultural production simultaneously within and beyond the category of the nation-state. At the same time that Mary's interpersonal position toward Clara elucidates the United States' geopolitical position toward the West Indies, the two sisters together destabilize any nation-based conceptions of identity and power. Ultimately, *Secret History* suggests that neither a national nor a transnational hermeneutic lens alone can bring the thematic concerns of the early American novel into full focus; instead, both lenses must be squinted through at once.

Chapter 2

Nationalism, Amputation, and Hybridity in the North American Historical Novel

After the War of 1812, the United States felt a new urgency to fashion itself as a unified nation. In his final annual address to Congress in December 1816, James Madison called for Congress to establish "the uniformity of weights and measures," "a university within this District on a scale and for objects worthy of the American nation," and "a comprehensive system of roads and canals, such as will have the effect of drawing more closely together every part of our country by promoting intercourse and improvements and by increasing the share of every part in the common stock of national prosperity" (Madison, "Eighth Annual Address"). His successor, James Monroe, continued this goal of national unification by spending four months touring New England, which was still dominated by Federalists who, stinging from the war's effect on commerce, vociferously called for the secession of New England from the rest of the United States. Monroe's private meetings and public appearances offered the impression that he was interested in bridging the cultural, economic, and political gaps among U.S. regions; as an editorial in *Niles' Weekly Register* noted, "The real or apparent moderation of party spirit has caused the present to be called 'the era of good-feelings'" ("The era" 163). This euphoric term, originally coined in Boston's *Columbian Centinel* in 1817, endured throughout the nineteenth century and remains shorthand for the Monroe administration.

The popular U.S. historical romance, whose most successful American practitioners included James Fenimore Cooper, Catharine Maria Sedgwick, and Lydia Maria Child, consolidated national sentiment during the 1820s and helped bolster the tenuous political maintenance of this so-called "Era of Good Feelings." According to Georg Lukács's analysis of the historical romance, this genre of fiction looks to the past for symbolic representations of the national present. As Richard Slotkin points out, the popularity of the historical romance in both England and the United States "coincided with the rise of European and American nationalism" and provided "the popular mythos which both fed and fed upon that cultural and political movement" (82). In Sandra Messinger Cypess's estimation, new world literary cultures turn in particular to moments of colonial conquest in order to dispel separation anxiety with the European colonizer, against whom the Western hemisphere nation desires cultural distinction "while not faulting themselves as children for desiring separation" (41). Fiction like Cooper's Leatherstocking tales and Child's *Hobomok* were both conceived and well received in the wake of a war against the nation's colonizer; they dramatize historical moments that seem to prepare the way for contemporary cultural and social conditions. These historical romances are imbued with what Walter Benjamin would call the "*weak* Messianic power" of the past (254): they tell postwar Americans how they arrived at this point.

American fiction during this era reflected anxieties about national unity that, although not new, were exacerbated in the decade or so following the War of 1812. Although the aftermath of the War of 1812 cemented the United States' complete political freedom from Great Britain, it also exposed the sectional fault lines threatening to divide the union. Many Republicans and inhabitants of rural and frontier areas perceived British

colonial agents in Canada and the Western territories as the instigators of Native American unrest, but that viewpoint (as erroneous as it may have been) failed to compel Federalists in coastal regions, particularly New England, who by contrast considered good relations with Great Britain essential to their trade interests (Wilentz 141-178, Loveman 29-31, Beard 409-416). In David Reynolds' words, the Monroe administration (1817-1825) "strengthened nationalism and expanded democracy but also planted the seeds of future conflict" (*Waking Giant* 21). As both slavery and diverging economic priorities underscored sectionalist and cultural fissures only partially sutured by the Missouri Compromise of 1820, American citizens experienced a resurgence of post-revolutionary anxieties about national identity during the 1820s.

American authors of the era reflected these anxieties. The War of 1812 was "a chastening experience for the United States" (Davis, Finan, and Peck 53), which demonstrated not only U.S. power but also the limitations of that power; American fiction underwent a sort of "chastening" as well. While authors in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century like Charles Brockden Brown, Washington Irving, and Leonora Sansay included internationally circulated characters and explored American transnational routes, American authors like Cooper and Sedgwick focused on the North American continent, mining history for origin stories about American roots. The bodies represented in U.S. fiction reflected this change.

While just before the outbreak of the War of 1812, an expansive-minded Leonora Sansay, for example, used two bodies to represent a watchful and cosmopolitan prewar American existence, the 1820s saw retractions of both American military ambitions and novelistic corporeal representations. As the territorial and national unity of already-drawn

American borderlines took center stage in U.S. politics, the physical integrity of the body became central to the American novel. Furthermore, the body shifted from an expansive, watchful, transnationally circulating dual subject in a novel like *Secret History* to an imperiled object in the 1820s, liable to dismemberment and requiring vigilant preservation.

The bodies in two of the period's historical romances manifest American anxieties about national fragmentation in particularly interesting ways. The anonymous *Xicoténcatl* (1826) and Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* (1827) are both historical romances set during crucial moments in the European conquest of North America, and both center their narratives on dramatic scenes of amputation. The amputees in both novels are transitional characters whose national and racial identities are conflicted and compromised. Both tales take an elegiac approach to Native American Indians, depict noble and heroic Native American Indian characters, and promote the potential of interracial friendship, but the two novels diverge in their depictions of interracial procreation. In *Xicoténcatl*, miscegenation represents the only viable way forward for Western hemispheric nationhood; by contrast, in *Hope Leslie*, interracial relationships are pushed to the margin. While Sedgwick's downplaying of miscegenation reflects a wider trend of racial nationalism in the Anglophone historical romance, other corporeal metaphors in *Hope Leslie* complicate the novel's version of nascent U.S. nationalism. Although interracial heterosexual relationships either fail or recede from visibility in *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick actively resists the interpretive tendency that would privilege heteronormativity as either a marker of success or a harbinger of U.S. nationhood. Putting *Hope Leslie* into conversation with the similarly themed but less known *Xicoténcatl* elucidates the corporeal nationalist metaphors in each.

Sedgwick's complex nationalist vision has been treated extensively by the critical scholarship on *Hope Leslie*, which has tended to be bifurcated. First, after the high reputation the novel had enjoyed in the nineteenth century was resuscitated by the work of canon-revising feminist scholars, *Hope Leslie* came to be seen as a proto-feminist novel. Inspired by the realization that, as Dana Nelson puts it, nineteenth-century Americans "could envision, contra Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, a world with strong women who go unpunished, unmarked, unfettered" ("Rediscovery" 286), this wave of critics elucidated the novel's support of women's rights. They emphasized the alignment between Hope, the novel's white heroine, and Magawisca, its Native American Indian heroine. Daughter of the Pequot chief Mononotto, Magawisca is given by Massachusetts governor John Winthrop to the Fletcher family to work as a servant. When she develops a close relationship to the family, especially the fourteen-year-old Everell, she feels torn between loyalty to her father and her tribe on the one hand and affection for the Fletcher family on the other. In a climactic scene in which Mononotto attempts to kill Everell in retribution for previous English murders, Magawisca jumps in front of the hatchet aimed at Everell's neck. Her arm is amputated in the process. Meanwhile, Hope is adopted by the Fletcher family after her mother, a former lover of Mr. Fletcher, dies. Hope too develops feelings for Everell, and Hope too comes into conflict with the governing authorities. Hope is not forced to sacrifice any limbs to her internal conflict, but she sacrifices her reputation when, in an attempt to contact her kidnapped sister Faith, she refuses to tell either Winthrop or the Fletchers what she is doing, even under direct questioning. She also breaks the law explicitly when she springs both Nelema, an old Indian healer accused of witchcraft, and Magawisca herself out of prison. This lawlessness and indecorum align Hope with

Magawisca in their defiance of patriarchal authority and suggests the capabilities of politically active women.[24]

In reaction to this convincing line of interpretation, other scholars have sought to bring the novel's politics of race and empire to the forefront.[25] They object that, however pro-woman the novel might be and however strong a character Sedgwick presents in Magawisca, *Hope Leslie* noticeably agrees with and contributes to the nation-building, Indian-removing tendencies of the Cooperian frontier novel. While Hope and Magawisca share some strong qualities and outshine Everell as characters of interest and sympathy, Hope wins the (dubious) prize of Everell's hand in marriage and ultimately emerges as the prototypical (white) American citizen, while Magawisca recedes respectfully, sterilely, and approvingly into the woods and into obscurity. *Hope Leslie*, then, bolsters the Vanishing American mythos, and is racist rather than progressive.[26] Within this cluster of critics, a

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[24] Among the best examples of this line of scholarship is Zagarell, Gossett and Bardes, Harris, Higonnet, and Fetterley. Harris insightfully points out the measured triumphs of Hope's and Magawisca's assertiveness by contrasting them with Esther's passive but still successful submissions: "Sedgwick treads a fine line between representing the submissive woman as a culturally valorized figure and showing how her passivity inevitably results in her being manipulated by others for their own gain. In Sedgwick's work, passive submission by women to male authority may result in harmonious families, but it almost always ends in the destruction of the passive party, generally as a result of her partner's irresponsibility" (278). Zagarell, Gossett, and Bardes put Sedgwick into conversation with less canonical contemporary writers in order to limn proto-feminist trends across early nineteenth-century fiction by women.

[25] This represents a shift in emphasis rather than a genuine disagreement, as questions of race and empire often appear briefly in feminist outlooks on Sedgwick; for example, Emerson offers this caveat to her argument that *Hope Leslie* promotes equality: "Nineteenth-century society clearly cannot integrate Magawisca's rebellious character—at least not without the ameliorations of Hope's fair skin and cheerful demeanor. *Hope Leslie* raises multiple possibilities for women's character in the new nation, but these, too, have their limits" (32).

[26] Within this camp, the rhetoric of Roland Finger is perhaps the most vitriolic: he accuses Sedgwick of a "dark jingoism" and a "sanctimonious sympathy" deployed self-interestedly in order to help white Americans "cope with national guilt for colonial violence and

subset that we might label the Foucauldian compromisers, carefully parse out the complexities of the false "conservative/progressive" dichotomy. It is a mistake, they rightly point out, to treat ideology as a monolith and to insist that a novel must either resist or submit to its culture's ideology. Recognizing that there is no single ideology to resist and that there is no getting outside of ideology, this school of critics concludes that Sedgwick is neither progressive nor reactionary but is instead forward-thinking on gender and conformist on race.[27]

While the three camps—the feminists, the anti-imperialists, and the compromisers—have contributed insightful perspectives on the novel and on the functioning of historical novels in general, they all reproduce and ossify the gender and racial categories that Sedgwick sought to disrupt. All three critical standpoints take root in the assumption that political themes are race- and gender-specific—that, for example, the way Sedgwick represents women in the Puritan era must indicate her views on contemporary women's rights and the way Sedgwick represents seventeenth-century

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expropriation" (132, 133, 119). Maria Karafilis claims that Hope's sympathy for Magawisca "perpetuate[s] the very racist, oppressive state her actions also tend to undermine" (336). In Ezra Tawil's convincing reading, Faith Leslie's marriage to Oneco paradoxically demonstrates Sedgwick's belief that racial identity is at core irreducible and inalterable (118).

[27] This approach works for some scholars better than others. Lora Romero puts it well, for example, when she explains that *Hope Leslie* "employs relativism to buttress its own antipatriarchal critique as much as to ennoble aboriginals" (26). On the other hand, critics like Douglas Ford choose to simply divide gender from race and empire and imagine Sedgwick on the "right" side of one and the "wrong" side of the other. Saddled by an excessive dependence on Foucault's formulation of "discourse," Ford often makes such statements as: "Sedgwick's novel dares to imagine a discourse which can make cultural distinctions clear and draw sympathy from its reader, but it ultimately finds itself confined by the limiting discourses actually available" (86). In an attempt to extricate criticism from the binary between "ideology" and "opposition," Ford constructs a new false framework in which authors are choosing among discourses with which to engage, rather than constructing discourse through their creations.

Pequots must show her position on contemporary Indian politics. This way of doing cultural studies is so engrained in early Americanist scholarship that it may be worth remembering that it is neither necessary nor inevitable. In fact, early American authors wrote in a tradition of dermally and genitally unbound metaphors. As Julia Stern reminds us, "The metaphor of the nation as virtuous woman is an eighteenth-century commonplace" (207). Gustavus Stadler claims that "liberal Euro-American writers" often imagine "people of color as mediating, critical figures in the always already problematic schema of public and private life. For a liberal, white writer, such a figure is embedded with deconstructive force, because he or she appears to wear the social on his or her skin" (41). In other words, authors do not always make a character Native American in order that she may represent all Native Americans, or female to represent females; makers of fiction do not necessarily inscribe their political viewpoints within the gendered and raced categories of their characters. Sedgwick, in fact, seems to take great pains to avoid rigid categorizations along lines of gender or race. Magawisca is often described by her European look: her face "beautiful even to an European eye" (23), her hair styled "contrary to the fashion of the Massachusetts Indians" (23), the cloth of her garments "obtained, probably, from the English traders" (23), and her leggings "similar to those worn by the ladies of Queen Elizabeth's court" (23). Magawisca also makes "marvellous progress" in English, according to Mrs. Fletcher (31). Of course, if read as an attempt to make Magawisca more sympathetic to Sedgwick's white readership and to help explain Everell's attraction to Magawisca by Europeanizing her, these details can be recruited into the interpretive framework that marks Sedgwick as a racist nation-builder.[28] But they could

[28] As Stadler reads Magawisca's body, "Despite the difference embedded in her racial

just as easily, and I think more fruitfully, be read as Sedgwick's support of plurality; by describing a girl who ardently identifies herself as Pequot yet gracefully reaps the sartorial benefits of cross-cultural contact,[29] Sedgwick imagines syncretism as an alternative to the genocide in which she is often accused of being complicit. As scholars of the novel, we are remiss if we do not consider the possibility that Sedgwick makes Magawisca a bit Euro-American, not to justify making her noble and attractive, but to suggest that Magawisca's experience resonates within Euro-American politics—that Magawisca is equally likely to symbolize "America" as she is to represent "Native America." A comparison between Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* and the anonymous novel *Xicoténcatl*, as well as a closer examination of the bodies in both novels, can usefully break the critical deadlock surrounding *Hope Leslie* by establishing an alternative hemispheric hermeneutics that do not center interpretation on characters' race and gender. Such an interpretive framework

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'peculiarities,'" Magawisca's "bodily surface, engraven with her past—'the legible record of her birth and wrongs'--is brought into being as an accessible text to be read, 'perused,' by a Western gaze" (47). For Stadler, Sedgwick gives Magawisca "white" qualities in order to make her legible and to confirm her attractiveness (43). Miller calls Sedgwick's description "an example of the tradition of the 'noble savage,' a condescending (if well-intentioned) attitude that has brought into question any ostensibly sympathetic depictions of Native Americans by Euro-Americans throughout history. Sedgwick intends to be sympathetic to Magawisca, yet her perspective is still somewhat allied with that of the Puritans: Magawisca for Sedgwick is a primitive 'other'" (132). Ford points out that one of the central tensions in the novel is that the reader is meant to admire Magawisca, but partially because she is so "Christian-like" (86).

[29] Such sartorial influences cut both ways: later in the novel, Magawisca makes contact with Hope by pretending to be a door-to-door moccasin saleswoman. Mrs. Grafton, Hope's embarrassing aunt, often ridiculed in the novel for preferring style over presumably more substantial matters, attests to the desirability of Indian-influenced fashion. Annoyed that Madam Winthrop had not announced the salesgirl's presence, she declares, "she knew I wanted them; at least she must know I might want them; and if I don't want them, that's nothing to the purpose [….] I should like you to have a pair, Hope. Sir Philip said yesterday, they gave a trig look to a pretty foot and ankle" (184).

must be reached by first elucidating the diverging ways in which critics approach Anglophone and Hispanophone fiction.

William Cullen Bryant was the first critic to place *Xicoténcatl* within a tradition of similarly themed Anglophone novels. He reviewed *Xicoténcatl* and provided the first partial English translation in his *United States Review and Literary Gazette* in 1827. He ascribes the historical romance a powerful role in political socialization, claiming that the novel "is a very convenient and effectual medium for the insinuation of opinions, which readers in general are not prepared or not inclined to receive in a more direct manner" (337). Since Bryant's initial assessment, scholars agree that the author of *Xicoténcatl* is addressing the Mexican nationalist struggle. Lessons learned by the Tlaxcalan victims in the novel apply not only to the struggles of indigenous populations but also to the fledgling Mexican nation and more broadly to all Latin American national independence movements.[30] In other words, indigenous characters speak not just to indigenous political issues, but also to national and international politics. Inspired by this scholarship, I would like to suggest a new way to understand *Hope Leslie*, suggested by its similarities to *Xicoténcatl*.

Like *Hope Leslie*, *Xicoténcatl* contains a scene of dramatic and richly symbolic amputation. *Xicoténcatl* was written in Spanish, set during the overthrow of the Aztec

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[30] For example, Jongsoo Lee situates the anonymous novel in a hybrid space in the early nineteenth-century debates about Mexican national sovereignty, a space which he ultimately calls "Creole patriotic enlightened liberal" (337). For Lee, *Xicotencatl* exploits indigenous characters and history, using mistaken or fabricated information in the service of advancing Creole nationalist ideas. Daniel O. Mosquera calls the novel "an interesting if somewhat idealized response to nineteenth-century Mexican nationalist claims and complicated politics during its movements for independence" (172). Both Jayson T. Gonzales Sae-Saue and Begoña Pulido Herráez consider the novel a warning against reinstating a monarchy in place of Mexico's rickety new republic.

empire, and anonymously published in Philadelphia in 1826.[31] The novel fictionalizes the story of its titular character, a Tlaxcalan statesman, warrior, and resister to the invasion of Hernán Cortés. Cortés, of course, was the famous Spanish explorer and conquistador who invaded Aztec Mexico in 1519; his early alliance with the province of Tlaxcala proved decisive in his ultimate defeat of the Aztec empire. The novel depicts Tlaxcala's capitulation to the Spanish as the infiltration of an ideally conceived but internally fragmented democratic republic by a ruthless and manipulative despot. In a crucial scene, Cortés punishes a group of Tlaxcalan spies by amputating their limbs. This dismemberment corporealizes and symbolizes Cortés's political fragmentation of the Tlaxcalan republic and ultimately the Aztec empire.

Xicoténcatl engages some of the commonalities of Spanish- and Anglo-American New World nationalisms. The narrator warns, "When internal divisions destroy the unity of a people, they inevitably become the victims of their enemies" (79). This fear pervades the processes of both Mexican and U.S. nation formation in the 1820s. For example, well prior to the actual secession of South Carolina in 1860, the U.S. was many times at serious risk of dividing along sectional lines over the legality of slavery in newly acquired territory (a controversy temporarily quelled by the Compromises of 1820 and 1850) and the constitutionality of protective tariffs (whose divisive power began in the 1820s and peaked at the nullification crisis of 1833).[32] Mexico, which gained independence from Spain in 1821 and established a republican government in 1824, immediately faced separatist

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[31] Luis Leal concludes that the author was very likely the Cuban priest Félix Varela based on the novel's prose style, its subject matter, and Varela's residence in Philadelphia just prior to the novel's publication.

[32] For a detailed history of antebellum secession movements and the nullification crisis, see Ellis.

threats from the Río Grande and Yucatán territories, but especially from the state of Coahuila y Tejas. Mexican officials, worried about Amerindian violent resistance to Mexican settlement, attempted to buttress Creole military power by encouraging immigration to the sparsely populated Coahuila y Tejas. But when Mexico tried to enforce its gradual emancipation policy, Anglo American immigrants to the state resisted and began to threaten secession.[33] In other words, the United States and Mexico shared fears about national fragmentation, both territorial and ideological, in the 1820s. The decade's prominent historical novels are concerned with those fears: just as *Xicoténcatl*'s fragmented bodies signal its author's concerns about nation-threatening factions, the mutilated Magawisca reflects Sedgwick's anxieties about a fragmenting United States.

As Jesse Alemán has argued, recent archival recoveries made by the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project have complicated "the essentialist, nationalist sentiment that US Latino/a literary history works in opposition to Anglo American discourses. The contrary may in fact be true" (167). By asking what *Xicoténcatl* might have to say about the shared anxieties of both Mexican and U.S. burgeoning nationhood, and putting this anonymous U.S. Hispanic novel into conversation with Sedgwick's well-known Anglophone body of work, I join Caroline Field Levander and Robert S. Levine in their call to inquire, "what happens if the 'fixed' borders of a nation are recognized not only as historically produced political constructs that can be ignored, imaginatively reconfigured and variously contested but also as components of a deeper, more multilayered series of national and indigenous histories?" (401). Representations of the body in both Hispanic- and Anglo-American literary productions offer a provocative extra-

[33] Hamnett 112-176; Meyer, Sherman, and Deeds 297-337.

national space on which to project provisional answers to such a question. Anxious about the possibility of the nation's fragmentation, North American novelists—whether their language is English or Spanish—depict bodies at risk of breaking apart.

Xicoténcatl explicitly connects the nation and the body through both its narrative structure and the musings of its omniscient narrator. The novel tells two parallel stories, a personal narrative alongside a political one. The story of Tlaxcalan resistance to, alignment with, and ultimate subjugation by Hernán Cortés and his invading Spanish army parallels Cortés's kidnapping of and attempts to seduce and ultimately rape Teutila, the woman betrothed to the Tlaxcalan general Xicoténcatl. Structurally, the threats to Teutila's body reflect the threats to the Tlaxcalan nation-state, with sexual contact roughly analogous to colonization, consensual or coerced.

The narrator reinforces the structural analogy between nation and body by comparing Tlaxcala to an ill patient and anti-imperial Tlaxcalan senators to doctors at work on the body politic. The Tlaxcalan senator with the most seniority is Xicoténcatl the elder, who, like his eponymous son, is trenchantly opposed to the Spanish. But both Xicoténcatls are disputed by Magiscatzin, the second most senior senator, who favors aligning with Cortés against the Mexican empire. The elder Xicoténcatl explains political influence in medical terms: "Magiscatzin has friends, and when gangrene settles into one extremity, the sickness has already more or less contaminated other parts of the same body" (27). Instead of directing an internal counterattack against Magiscatzin's contingency in the Senate, the elder Xicoténcatl, wary of factions, turns his attention to the republic's civic virtue in general: "Thus did the wise and elderly Xicoténcatl, who saw in Magiscatzin's crime the first symptom that threatened the health of the nation, direct his attention and efforts to

revive public virtues and to paralyze the corruption of those who had sold out to special interests" (55). He also tells his son that "bad examples are contagious" and advises him to "be moderate and not allow yourself to be carried away by your ardor, losing yourself and with you the health of our nation" (55, 56). Toward the end of the novel, it is reported of the younger Xicoténcatl that "[i]n his mind, his homeland seemed like a desperately ill patient who is consumed daily by the lack of a spirited man who might dare to run the risk of saving him" (128). In the view of the Xicoténcatl family and the narrator, the nation is a body whose health must assiduously be maintained, and corrupt politics spreads through the nation in the same way that disease circulates through the body.

The analogy between nation and body in *Hope Leslie* is less explicitly delineated; Sedgwick tends to use her paratextual asides to chide her Puritan ancestors for their repression of women and destruction of Native Americans, rather than to explain her metaphors. Sedgwick corporealizes her nation-building themes by embodying national identity in characters. In Gustavus Stadler's excellent reading, Sedgwick's historical project is to "locate a different national origin, one in which bodily presence and pain help cement the state," as an alternative to the national origin documented by the Constitution that privileges the disembodied white male as the site of rights-based citizenship (44).

Indeed, *Hope Leslie*'s narrative structure revolves around the goings-on of Magawisca's body. The novel is divided into two parts. In Volume I, Sedgwick enlists Magawisca's body to test the intensity of political, familial, and sympathetic attachment. When William Fletcher returns to his home at the outskirts of the Massachusetts colony, he discovers that the Pequot chief Mononotto has attacked his family. Fletcher's wife and three youngest children are dead; his son Everell and his adopted daughter Faith have been

kidnapped. While she maintains loyalty to her father Mononotto, Magawisca also experiences a familial attachment to the Fletchers that she perceives as almost physical, biological. During the attack, Magawisca "shrunk, as if her own life were menaced, from the blow that was about to fall on her friends" (55). Later, she exclaims to Mononotto, "I bleed when they are struck" (63). Of course, this physicality performs the narrative function of foreshadowing: her allegiance to the Fletchers, and especially to Everell, causes her to lose her arm. Furthermore, the corporeality of her attachment has a thematic link to Sedgwick's concerns with sympathy: Magawisca, although physically an Indian, is in some ways a European, since she (in a sympathetic sense) *feels with* the Europeans. But these corporeal descriptors also point to the viscera, the fleshiness of both familial and political affiliations in this novel.

The climax of the first volume occurs when Mononotto is just about to execute Everell in revenge for his own son's death at the hands of the English. After numerous failed attempts to convince her father not to kill Everell, Magawisca finally intercedes physically:

> The chief raised the deadly weapon, when Magawisca, springing from the precipitous side of the rock, screamed, 'Forbear!' and interposed her arm. It was too late. The blow was levelled—force and direction given—the stroke aimed at Everell's neck, severed his defender's arm, and left him unharmed. The lopped quivering member dropped over the precipice. (93)

After this daring rescue, Everell escapes. He completes a course of study in England, during which time he maintains a lively correspondence by letter with Hope Leslie, who continues to live on the Fletcher homestead. When he returns to New England, Everell is

reunited not only with Hope but also with Hope's friend Esther Downing, who incidentally was once in love with and rejected by Everell.

When Volume II begins, Magawisca helps Hope make contact with her sister Faith, who is still living with the Native American Indians. Her plans are meddled with by Sir Philip Gardiner, a newcomer to town who pretends to be a very devout Puritan but is actually a Catholic seducer, and her refusal to tell anyone, even the powerful Governor Winthrop, about her actions causes everyone, including Everell, to disapprove of her. Nevertheless, Hope manages to obtain a secret meeting with Faith and Magawsica, who serves as interpreter. To her great disappointment, Hope is unable to convince Faith to return to "civilized" English society. Just as they are parting, the whole group is ambushed by Winthrop's forces—tipped off by the spying Sir Philip. The English capture Faith and Magawisca, but Oneco and Mononotto grab Hope as they flee. Hope is able to escape after Mononotto is struck by lightning. Magawisca is imprisoned, despite Hope's protestations of her innocence, and Magawisca's trial serves as the climax of Volume II.

Throughout Volume II, the narrative performs a kind of strip tease around Magawisca's missing limb; she always wears a large cloak or blanket that threatens to slip off but never quite does. For example, when Magawisca arrives in disguise at the Winthrops' house to set up a meeting with Hope Leslie, "Magawisca might have at once identified herself, by opening her blanket, and disclosing her person; but that she did not, no one will wonder who knows that a savage feels more even than the ordinary sensibility of personal deformity" (183). Sedgwick here has to fabricate a racial characteristic—inordinate Indian embarrassment at being an amputee—in order to keep Magawisca fully clothed and her severed limb concealed. Later, when Sir Philip Gardiner is visiting her in

prison, “Magawisca again turned away, and drawing her mantle, which, in her emotion, had fallen back, close over her shoulders, she continued to pace the apartment” (255). The severed limb, the symbol of conflicted affiliations and anxiety about divided and fractured nationhood, is always present and often acknowledged but never seen. Magawisca finally “threw back her mantle” in the climactic courtroom scene (293): “Her mutilated person, unveiled by this action, appealed to the senses of the spectators. Everell involuntarily closed his eyes, and uttered a cry of agony, lost indeed in the murmurs of the crowd. She spoke, and all again were as hushed as death” (293). With this final exposure of her limb, the novel reaches its second climax, which parallels the drama of her arm’s amputation in the first half of the novel. In the novel’s resolution, Everell and Hope spring Magawisca from jail, the English decide to return Faith to her Pequot husband Oneco, and Esther relinquishes all claims she may have had to Everell. Finally the way is cleared for the budding romance between Everell and Hope to be consummated in marriage. Thus while the novel is called *Hope Leslie*, arguably because Hope emerges as the reproductive prototypical American female, the narrative arc follows the perturbations of Magawisca’s body. As Stadler puts it, Magawisca’s body serves as “the dominant authority in shaping the novel’s events” (45).

Mutilated bodies also create a turning point in the action of *Xicoténcatl*. The author of *Xicoténcatl* uses corporeal dismemberment to signal the breakdown of national unity and capitulation to European colonial power. During the Tlaxcalan resistance to the Spanish, the younger Xicoténcatl leads the Tlaxcalan army in a series of battles in which the Spanish suffer greater casualties, but the Tlaxcalan people grow increasingly more skeptical of the necessity to fight. Meanwhile, Magiscatzin has organized a group of

soldiers willing to betray Xicoténcatl and fight for the Spanish. After another battle of mixed results and a failed Tlaxcalan sneak attack during the night, the Tlaxcalan Senate seems ready to vote for peace, under the influence of Magiscatzin. Xicoténcatl resolves to try a second sneak attack, this time with intelligence, so he sends some soldiers disguised as peasants to find out information about the Spanish Army. Cortés, however, discovers the plot through Magiscatzin's interference, cuts off their "ears, noses, fingers, and toes" and sends the men back to their villages to demonstrate the results of resistance to Spanish empire (43-4). This spectacular bodily dismemberment turns the tide of Tlaxcalan public opinion; the Senate follows Magiscatzin's advice and Tlaxcala becomes allied with the Spanish.

This graphic demonstration of Cortés's power is the first violence that happens onstage, as it were, as previous battle scenes have been narrated only in terms of military formations and negotiations between the generals—the author never gives the details of which person is attacking whom, in what manner, and with what result. The amputation scene also turns out to be the turning point in these skirmishes, because afterwards the Tlaxcalans entirely capitulate to Cortés. Physical dismemberment combined with the disunity of the Senatorial body results in the final surrender of Xicoténcatl and the Tlaxcalan army (44). This corporeally-induced military turning point is duplicated later in the Spanish advance on Mexico; the Mexican army is on the verge of a decisive victory when Cortés saves himself with another spectacle of corporeal destruction: "The astute politician [Cortés] sent the royal corpse [of Moctezuma] to the people, who fled terrified and horrified upon seeing it, and in this way he gave himself breathing space in the middle of his distressing situation" (113). Both the Tlaxcalans and the Mexicans, in greatly

advantageous military positions, come apart when confronted with corporeal symbols of Spanish domination.

Body-nation analogies resurface when Teutila finally has an opportunity to save Tlaxcala from Cortés. The novel concludes with her final frustrated attempt to assassinate him. Through clever planning and disguise, she gains direct access to him in private. But as she waits for him to arrive, she decides she must die of her own volition rather than be subject to prosecution and execution by the Spanish invaders. So she gives herself a lethal dose of poison *before* Cortés enters the room. When his arrival is delayed momentarily, Teutila starts to die before she can execute her murderous plan. The narrator explains that "the heroic lady's strength failed her and her extremities, already affected by the action of the poison, refused to obey her will" (154). This paralysis of Teutila's limbs, a breakdown of unity within her own body, perfectly mirrors the narrator's political analysis of the breakdown of Tlaxcalan national unity.

Since both *Xicoténcatl* and *Hope Leslie* draw connections between the body politic and the individual body and focus on fragmented bodies, it's no surprise that both novels also emphasize the importance of national unity. In *Xicoténcatl*, evidence of factions and discord within the Senate, what the narrator calls "this present state of division" (36), carefully builds throughout the novel to help explain Tlaxcala's ultimate capitulation to the Spanish. Cortés, the novel's most successful politician, understands that his greatest enemy is a unified Tlaxcalan nation under strong leadership; he fears that the young Xicoténcatl could "renew the same dangers from which he had so fortunately escaped under the shadow of a faction. Nor was it hidden from him that, no matter how large and dangerous a faction might be, sooner or later it will yield or encounter a nation's might and this might

is invincible when it has a good head to lead it" (46). The narrator breaks into a didactic aside to reinforce his point, in case the plot does not make it perfectly clear:

> When internal divisions destroy the unity of a people, they inevitably become the victims of their enemies, and more so if the practitioners of political shrewdness and craftiness are able to take advantage of that discord. I call on all nations! If you love your freedom, gather together all your interests and your forces and learn that, if there is no power that will not fail when it collides against the immense force of your union, neither is there an enemy so weak that it will not defeat you and enslave you when you are disunited. (79)

The author of *Xicoténcatl*, then, underscores the urgency of the Tlaxcalan situation by universalizing its lessons to all nations.

Sedgwick's concerns with national unity, though more subtle, are no less real. *Hope Leslie* partly blames tribal faction for the Native American Indian destruction that it laments: The old seer Cushmakin declares on his deathbed, "Linked together, we shall drive the English into the sea" (52). The narrator later apologizes that the "melancholy policy" of the Puritans was "to promote, rather than to allay, these feuds among the tribes" in order to distract the Indians from hostility against the English (341). In other words, Sedgwick identifies unity as a precondition for national survival. Because she locates fragmentation within the Native American (rather than Anglo-American) population, political analyses like these are usually overlooked. As Philip Deloria has pointed out, 1820s frontier novels define American culture as an amalgam of lessons learned from Europe and the Indians; I would like to extend the concept of "playing Indian" into the

political realm. Sedgwick enlists an analysis of Native American history in order to think through American nation-building, imperiled during Sedgwick's time by political factions.

Sedgwick witnessed one of the most politically divisive periods in U.S. history. The daughter of Theodore Sedgwick, a Federalist elected to both houses of the Massachusetts Congress and later to both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate, she recalls in her unpublished autobiography how seriously the importance of party allegiance was impressed upon her at a young age during the "great ferment" of agitation between the declining Federalist party and the rising Democrats. "I remember," she wrote, "well looking upon a Democrat as an enemy to his country, and at the party as sure, if it prevailed, to work its destruction" (*Power* 63). She perceived her coming-of-age years as being "the period of the most bitter hostility between the Federalists and Democrats. The whole nation, from Maine to Georgia, was then divided into these two great parties" (80). Looking back, she considered the time of the Federalists to have been passing away: "The Federalists stood upright, and with the feet planted firmly on the rock of Aristocracy, but that rock itself was bedded in sands, or rather was a boulder from the Old World, and the tide of democracy was surely and swiftly undermining it" (80). Her elegiac reminiscences of her family's Federalist devotion further reinforces her identification with not just the Anglo-American settlers but also the Pequots in *Hope Leslie*—another group whose political power, she clearly insists in the novel, is passing away.

Later in life, Sedgwick became interested in Democratic politics. She spent winters during the 1820s with her two married brothers in New York City, and as Charlene Avallone has shown, her father's prominent Federalist standing combined with her brothers' connections in the Democratic party put her in a position to meet and converse

with the city's political elite (116). Her social circle included many prominent members of the Democratic Republican party, including Martin Van Buren, Gulian Verplanck, James Kirke Paulding, William Leggett, Gansevoort Melville, John O'Sullivan (to whose *Democratic Review* Sedgwick contributed) and William Cullen Bryant, with whom Sedgwick become good friends (Avallone 120). According to Avallone, Sedgwick's exact involvement in party politics is unclear, yet she does seem to have influenced Verplanck to press for legal reform in the House of Representatives, and she is recorded as having discussed with Bryant an apparent plot by Andrew Jackson to "steal" Texas from Mexico (120). She also defended Van Buren's economic policies in an 1837 piece for the *New-Yorker* (120). To put it mildly, Sedgwick's childhood of passionate Federalism seems not to have lingered long.

In the pressing political battles of her day, then, Sedgwick staked a position of flexible, not to say waffling, involvement. Despite her strict Federalist upbringing, she shifted party allegiances to suit her social needs and maintain her social influence. She even advised some acquaintances (the German Unitarian couple Charles Follen and Eliza Lee Cabot) to keep quiet about their abolitionist views lest they lose influence in a church full of diverse opinions on the topic (Avallone 121), a detail that suggests that Sedgwick, although progressive, was politically pragmatic above all. With this biographical evidence in mind, I would like to suggest that understanding *Hope Leslie* requires a paradigmatic shift in our scholarly inquiry. In focusing on the bodies in the novel, the temptation and in fact perhaps the logical direction would be to analyze the respective reproductions and sterilities of the main characters. As Doris Sommer has influentially argued, nineteenth-century historical novels suggest solutions to contemporary political problems through

their sexually productive heteronormative characters. According to the novels' "erotics of politics," "national ideals are all ostensibly grounded in 'natural' heterosexual love that provided a figure for apparently nonviolent consolidation during internecine conflicts at midcentury […. A]fter the creation of the new nations, the domestic romance is an exhortation to be fruitful and multiply" (6). The novels figure conjugal success as "a wish-fulfilling projection of national consolidation and growth, a goal rendered visible" (6-7). Reading *Hope Leslie* with Sommer's rubric in mind, a scholar must conclude that it is, as Christopher Castiglia once glossed, "a racist, nation-building type of novel." After all, in a competition for the romantic attentions of Everell Fletcher, apparently the prototypical American male, Magawisca fails where Hope succeeds, symbolically tethering American nationhood to racial purity rather than amalgamation.

This allegorical nation-building via procreation also appears to be where *Hope Leslie* and *Xicoténcatl* part ways. Aside from the gruesome amputations, the most salient narratives of the body running through both *Hope Leslie* and *Xicoténcatl* are the chronicles of the reproductive successes and failures of the novels' women. In *Hope Leslie*, a white couple is the symbolic progenitor of American national identity, while in *Xicoténcatl*, Cortés and Doña Marina emerge as the novel's breeders. At first glance, this corporeal narrative appears to divide the two novels along lines fairly predictable by the consensus about Anglo- and Latin-American culture: Latin-American cultural nationalism prizes admixture while Anglo-American cultural nationalism polices reproduction and circumscribes it within racial groups.

However, this attractive but facile conclusion ignores the systems of meaning-making the authors establish within the novels. Sommer's "foundational fictions" model

works extraordinarily well in analyzing *Xicoténcatl*, not only because Sommer had Latin-American literature specifically in mind, but because the novel goes out of its way to valorize reproduction and establish it as a measure of each character's success. *Hope Leslie*, on the other hand, actively resists any hermeneutic framework that would tie heteronormativity to either personal or national success.

In *Xicoténcatl*, consent to European colonialism and election into the national social contract are explicitly measured by the generative capacity of the female characters' bodies. To understand *Xicoténcatl*'s politics of reproduction, we must examine its ethics of deception and transparency. In the novel, the narrator uses adjectives like "skillful" and "artful" as insults to demarcate characters who unethically conceal their motives and goals, most prominently Cortés and his indigenous mistress, Doña Marina. For example, when Cortés is plotting to kill the young Xicoténcatl without damaging his own public image, "the skillful Spaniard saw, in the Senate's easy malleability to his insinuations, that he could obtain from it, with astute concealment, whatever he needed to carry out, without risk, the horrible crime his imagination was plotting" (117).[34] In the novel, skill goes hand in hand with both concealment and evil.

By contrast, Teutila and the younger Xicoténcatl, who, as Cypess has pointed out, are used as idealized symbols of "patriotism" in contrast to Marina's "perfidy" (51), exhibit excessive transparency in both their political and personal lives. Xicoténcatl, for example, actually informs Cortés in advance when he is planning to attack the Spanish army. Xicoténcatl's messengers tell Cortés that Xicoténcatl "*was notifying him, of course, so that he might have time to prepare himself*, making it thus understood that he did not

[34] See 23, 40, 47, 58, 74, 118, 121, for other examples of "skillful" and "artful" with negative connotations.

wish to diminish the value of the victory as a result of the enemy's being surprised" (38).[35] Teutila, upon being apprehended by Cortés's soldiers toward the beginning of their occupation, guilelessly reveals numerous secrets about the inner-workings of Tlaxcalan politics. Teutila's undiscerning transparency allows Cortés to target Magiscatzin as a powerful ally in the Tlaxcalan Senate and to manipulate the Tlaxcalans, but the narrative voice has little but praise to offer Teutila for her "noble and generous heart" and her "frankness and simplicity" (22, 29).

Doña Marina, by contrast, is so successfully deceptive that she can even enlist the ordinarily involuntary biological functions of her body in her frauds. When the young Xicoténcatl, who had fallen in love with Doña Marina, discovers that she is Cortés's mistress, he wonders, "Who could have discovered the poison in her tender words? Those kind and modest looks, that *heartbeat*, those continuous displays of alarm against her weakness: does all this befit a betrayer as she leaves her adulterous bed?" (65, emphasis added). Xicoténcatl's lament attests to Marina's control over even her autonomic nervous system, which she can use to confirm her external manipulations. Gillian Brown has pointed out that in the logic of the eighteenth-century seduction novel, a woman's body communicates with more veracity than her speech: "The female body and its operations thus convey a different message, modifying and even contradicting a woman's verbal articulations. [….] Rousseau imagines every woman as a completely legible text, her speech a coquettish denial of—and therefore affirmation of—the truth available to a man beholding her" (127-128). Marina's self-control, even to the point of conforming her

[35] Castillo-Feliú, the translator of the novel, uses italics to indicate portions of the novel taken verbatim from Antonio de Solís's *Historia de la conquista de México* (1684).

bodily functions to her verbal deceptions, contradicts this line of thinking and demonstrates, in corporeal imagery, her tremendous power.

The virtuous men in the novel, by contrast, have little or no control over what *seem* like voluntary physical acts. The best example of this lack of corporeal self-control occurs in the somewhat roundabout narration of Doña Marina's seduction of Ordaz. Marina simply brings Ordaz to a small room. "The room was small and poorly lighted; they had to speak to each other closely so as not to be heard. Ordaz was young; doña Marina was beautiful and kind, and—too late did the honest Ordaz come out of his lethargy and he was covered with shame" (48). Although the demure narrator disembodies this sexual contact with an em-dash (an ellipse in the original Spanish), we find out later that, when Doña Marina becomes pregnant, Ordaz fears he is the father (66). Marina's easy success in her simple artifice suggests that men have no control over their own bodies. The narrator later calls their encounter "*her* [not their] gallant adventure" (66, emphasis added). Marina's dominion over the bodily realm is so absolute that it seems to paralyze others' physical self-control.

Marina, however, soon encounters the limits of control over her body: her pregnancy by Hernán Cortés effectively ends her attempts to manipulate both Xicoténcatl and Ordaz. Once she is visibly pregnant, she can no longer captivate Xicoténcatl or attempt to seduce Ordaz. Xicoténcatl remains so guileless as to be unable to discern her visible pregnancy. One of Cortés's soldiers advises the young Xicoténcatl, just weeks before Marina gives birth, to "open your eyes, look at her waist, and take advantage of it, if there is still time to end the deception" (64). A European conquistador, by teaching the

Tlaxcalan leader how to read the body of a deceptive woman, initiates him into the duplicitous ways of the colonial world.

Her encounter with the biological limits of her power catalyzes Marina's metamorphosis into a virtuous woman and a sympathetic character. She shifts, at the moment of childbirth, from a concealing character to a transparent one; that is, from a character like Cortés to a character like Teutila:

> Amid these feelings of spiritual anguish, excited further by the violence of the [birth] pains, she called Fray Bartolomé de Olmedo and confessed to him all of her past conduct, hiding from him neither the daring scene with Ordaz, nor her guardianship of Teutila, nor her persecution by Hernán Cortés, nor the intrigues and political tales—absolutely nothing. (97-98)

When she can no longer control her body biologically, she chooses stop concealing anything. Her moral transformation coincides with a biological one, the so-called "physiological changes that accompany weak, lactating mothers" (99). When Cortés asks her what caused her change in perspective, she explains, "Nature, sire; this solicitous mother needed my instincts for her great goals and was able to awaken them" (124).

Marina's reproductive capacity, however, cannot be read as a mere symbolic representation of the moral ability to change one's ways; the text complicates any simple causal relationship. As much as pregnancy inspired Marina to repudiate her deceptiveness and assimilation to the Spanish, it was in fact her deceptiveness and her assimilation that enabled her pregnancy. While the author, in narrative asides, clearly aligns himself morally with transparency, the novel also delineates the political and biological productivity of guile. The "skillful," "artful" Cortés is the political victor, and Doña Marina is the only

reproductively successful female; she survives the narrative bloodbath to emerge as the symbolic progenitor of modern Mexico. Conversely, the narrative complicates its consistent praise of Teutila by emphasizing her failure to conceive children. For example, after Xicoténcatl's death, Teutila weeps when a mutual acquaintance shares this memory of Xicoténcatl:

> In this very house, we heard him speak incessantly of his beloved Teutila, as he showered his love on my two young children. If she at least had one child, he would say to us, her loneliness would not be so harrowing; but oh! how can her sensitive spirit resist the great emptiness that she must feel after all the great losses she has suffered? I am the only one she has left in the world. (146)

Teutila, for all her praised virtue, ends the novel a completely abortive character, both reproductively in this mourned childlessness and politically through her suicidal failure to assassinate Cortés. Through the respective generative capacities of Teutila's and Marina's bodies, the anonymous author symbolically aligns physical reproduction with political survival and efficacy.

The disjunction between virtue on the one hand and both personal and political productivity on the other upsets Gonzales Sae-Saue's oversimplified claims about the novel's gender politics. Gonzales Sae-Saue concludes that "Teutila's self-subjugation and complete resignation inscribes female passivity as a virtue into Mexico's post-independence consciousness and promotes national self-resignation before the 1824 republican authority" (194). In his reading, "Teutila and Marina are not foils for each

other, as critics persist in claiming (see Messenger [*sic*][36]); rather they both illustrate female impotence and sexual obedience" (194-5), with the political valence divided between the cultural imperative for women to submit and the nationalist demand to resist "the dishonor and contamination of European contact and influence" (195). But Gonzales Sae-Saue grafts a simple narrative of female submission over the facts: Doña Marina succeeds biologically, Cortés succeeds politically, Xicoténcatl loses power and dies, and Teutila essentially kills herself. Gonzales Sae-Saue anachronistically writes off Marina's redemption as a sloppy, last minute attempt to appease a Mexican readership attached to La Malinche as a symbol of their origins. But *Xicoténcatl*'s depiction contributes to *creating* a sympathetic La Malinche, not conforming to the expectation for her. Against difficult odds, Doña Marina manages to insinuate herself into a powerful political position and to achieve the reproductive success valorized in the novel. What Gonzales Sae-Saue writes off as hasty audience appeasement is instead a stunning example of successful strategic assimilationism. Her willingness to contaminate herself, to cross racial and national boundaries with her sexuality, ensures her survival and success. Teutila's virtue, however poignant and righteous, is nevertheless sterile and self-negating. Doña Marina ultimately confirms the elder Xicoténcatl's initial suspicion that she "might know how to obtain some benefit from her misfortune" (*Xicoténcatl* 63). The novel, then, reaches the unsettling conclusion that the most ethical choices are not always the best or the most advantageous, politically or biologically.

Like the author of *Xicoténcatl*, Sedgwick also divides *Hope Leslie*'s characters between those with self-control—identified by control over the body—and those without

[36] Gonzales Sae-Saue refers to Sandra Messinger Cypess as "Sandra Cypress Messenger."

it. For example, Mrs. Martha Fletcher (Everell's mother) is so restrained that she can even control the autonomic functions of her body: "I stilled my beating heart with the thought, that my children leant on me, and I must not betray my weakness" (31). In the second half of the novel, Esther Downing, friend of Hope and admirer of Everell, replaces the deceased Mrs. Fletcher as the epitome of self-discipline. Esther and Hope are "unlike in everything": "Hope sometimes ventured to rally Esther on her over-scrupulousness, and Miss Downing often rebuked the laughing girl's gaiety" (139). Esther is indeed so "over-scrupulous" that she compulsively examines and condemns every instance in which she fails to exude a completely placid exterior physicality; recalling her confession of love to Everell, she mourns, "had I but known how to watch and rule my own spirit" (139). But Magawisca, with her "habitual self-command" (45), is easily the character with the most control over her body. For example, in trying to rescue Everell from death, she handles a boiling liquid narcotic in the palm of her bare hand, "but she did not cringe; she did not even feel it" (90). Magawisca's sense of purpose and duty allows her to suppress all corporeal expression.

However, as in *Xicoténcatl*, while controlling one's passions and subjugating them to religious or public duty is conveyed as the clearly more ethical way of living, exemplified by Esther Downing, it's shown to be disadvantageous and non-reproductive. The characters with the most self-control, Magawisca and Esther, are the characters who lose the romantic battle over Everell, while the less controlled character, Hope Leslie, "our heroine," allows her personal passions to take precedence over her duties but emerges with Everell as the fertile ancestral American. When Hope feels "a sense of conflicting duties" (207), during the time between her secret meeting with Magawisca and her planned secret meeting with her sister, the physical result is the failure of her attractiveness: "Miss

Downing appeared far more lovely than our heroine during the week, when she was suffering the extremes of anxiety and apprehension" (207). The moment when Hope exhibits the most self-control, she imperils her relationship with Everell because, as Romero puts it, "historical romances written by women suggest that because theirs is the power of influence rather than of force, domesticity is always on the verge of reproducing patriarchal culture's male gaze" (22). Throughout the novel, Hope struggles to follow the dictates of her conscience and her desires while still maintaining influence, both political and sexual, within a restrictive Puritan milieu.

Hope Leslie departs from *Xicoténcatl* in the values Sedgwick assigns to reproductive success and failure. The critical tendency is to read Everell and Hope as the successful reproductive couple intended to symbolize a racially pure (white) American nationhood; while tacitly repudiating such an outlook, critics insist on procreative heteronormativity as the sieve through which all characters must pass to determine their success and to qualify them as paradigmatic national symbols.[37] But Sedgwick specifically instructs readers to avoid such a reading. As David Reynolds points out, Sedgwick, far from condemning singlehood and celibacy as a failure to generate future Americans, "use[s] the old maid as a symbol of womanly self-reliance" (*Beneath the American*

[37] Tawil takes this idea as his interpretive premise: "If, as Philip Fisher has argued, 'killing a man' was a racial matter for male historical novelists, I want to argue that marrying a man was certainly no less bound up with race for their female counterparts" (100). Stephanie Wardrop links Sedgwick's Indian politics to Cooper's by way of their similar lack of interracial heterosexual relationships: "married love" eludes Magawisca; therefore, "the Native American and European American communities can never be integrated. Hawkeye and his Mohican companions exist on the periphery of both cultures, and Magawisca has been exiled by both" (65). Karafilis also exemplifies this method of reading: "Magawisca slides 'voiceless' into the West, [….] Esther Downing is also 'removed' from the space of the text […] and Hope remains the lone heroine in the New World. Thus, it is only through Hope (and her union with Everell) that the text holds out the potential for radical democratic individualism beyond the scope of the novel" (341).

Renaissance 349). Sedgwick devotes the novel's closing paragraph to describing and vindicating Esther's sterility:

> Her hand was often and eagerly sought, but she appears never to have felt a second engrossing attachment. The current of her purposes and affections had set another way. She illustrated a truth which, if more generally received by her sex, might save a vast deal of misery: that marriage is not essential to the contentment, the dignity, or the happiness of woman. Indeed, those who saw how wide a sphere her kindness shone, how many were made better and happier by her disinterested devotion, might have rejoiced that she did not
>
> "Give to a party what was meant for mankind." (349-350)

Indeed, Sedgwick would potentially even question my use of the word "sterility" to describe Esther's fate. The word "sterility" assumes that historical romances valorize heteronormativity and reproduction as measures of personal success and symbols of political, cultural origins; the word contradicts the social promiscuity suggested both by Sedgwick's description of the single Esther and by Sedgwick's own life of active, influential, socially circulating spinsterhood. When we contrast Sedgwick's fervent vindication of Esther with the moral magic of Marina's childbirth and Teutila's tearful childlessness in *Xicoténcatl*, it becomes impossible to apply the same hermeneutic rubric to both novels.

Instead of gauging *Hope Leslie*'s nationalist politics through its women's reproduction, we should look to its women's other successes and failures to construct a complete thematic of nation-building. Both Hope and Magawisca are faced with a dilemma

in which they must cross taboo boundaries in order to survive. In order to free Magawisca from prison, Hope devises a plan of disguising her as the docile tutor, Master Craddock. Magawisca must dress as a white man in order to escape prison; the "hideous disguise" (315), which the proud Magawisca dons only with great reluctance (311), suggests the racial and gendered flexibility necessary to survive in an unjust hierarchical society. Hope is similarly willing to compromise her apparent identity in order to ensure her survival. Her cultural cross-dressing occurs when she must flee from a band of criminals. Hope impulsively jumps into a boat she believes is unoccupied, but in fact, Antonio, a devout Italian Catholic, is sleeping at the bottom of the boat. When he mistakes her for the Virgin Mary, she preserves herself by playing along: "She had recoiled from the impiety of appropriating his address to the holy mother, but protestant as she was, we hope she may be pardoned for thinking that she might without presumption, identify herself with a catholic saint" (242). She speaks to him softly in Italian, "of which Hope fortunately knew enough to comprehend him, and to frame a phrase in return" (241); confirms that she is a saint; requests that he row her to safety; and blesses him. Of course, in portraying Antonio as ridiculous and superstitious, robbed of reason by his apparently silly Christian sect, the scene's condescending anti-Catholicism, as Harris points out, is typical of Sedgwick's work (280-281). But more importantly, in her disguise, she transgresses national, linguistic, ecclesiastical, and even cosmological boundaries. Her cross-dressing suggests a model of strategic multiculturalism, the cosmopolitan pragmatism and flexibility necessary for Hope's (and by extension America's) survival. Hope navigates cross-cultural accommodation and mimicry while literally traveling in a boat, exemplifying Paul Gilroy's insistence that culture is formed through routes rather than roots (Gilroy 12, 117).

Of course, it is no foregone conclusion that every instance of boundary-crossing signifies a refusal of racial or gender essentialism. Eric Lott has identified racial cross-dressing as a game that frees the cross-dresser to explore his interracial homoerotic curiosity but relegates the racial other to a position of joyful adolescence, thereby reifying the racial lines that demarcate whiteness and reinstating white maleness as dominant force (477-482). Judith Butler too wonders "whether the denaturalization of gender cannot be the very vehicle for a reconsolidation of hegemonic norms" (384). But through Sedgwick's explicit insistence that whiteness not be the exclusive marker of nobility and that heteronormativity not be the exclusive measure of female influence and success, *Hope Leslie* resists the normalizing, hegemonic force of cross-dressing and reclaims it in order to imagine a heterogeneous American nation.

Freed from the assumption that nation-building must be figured in the novel by heteronormative reproduction, we can see that *Hope Leslie* joins *Xicoténcatl* in valorizing hybridity. By eschewing sexual reproduction as the marker of female productivity, *Hope Leslie* also imagines wider possibilities for female participation in national politics. Both novels share a political context of imperiled national unity, both embody that political problem in a scene of amputation, and both use corporeal metaphors—miscegenation in *Xicoténcatl* and trans-racial, transnational, and transgender disguise in *Hope Leslie*—to propose hybridity as a viable solution to national fragmentation.

Chapter 3

Robert Montgomery Bird and the Expansionist American Dream

Throughout the 1830s, the United States experienced a rapid increase in all kinds of mobility. Citizens gained unprecedented opportunity for geographic mobility as canals were dug and railroads were laid down; moreover, more and more people were forced to move off the family farm once generations of partitioning lands to heirs rendered each plot too small for further division (Appleby 56-89). Capital began to circulate more freely, as competing banks tried to outperform one another by loaning notes for land speculation, especially after Andrew Jackson shut down the federal Bank of the United States in 1832 (Watson 19-37). Of course, Jackson's election to the presidency captured the public's imagination with the suggestion that even a (white, male) person of relatively humble origins could rise to the highest office in the land; furthermore, populist appeals to liberty and egalitarian opportunity undergirded most successful political campaigns of the late 1820s and early 1830s, including Jackson's (Watson 49-54).

Robert Montgomery Bird's 1836 novel *Sheppard Lee* dramatizes and parodies that feeling of unfettered mobility. Bird embodies his United States in the title character and narrator, a hapless farmer who escapes his own destitution by invading the bodies of

others. Through metempsychosis, the transmigration of the soul from body to body, Bird ridicules the social, racial, and imperial predicaments of Jacksonian America. An easygoing New Jersey farmer, Sheppard Lee so relishes inactivity that he cannot bear to manage his own farm, and consequently he is duped of his property and prosperity by a dishonest overseer. Driven to desperation and encouraged by the vivid tales of his single slave, Jim Jumble, Sheppard stakes his final hope on unearthing Captain Kidd's fabled buried treasure, but, while digging with a spade, he accidentally delivers his own death blow, in the form of a serious wound to his foot. Once apparently dead, Sheppard discovers his unusual power: he can reanimate corpses by transferring his soul into others' dead bodies. He exercises this power throughout the rest of the novel, inhabiting a miserable husband, a shallow dandy, a cranky old miser, a naïve Quaker philanthropist, a contented slave, and a hypochondriac. The unique experience of metempsychosis gives Bird and the reader alike a unique opportunity to consider three interrelated questions of high importance in the antebellum United States. First, in what ways does race matter; are the qualities of the body presumed to be physical and biological, such as race, permanent and fixed categories or contingent, permeable, and fluid? Second, if one's body is liable to seizure by others via metempsychosis, what is the status of eminently more transferable assets, like property, land, and territory? Finally, what happens when the unfettered mobility of Jacksonian America propels citizens onto already-inhabited land? In what ways does the U.S. engage in a kind of territorial metempsychosis, extending the celebrated American mobility by opportunistically seizing and inhabiting land the way Sheppard appropriates nearby bodies?

Sheppard jumps from body to body throughout the novel with comic ease. Bird thereby reduces the popular rags-to-riches autobiography genre to a surreal joke by analogizing it through metempsychosis. The reward of prosperity after a lifetime of hard work, described in such bestsellers as Benjamin Franklin's autobiography, are achieved in a matter of seconds by a mere wish on Sheppard's part. As Christopher Looby establishes in his introduction to *Sheppard Lee*'s 2008 republication, the 1836 satire is "an allegory of social mobility" (xv). However, far from the inspirational spiritual uplift allegorized in Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, first published in 1678 but still a bestseller in Bird's day, or the fables of the rewards of hard work and virtue on which Horatio Alger would make his career in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Bird's allegory of mobility is notably cynical. Sheppard's experiences make a joke of the ease with which upward mobility can be achieved, but they hardly advocate attempting such meteoric rises. In every new body he inhabits, Sheppard finds new reasons for discontent.

In fact, his corporeal appropriations always result in disaster. While he inhabits John H. Higginson, the rich and cheerfully active man—and the incompetent Sheppard's near opposite—Sheppard battles a nagging wife and a gouty foot. As the blissfully healthy and unencumbered I. Dulmer Dawkins, Sheppard lacks both the money to maintain his aristocratic lifestyle and the fortitude to bear poverty. While he is the wealthy Abram Skinner, Sheppard has all the money he needs but has traded every potential human relationship for it. He enjoys his philanthropic pursuits while he lives in the body of the Quaker Zachariah Longstraw, but that joy is mingled with a pietistic condescension that turns even his beneficiaries into enemies. While Sheppard inhabits the body of an enslaved man named Tom, Bird deploys all the stereotypes of the pliant, mollified slave and affords

Sheppard some happiness within the confines of a soi-disant benevolent plantation, but the slaves' apparent bliss is ultimately curtailed because they turn out to be as susceptible to murderous rage as lazy pleasure. Arthur Megrim, finally, has everything Sheppard or anyone could possibly want—but Sheppard-as-Arthur is driven insane by a number of imagined, psychosomatic ailments, including nightmares, stomach pains, and delusions. Sheppard ultimately returns to his original body, and prefers his own "mortal tenement, which, with all its troubles, I was now convinced was the best for my purposes in the whole world" (408).

As Samuel Otter admits in his lively reading of the novel, "it is not clear what instruction *Sheppard Lee* might offer its readers, unless it is the (strangely literal) advice to look before you leap into bodies" (96). Nevertheless, reading the novel as primarily a comedy about social mobility yields a plausible theme: the rather conservative doctrine that one should be contented with what one has, rather than seek to improve one's condition in life. Under this reading, Bird updates one of the founding principles of the early United States, established at least as early as 1630 by John Winthrop in "A Model of Christian Charity," that some people are made to be rich and others poor; since each citizen's position on the social and economic ladder is ineluctably fated, the most virtuous and pragmatic reaction is humble complacency. As Edgar Allan Poe explains in his otherwise positive September 1836 review of *Sheppard Lee*, "The sole object here in the various metempsychoses seems to be, merely the depicting of seven different conditions of existence, and the enforcement of the very doubtful moral that every person should remain contented with his own" ("Review" 401-2).

Of course, Poe's complaint ignores Bird's philosophical and political uses of the body. In *Sheppard Lee*, Bird anticipates the work of such philosophers as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who argued in *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) that the physical fact of the perceiving body precedes all philosophy and consciousness and abolishes any hard binary between subject and object. Bird's fiction suggests that one's social position is not only immutable, but also superimposed on and suffused throughout the body. Sheppard's body is not static and immutable, but changes from day to day, according to his preferences and choices. In this way, Bird envisions a sort of democratic, volitional corporeality. As Elaine Scarry explains,

> The material realm might ordinarily be thought of as the realm of nonnegotiable contingency and accident, a realm where one's alternatives are either to be wholly subject to its claims or to distance oneself from it altogether through some form of mystical repudiation. To thus re-conceive of materialism as voluntary is in some sense to revolutionize or reinvent it altogether. (76)

Materiality—the thingness of things—is considered a chosen attribute, according to the logic of *Sheppard Lee*. Under this understanding, a person's material body is not the given and irrefutable aspect of his or her personhood, but is voluntary. Scarry calls this chosen-ness of the body "volitional materialism" or "consentual materialism" (76).

The emergence of the modern nation-state hinges on a similarly radical notion of self-determination. Such a phenomenon as citizenship, once considered a function of chance, is conceived of under nationalism as a chosen, volitional condition. In Ernest Renan's famous formulation, the nation itself is a "daily plebiscite" (19), a continuously renewable and mutable agreement among citizens to remain an aggregate. In other words,

each individual's being a national subject is not a given, not automatic, but is chosen, explicitly or tacitly. To put his socio-political idea in phenomenological terms, nationhood is not a state of being, but of becoming—a process rather than an essential property. Robert Reid-Pharr has taken this notion of choice even further by suggesting that "even when the nation's subjects are most severely abused and exploited," they are still accountable for the nation's ethics (*Once You Go Black* 18). For Renan, the volitional nature of nation-formation has consequences on the personal attributes considered to be bodily and self-evident. Great, diverse nations reconfigure their notions of ethnicity as new groups choose national inclusion, Renan explains; "[r]ace, as we historians understand it, is therefore something which is made and unmade" (15). Because the nation is chosen, each citizen's racialized body, in a certain sense, is also chosen, since in choosing the nation, individuals decide how their bodies will be configured and understood by their national culture. Thus one's nationality and one's corporeality are inextricably linked in a matrix of choice.

This matrix of choice becomes legible through the supernatural device of metempsychosis in *Sheppard Lee*. Sheppard constantly renegotiates the terms of his inclusion in the American nation by literally choosing different bodies that enjoy (or are excluded from) American citizenship to a greater or lesser extent. However, the novel also challenges the notion that all people have the equal freedom to choose either the body or the nation. Bird depicts characters who exceed the bounds of volitional materiality by seizing control of the bodies of others and, by analogy, the novel represents the consequences of exceeding the bounds of "volitional nationality" by seizing foreign territory. *Sheppard Lee* fictionalizes the daily plebiscite of embodiment and nationhood

and demonstrates the danger of that unfettered volition in the context of intercorporeal and international imbalances of power.

As a plot device, metempsychosis suggests not just social mobility, the quick movement from one station in life to the next, but also imperialism, the acquisition and control of foreign territory. In my reading of *Sheppard Lee*, I would like to push beyond Bird's treatment of social mobility and ask what the device of metempsychosis might have to say about territorial mobility—specifically the territorial mobility most relevant to the 1830s United States, that is, the removal of Native American Indians from eastern North American territory.

Sheppard Lee well illustrates Michel Foucault's notion of biopower by presciently identifying the human body as the central object and agent of the workings of modern power. [38] In reorienting my interpretation around imperialism, I follow the lead of theorists like Ann Laura Stoler, whose *Race and the Education of Desire* seeks to enrich the Foucauldian notion of the self by repositioning it vis-à-vis imperialism. The plot of *Sheppard Lee* allows Bird to rehearse the entire drama of bourgeoning imperialism: the perceived need for resources available only through expansion, moral justifications for conquest, the colonizer's disavowal of moral agency, the difficulties of colonial and frontier government, and the withdrawal of colonial power after the exhausting of the colony's utility. A certain cognitive dissonance emerges when we consider Bird's entrenched anti-Indian racism in *Nick of the Woods* (1835) and paternalistic condescension toward black Americans in unpublished letters alongside his dexterous and often insightful fictional representations of metempsychosis and its racial and expansionist implications.

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[38] See *History of Sexuality* (140) and *Security, Territory, Population* (1).

While Bird does not stray far from the predominant ideologies of his generation regarding gender, race, and class in many of his works, his fantastic, allegorical uses of the body in *Sheppard Lee* provide both an interesting meditation on race and a rather sophisticated anatomy of nineteenth-century empire.

In *Sheppard Lee*, metempsychosis elides corporeal self-containment and abolishes the distinctions between individual bodies. Because Sheppard inhabits both black and white bodies, his metempsychoses imply the mutability of racial distinction. In a recent reconsideration of *Sheppard Lee*, Justine Murison claims that Bird maintains racial distinction at the sentence level: he "never seamlessly integrates Lee's voice with Tom's voice" (12). Although this is an intriguing observation, it does not negate Bird's choice to stage metempsychotic transfer across racial lines (but never, say, between genders). That is, metempsychosis appears initially to be a platform for Bird's argument that race is mutable. However, by the end of the novel, Sheppard has concluded that exercising his metempsychotic powers was dangerous folly. In other words, metempsychosis offers racial fluidity and territorial entitlement, but when Sheppard ends his metempsychotic transfers, everyone is both literally and allegorically back where they "belong," racially and geographically. By staging corporeal transfer as possible but only temporarily acceptable, Bird flirts with the idea of an interracial or transracial American subject but ultimately backs away from that stance.

At the same time, metempsychosis offers a model of apparently harmless, peaceable, consensual conquest that suggests a reasonable justification for appropriating and controlling other bodies and territories. Bird has Sheppard use political, territorial, and property-based language to speak of his metempsychoses. Sheppard calls his body his

"mortal tenement" (408) and a "natural dwelling" (52); other people's bodies are also "tenement[s]" open for spirits "to claim" them (52). Bodies and spirits are "like two feeble factions united together in the political world" (52). In fact, using the body to work through ideas about possession of the self, property, and territory is logical both within post-enlightenment understanding of property rights and within Bird's conception of his career as a writer. In an 1835 letter to his friend James Lawson, Bird speculates that *Calavar* (1834) and *The Infidel* (1835), his historical romances about the conquest of Mexico, were only modest successes because the subject seemed too remote for his reading audience. "You are right about my Mexican subjects," he writes; "they are too far-offish and Hebraic for our Johnny Raws of the States, who know and care as little about Mexico as they do about the moon" (qtd. in Foust, 89-90). His future sales proved Bird right: his grandest success, *Nick of the Woods*, brings Bird's ideas about expansionism geographically closer to his readers by setting frontier violence and destruction east of the Mississippi, in the more familiar Kentucky. In *Sheppard Lee*, Bird pulls his theme ever closer to the reader by figuring conquest as a tactical negotiation between individual bodies, rather than between nation-states or political groups.

John Locke influentially claimed in his 1690 *Second Treatise of Government* that "every man has a property in his own person: this no body has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his" (287). Understanding that Enlightenment political theory perceived the body itself as the most irreducibly owned property and political territory as contractually determined national property, we can see that *Sheppard Lee* allegorically works through the question of how property and territory are appropriated. Two theories, derived from classical legal

philosophy, justified the conquest of foreign land among the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europeans and Americans. The fact that many North American Indian tribes did not establish permanent settlements, but instead moved from season to season to pursue prey or renew farmed soil, was enough to justify the European legal doctrine of *vacuum domicilium*, through which land considered unoccupied was available for settlement; if the land could not be plausibly labeled vacant, even by such ethnocentric standards, colonizers used the theory of *occupatio bellica*, or peaceful seizure, to suggest the American Indians had willingly surrendered their land (Berkhofer, 120-124). From the early colonial period through the Jacksonian era and beyond, any expedient method could be used to demonstrate *occupatio bellica*, from Columbus's planting crosses in North American soil without violent opposition to the treaties of so-called "honorable" U.S. expansion in the early nineteenth century (Berkhofer 120). The idea that useful but unused or underused territory can and should be overtaken by those better equipped to use it would become entrenched in U.S. policy in increasingly explicit expansionist legislation throughout the nineteenth century.[39] The idea was embodied and satirized through the metaphor of metempsychosis in *Sheppard Lee*.

Bird's work recognizes the permeability not only of bodies but of power relations. For example, in a draft of an unpublished book entitled *History of the Annexation of Texas and The War with Mexico*, Bird, within pages, takes two apparently contradictory tacks: first, he excuses U.S. expansionism in the North American West as a mere inevitable reaction to a less forgivable version of imperialism practiced by the Spanish:

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[39] Take, for example, the Guano Islands Act of 1856, in which the United States claimed the right to take over any ungoverned island that contained guano deposits (which were used for fertilizer and gunpowder, among other things).

> The position of Spain, colonially, with regard to the United States, her proud spirit, the consciousness of great achievements of discovery on the North American continent, conferring great claims, if not great rights, of possession, with the sense of present, and the foreshadowing of future danger, will sufficiently account for the aggressive policy by which the earliest American colonists of the Mississippi Valley were irritated into a feeling as hostile and rapacious as her own.

Thus, while Bird surprises the reader by accusing Anglo-American colonists of hostility and rapacity, he softens the condemnation by implying it was a reasonable reaction to Spanish imperialism. Only five handwritten pages later, however, Bird aligns insidious U.S. attempts to encroach on Mexican territory with the more widely publicized and harshly criticized conspiracy of Aaron Burr to establish his own Western empire. Bird writes further,[40]

> The conspiracy, as it is called, of Aaron Burr, in 1806, from the character and [illegible word, possibly "famous"] elevated position of that ambitious man, the mystery which enveloped, and still, to a certain extent, envelopes his project, and, still more, the belief that it involved a [~~dismemberment of~~] [illegible word] design against the Union, created a much profounder sensation, and perhaps still excites a greater interest, than any other scheme of Americans which aimed at the conquest or [~~dismemberment~~] revolution of Mexico.

Thus, Bird indicts all imperialistic plans equally, whether they have been hatched by European powers or by the United States. These fragments of Bird's interpretation of U.S. border history indicate that he was capable both of identifying and condemning U.S.

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[40] I indicate revisions on the manuscript with bracketed strikethroughs.

imperialist ambitions, and of excusing them through the specious implication that the United States was postcolonial victim and anti-imperial crusader.

Bird has Sheppard Lee, like the early U.S. he describes in his nonfiction, straddle this line between colonizer and colonized. At the beginning of the novel, the overseer of Sheppard's farm manages his business and ostensibly encourages his freedom and wellbeing while in reality stealing his land and livelihood. Sheppard's initial condition, then, is analogous to being colonized; he is a subaltern in Gramsci's sense, a member of a powerless group whose assent is conserved by the maneuvers of a self-interested ruling class (Gramsci 52-55). With his first takeover of another body, Sheppard begins his role as the representative colonizer.

Sheppard's power of metempsychosis treads the line between so-called benevolent colonization and outright theft. The dead bodies of others, useless to their original inhabitants but needed by Sheppard, are taken over in the interest of keeping Sheppard alive and affording the dead bodies continued and potentially improved usage. Thus both Sheppard's takeovers of others' bodies and early nineteenth-century U.S. foreign interventions on the Western frontier and in the Caribbean find double justification in the supposed mutual benefit of both the needy colonizer and the colonized population or land to be "civilized."

Bird does not attack this specious doctrine of mutual benefit by attempting to abolish the binary between civilized and barbarous, as his peers Cooper and Sedgwick did. Indeed, we know from his frontier novels that he was quite influenced by and contributive

to the hierarchical and racialist theories of social progress popular in his time.[41] Instead, Bird attacks the imperialist theory of mutual benefit by embodying it in comic characters and satirically belittling it. For example, when Sheppard first realizes that he's dead and stumbles upon Squire Higginson's body, he thinks,

> His body, as it lay there in the bushes, was perfectly useless to him, and to all the world beside; and my spirit, as was clear enough, was in a similar predicament. Why might I not, that is to say, my spirit,—deprived by unhappy accident of its natural dwelling,—take possession of a tenement which there remained no spirit to claim, and thus, uniting interests together, as two feeble factions united together in the political world, become a body possessing life, strength, and usefulness? (52)

Here Sheppard combines the legal justifications of *vacuum domicilium* and *occupatio bellica* to understand the terms of his invasion of Higginson's body. Higginson's body is "useless" to himself, Sheppard is in need of a body through no fault of his own but "by unhappy accident," and Sheppard's takeover of Higginson's body appeals to the "interests" of both (although Higginson is conspicuously mute on his own interests). In one quick turn

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[41] In his preface to *Nick of the Woods*, for example, Bird uses loaded descriptors to retell early colonial history: Kentucky, he says, was "torn from its aboriginal possessors, and converted from a desert hunting-ground into the home of civilized men" (27). European pioneers "wrested from the savage the garden-land of his domain, and secured to their conquest all the benefits of civil government and laws" (27). Here he simultaneously identifies European occupation of North America as violent, forcible conquest, and also seems both to relegate Native American Indians the status of uncouth savage. In his preface to a later edition, to justify his much-criticized depiction of the Indians, he lays the barbarism idea on more thickly: There are no Cooperian Uncases among the Indians, Bird claims, because nobility and honorability "never were the lineaments of any race existing in an uncivilized state" (32); instead, "in his natural barbaric state, he is a barbarian" (32). Thus while Bird resists the sentimental "disappearing Indian" mythos of the most successful early U.S. frontier novels and confronts the tragic aspects of Anglo-American westward expansion, he also finds ample justification for such tragedy in the name of "progress" and "civilization."

of logic, Sheppard declares the body vacant, disavows agency and personal culpability, and asserts the universal benefit of his occupation.

Sheppard's trans-corporeal adventures also bear witness to an increasingly cavalier attitude toward the territory/body to be inhabited. At first, he believes he truly lacks agency in his conquests of others' dead bodies. When he makes his second transformation, for example, from Squire Higginson to I. Dulmer Dawkins, he informs his reader, "I had certainly done nothing, on my part, in either case, to effect a change, save merely wishing it" (108). Next, when he abandons Dawkins in order to inhabit Skinner, his motive is partly experimental; he wants to test his ability to perform such an apparently impossible feat. In the early nineteenth century, Dana D. Nelson explains, "the issue of geographic/scientific exploration was inseparable from that of nationalistic expansion" (*The Word in Black and White* 93-4). Sheppard articulates the experimentation motive as follows: "I had a strong persuasion in me, resulting from my two former adventures, that I possessed the power of entering any human body which I found to my liking; and I resolved to exercise it, or, at the worst, to make proof of its existence, for the third time" (194); to borrow Nelson's words, he justifies his corporeal takeover in the interest of "geographic/scientific exploration." He expresses a direct act of will in this interaction when he says aloud, "Old Goldfist, if you please, I wish to be in your body!" (194), but he still farcically maintains that the conquest is consensual ("if you please").

The body-nation trope allows Bird to represent a trans-historical and categorical concept of imperialism, but details of the analogy suggest specifically American forms of nation-building that hinge on the U.S.'s explicit disavow of empire. The transmigrations of Sheppard Lee's soul reflect the U.S.'s shift from colonial territory under British

imperialism to colonizer vis-à-vis Native American Indian territory, Mexico, the Caribbean, and eventually Pacific Islands and beyond. Contending early U.S. discourses often sought to disassociate the U.S. from European political and cultural affiliation while clinging to a myth of unified European racial identity, to align the U.S. symbolically with North American indigenes and African diasporic populations while exploiting and enslaving each respectively, and to cry out against European encroachment in the Americas while expropriating as much land as possible in the Americas and beyond.

This tension in U.S. history and culture has become a focal point of American studies in recent years, and scholars have spent decades groping for a useful set of terms to describe it. To survey just a few examples, Alan Lawson has proposed the concept of the "Second World" to identify the hinge between settler and colonizer (68). Edward Watts calls for the deployment of "settler theory" to understand U.S. literature before 1830 (447). Sean X. Goudie has coined the term "paracolonial" to describe the United States' anxious vision of itself as operating alongside, rather than within, colonialism (11-13). Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin suggest that "putting barriers between those who may be called 'post-colonial' and the rest, contradicts the capacity of post-colonial theories to demonstrate the complexity of imperial discourse" (200). In *Imperial Leather*, by contrast, Anne McClintock ridicules those critics who have attempted to use the term "postcolonial" to encompass all peoples and cultures embroiled in the colonial world order: "By what fiat of historical amnesia can the United States of America, in particular, qualify as postcolonial—a term that can only be a monumental affront to the Native American peoples currently opposing the confetti triumph of 1992 [anniversary celebrations of Columbus's 'discovery' of the 'New World']?" (12-13). However, to understand

postcoloniality in a U.S. context, carefully measured by an understanding of the U.S. as a neocolonialist economic, military, and cultural force, requires not historical amnesia but a careful parsing of American strategic self-fashioning. Furthermore, postcoloniality is not a status badge that one "qualifies" for and defends against those who would wear it without meeting the requirements; it's a hermeneutic category available to help us understand a text or culture.

Nevertheless, the struggle to aptly name the unique position of the United States, former colony but hegemonic colonial power, reflects McClintock's challenge to avoid flattening out the singularities of experience among players in modern hegemony, and particularly to avoid leveling the experiences of oppressor and oppressed. This leveling effect, the very "postcolonial" equivocation that McClintock warns against, was consciously chosen by early American thinkers and politicians, in order to forge a simultaneously sympathetic and ambitious national identity. Consciousness that the U.S. occupies the interstitial space between colonized and colonizer has been present since the founding of the United States, perhaps best exemplified in *The Federalist Papers*, in which "Publius" simultaneously paints the U.S. as an aggressive world power and an anti-hegemonic nation aligned with Asia and Africa against an arrogant Europe (Hamilton, Madison, Jay 58-9). Mary Ann Heiss points out that this paradox has been present since the Declaration of Independence, which is at once a protest against imperial England and a reaction to British attempts to "limit the colonists' territorial expansion west of the Appalachian Mountains, something that expansionist-minded Americans simply could not countenance" (515). She further illustrates that opposition to European imperialism, rather than contradicting them, actually helped to strengthen U.S. expansionist interests

throughout the first few decades of the nineteenth century, and ultimately "the principle that non-American influence had to be eliminated from North America and the need for access to new land aligned perfectly in U.S. policy" (518). The irony of the United States's self-fashioning as a kinder, gentler postcolonial colonizer did not escape Bird's contemporaries. Tocqueville, for example, bitterly notes,

> The Spaniards were unable to exterminate the Indian race by those unparalleled atrocities which brand them with indelible shame, nor did they succeed even in wholly depriving it of its rights; but the Americans of the United States have accomplished this twofold purpose with singular felicity, tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood, and without violating a single great principle of morality in the eyes of the world. It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws of humanity. (355)

As Benedict Anderson has shown, "Like a complex electrical system in any large mansion when the owner has fled, the state awaits the new owner's hand at the switch to be very much its old brilliant self again" (160); nationalist revolutionaries borrow and accommodate the structures of the regimes they overthrow, including imperialist aspirations and tactics.

In tracing the U.S.'s trajectory from colony to colonizer, especially in tracing it through cultural productions like novels, I find it important to avoid the reductive reasoning inherent in the idea of "trajectory," in Michel de Certeau's sense. Certeau warns that while "trajectory" implies motion and change, "it also involves a plane projection, a flattening out" (xviii), since it forces singular acts into a graphically visible line. From this concern he develops his famous distinction between "strategy," the institutional and

governmental manipulation of power relations, and "tactics," individuals' everyday negotiations with one another to gain space. Strategy is analogous to a city map that establishes, institutionally, the available routes, while tactics are enacted by the "ordinary practitioners of the city" whose lived networks are "shaped out of fragments of trajectories" (93). My analysis of *Sheppard Lee* is concerned with the patchwork tactics of early U.S. imperialism; I am not interested in, nor will I be capable of, articulating a systematic, centralized U.S. imperial strategy—such an institutional strategy had not yet fully materialized in Bird's day. Bird's use of metempsychosis suggestively and fantastically embodies Certeau's point, that individual bodies negotiate for material space prior to the systematization of national, institutional interests.

Despite Bird's heavy-handed anti-Indian frontier novel, *Nick of the Woods*, the focal point of Bird scholarship prior to Looby's resuscitation of Sheppard Lee,[42] Bird was very interested in the complex processes of empire-building and, in particular, American interstitial postcoloniality. *Sheppard Lee* reveals that Bird was very much in touch with the ironies and contradictions of what we might functionally term the antebellum U.S.'s "tactical postcoloniality," the self-conscious adoption of postcolonial identity in order to emphasize the U.S.'s love of freedom and official stance against imperialism, despite obliquely enacting imperialist policies.

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[42] For a representative example of Bird's reception by twentieth-century critics, see Slotkin, who inexplicably calls Bird a "southern novelist" for whom Indian violence is merely "the rage of the wild beast against the cage" (129). The adjective "southern," for some scholars, has served as reductive and offensive shorthand for all retrogressive and reactionary political, social, and racial viewpoints. Such usage of "southern" not only overlooks the pluralities of Southern identity, but also hardly makes geographical sense for Bird, who spent most of his life in New Castle, Delaware and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The progression of Sheppard's self-perception mirrors the United States' increased self-awareness as a national state and potential imperial power, from its official anti-imperial stance in the late eighteenth century to its tentative experiments with western hemispheric hegemony established by the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. While such a trajectory is evident throughout early U.S. foreign policy, a fitting example would be the U.S.'s shifting attitude toward Cuba. In an April 1823 letter, Secretary of State John Quincy Adams called Cuba and Puerto Rico the "natural appendages" to the United States (372), and claimed that "there are laws of political as well as of physical gravitation; and if an apple severed by the tempest from its native tree cannot choose but to fall to the ground, Cuba, forcibly disjoined from its unnatural connection with Spain, and incapable of self-support, can gravitate only towards the North American Union, which by the same law of nature cannot cast her off from its bosom" (373). Thomas Jefferson wrote in October of 1823 to James Monroe, "I candidly confess, that I have ever looked on Cuba as the most interesting addition which could ever be made to our system of States [….] Yet, as I am sensible that this can never be obtained, even with her own consent, but by war […] I have no hesitation in abandoning my first wish to future chances, and accepting its independence" (Jefferson 1482-3). Then, by issuing the Monroe Doctrine in December 1823, the U.S. effectively took steps toward Western hemispheric hegemony by declaring all of North and South America a U.S. protectorate of sorts, enveloping both continents within its sphere of influence if not its complete control. Just as Sheppard shifts from the assertion that his bodily takeover is non-voluntary to the admission that he desires the takeovers for the sake of experimentation and progress to finally an ever more willful conquest, U.S. leaders shifted their rhetorical positioning toward Cuban annexation.

Before Sheppard even enacts his first "imperial" conquest of a dead body, Bird establishes the central themes of U.S. tactical postcoloniality, via a wild and richly symbolic dream sequence. Hounded by creditors and bereft of the greater part of his farm through his own ineptitude and the deceptions of his hired overseer, a desperate Sheppard becomes increasingly influenced by the superstitions of his single slave, Jim Jumble. Jim espouses a simple means to prosperity: dig up the buried treasure of convicted seventeenth-century pirate William Kidd. The true location of the treasure is revealed, according to Jim, only if a person dreams about it on three consecutive nights; then the successful dreamer must dig, at midnight on the next night under a full moon, while reciting the Lord's Prayer backwards. Soon after losing his property and being declared "wrong in the upper story" (32), that is, insane, by both his brother-in-law and a neighbor named Squire Higginson, Sheppard has the requisite dream three nights in a row. This fantastic dream sequence succinctly establishes the analogies between body and empire that Bird unpacks throughout the novel.

In Sheppard's dream, his decrepit house finally collapses entirely. As he sits in front of the ruins, Higginson visits him, but in place of a dog, Higginson brings a large black pig, which he refers to as, conveniently enough, "Black Pig." He beats Black Pig with a whip until the animal reveals the location of Kidd's treasure. Next, Higginson draws a grave on the spot and indicates that Sheppard should dig there in order to find "a new life altogether" (34). Upon digging, Sheppard finds a coffin full of gold and silver and stuffs his clothing with the money. But on his way home, as he puts it, "I fell into a miry place, where I was weighed down by the mass of gold I had about me, and smothered. In the midst of my dying agonies, I awoke, and found that all was a dream" (35).

First, Sheppard's dream symbolically proposes domestic poverty and desperation as the impetus for expansionist aspirations. It is only when Sheppard has lost his home entirely that he feels compelled to look outside the domestic arena for wealth and opportunity. The dream begins with the complete destruction of Sheppard's home; as he says, "I thought that my house had fallen down in a high wind, as, indeed, it was like enough to do, and that I was sitting on a broken chair before the ruins" (33). The complete ruin of Sheppard's home is the direct catalyst of his search for Kidd's treasure, which analogically suggests that the nation-state averts attention from its domestic problems by supporting territorial expansion—the famed safety valve theory of expansionism.[43] This practice was especially relevant after 1832, when Jackson staged his battle with the Bank of the United States as a class conflict between the hardworking agrarian republicans and the moneyed "aristocrats" in control of the Bank. Jackson advised in his veto message that when the law helps the rich get richer, "the humble members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—who have neither the time nor the means of securing like favors to themselves, have a right to complain of the injustice of their government" (Jackson 175). An unintended consequence of that rhetoric was a flare-up of class violence, such as the anti-bank riots in Baltimore in August 1835, in which angry mobs burned the furniture of bank trustees, bank directors, and the mayor, and ultimately were massacred by an armed militia (*Niles* 123-126).[44] To relieve class tension, politicians pointed out the availability of free or cheap land along the Western frontier; as Indian lands were acquired, they were parceled up and sold at below-market value to lottery winners. As Harry L.

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[43] The definitive discussion of the safety-valve theory is still Henry Nash Smith's in *Virgin Land*, 234-245.

[44] David Grimsted calls 1835 the "Year of Violent Indecision" and July through October the year's "intense mob season" (ixx, 12).

Watson explains, “this gesture to republican equality” popularized Indian removal policy among whites, and as a result “politicians in the Deep South vied eagerly to see who could be most aggressive in promoting white equality by demanding Indian lands” (107). The collapsed house in Sheppard’s dream suggests the safety-valve hypothesis to explain Jacksonian expansionist policy.

The dream also suggests the delusive core of the Jacksonian promise of egalitarianism. When he sees Sheppard in front of his ruined home, Higginson, with Black Pig at his heels, declares, “Sheppard Lee, you are a poor man, and eaten up with discontent, but I am your friend, and you shall have all your wishes” (34). Through the wealthy Higginson’s promises to fulfill the wishes of the destitute Sheppard, Bird satirizes the ruling class’s tools of control, what Gramsci called “moralising sermons, emotional stimuli, and messianic myths of an awaited golden age, in which all present contradictions and miseries will be automatically resolved and made well” (150). Bird also exposes how the success of egalitarianism depends not only on unearthing new opportunities for wealth but also on consolidating power over an excluded nonwhite population, here represented by Black Pig. As Schueller and Watts have pointed out, “‘Americanness’ as a gendered, raced, and classed phenomenon was constantly negotiated through strategic identification and disidentification with Europeans, on the one hand, and American Indians, African Americans, and other nonwhite populations, on the other hand” (2). In Sheppard’s dream, the promises of the upper class juxtaposed against the servitude of a black beast embody this uniquely American tactical postcolonial position and dramatize the shallow alignment of white interests across classes that masqueraded as egalitarianism. This egalitarian sleight of hand makes class interest invisible to the white working class, embodied by

Sheppard Lee, by offering them shared domination over an oppressed racial minority, symbolized by Black Pig.

Next, the conversion of Higginson's dog into a black pig that must be whipped in order to perform its purpose introduces race-based slavery into the dream's symbolic logic. Sheppard narrates that in the dream, "a great black pig followed at [Higginson's] heels in place of his dog" (34).

> He then turned to the pig, which was rooting under a gum-tree, and blowing his whistle, said, "Black Pig, show me some game, or I'll trounce you;" and immediately the pig began to run about snuffing, and snorting, and coursing like a dog, so that it was wonderful to behold him. At last the squire, growing impatient, and finding fault with the animal's ill success, for he discovered nothing, took a whip from under his shroud, and fell to beating him; after which the pig hunted more to his liking. (34)

Here Bird allegorizes a specifically American system that propels its expansionist projects by extracting labor from the bodies of Africans. The black body is figured as both a dog and a pig: what had been Higginson's dog appears as a pig in the dream, but then appears doglike to Sheppard within the dream ("coursing like a dog"). This double animalizing of the black body points to its double function for white U.S. citizens: the slave alternately plays the parts of pet and beast of burden. Thus, with the dream's odd figure of Black Pig, Bird reinscribes the laboring black body into the imperial tableau.

The fact that the treasure is housed in a coffin foreshadows, most obviously, Sheppard's metempsychoses to come, since later in the novel he will become wealthy only by dying and reanimating the bodies of rich men. But the cash-stuffed coffin also implies

the danger and potential fatality of seeking wealth outside the domestic domain: Sheppard must literally climb into a grave to attain wealth, just as a colonizing national power courts its own destruction in its imperial pursuits. Furthermore, the coffin imagery evokes the origins of U.S. imperialism in the seizure of occupied Indian lands. Reminiscent of Thomas Jefferson's exhumations of Native American Indian corpses in *Notes of the State of Virginia* (1787), Bird here rewrites treasure hunting as grave robbery. The coffin, as well as Sheppard's suffocation at the end of the dream, suggests that Bird condemns the imperialist enterprise as self-destructive—an idea certainly reinforced by his better-known novel, the bloody frontier romance *Nick of the Woods* (1837), which attempts to do away with the notion of the gently surrendering Indian who appears (and disappears) in the novels of Sedgwick, Child, and Cooper. The mortal risks associated with empire-building also concern Bird in his less-read first novels, *Calavar* (1834) and *The Infidel* (1835). Historical romances set in sixteenth-century Mexico, both novels depict the tragic consequences of conquest and argue for peaceable evangelization and unity between colonized (the Aztecs) and colonizer (the Spanish).

Jim Jumble's directive to recite the Lord's Prayer backward further reinforces Bird's warning against expropriating foreign resources. The Lord's Prayer, recorded as a teaching of Jesus in the New Testament Gospels (*King James Bible*, Mt 6:9-13), sets up a utopian cosmological monarchy. With its benevolent dictator ("thy kingdom come"), automatic debt forgiveness ("forgive us our debts, / as we forgive our debtors"), and seamless and timely resource delivery ("give us this day our daily bread"), the Lord's Prayer essentially advocates submission to God-as-king and illustrates the modest rewards associated with that submission. Sheppard's search for wealth, performed while chanting

the prayer in reverse, by implication inverts and perverts that system. The reverse of the prayer's political vision, an idealized cosmo-political monarchy with a contented and cared-for populace, would be an imperialist capitalist republic. Thus, in the symbolic schema of Sheppard's treasure hunt, imperial enterprise destroys the possibility of passive, effortless, peaceful abundance and replaces it with disruptive, potentially lethal but ultimately fruitless striving for affluence.

Perhaps of most interest in the dream sequence is the fabled origin of the treasure itself. As Sheppard narrates, "Some called the place Captain Kid's [*sic*] Hole, after that famous pirate who was supposed to have buried his money there, as he is supposed to have buried it in a hundred thousand other dismal spots along the different rivers of America" (29). William Kidd had gained fame as a privateer in the Caribbean when British colonists hired him in 1695 to chase and attack pirates. His pirate-hunting expeditions badly failed, however. A crew member died after Kidd attacked him with a bucket, and the first ship Kidd successfully took was a merchant ship captained by an Englishman. When he returned to New York City, he was tried and hanged for murder and piracy, and in Sheppard's time as well as today Kidd is remembered as one of the most notorious pirates in history—even though his voyage was actually a botched attempt to police international waters and protect British interests. As the historian of piracy Robert C. Ritchie puts it, Kidd's "life represents a turning point in the history of empire as well as in the history of piracy" since his career bears witness to "the evolution of piracy as it changed from a state-sponsored to an increasingly autonomous activity" (2, vi). The story of Captain Kidd highlights the slippage between state-sponsored foreign interventions and explicit criminal acts—a slippage shared by early U.S. expansionism.

Bird and his contemporaries would have been well aware of the hazy line between state-approved piratical imperialism and anarchical nautical crime; contemporary general interest magazines hotly debated Kidd's culpability and the moral ambiguity of piracy. For example, one widely reprinted story that appeared in at least four different magazines in 1835, the year before *Sheppard Lee*'s publication, begins

> We have one remaining duty to perform which is imperative, and that is, to state who and what sort of personage this great sea-robber [Kidd] was, to disabuse the public as to his character, by rescuing him from the company of the vile plundering hands of assassins with whom he has so long been associated in story and in song—a scapegoat for all that was atrocious and bloody. ("Captain Kidd") [45]

The story goes on to explain that the American colonies of the late seventeenth century, too poor to be targeted by pirates and buccaneers, became friendly trading partners with the pirates so hated by the Europeans. Colonial administrators and governors were in league with the pirates, against the wishes of the metropole, because the pirates paid liberally for goods produced and sold in the colonies. The article meticulously lists the English noblemen and royalty who underwrote Kidd's expedition, and elucidates the political embroilments of Kidd's trial: "The subject of his nautical career of robbing, and the delay of bringing him to justice, was debated in the House of Commons, and the parties who were concerned in the original partnership with him, were attacked with the whigs and openly charged with being concerned in his stupendous careers of robbery, and sharing his treasures" ("Captain Kidd"). Another article, published in early 1836 in *The American Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, attests that while the technical illegality

[45] The story appeared in the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, *Atkinson's Casket*, *Workingman's Advocate*, and *Atkinsons's Saturday Evening Post*, among others.

of piracy was unquestionable, pirates often enjoyed public and political support: "the public feeling was every where very lenient towards pirates; although the laws against them were as severe, and as rigidly executed, as at present. The famous Captain Kidd was suffered to go at large, several days, in Boston, and it was even whispered that the British ministry, and the king himself, were concerned in his depredations" ("Old Pirates"). In other words, the interpenetrations among illegal piracy, economic development, and state-sponsored aggression are not merely today's faddish scholarly emphases, but were matters of inquiry at least as early as Bird's time. Bird taps into the tradition of the Captain Kidd legend in order to highlight those interpenetrations.

Throughout the novel, Bird returns to this blurred line between socially acceptable and socially prohibited criminality. For example, the narrator says that Abel Snipe, the protégé of one of Sheppard's avatars, Zachariah Longstraw the philanthropist, is "an amateur in that virtuous art of which Zachariah was a professor" (260). Sheppard further explains,

> having no means of his own to relieve the woes of the wretched, he had borrowed from the boards of his employers (the president and directors of a certain stock-company, in whose office he had a petty appointment), and thus, perforce, made charitable an institution which was chartered to be uncharitable. He committed the fault, however, of borrowing without the previous ceremony of asking. (260)

In other words, theft is amateur philanthropy, and therefore philanthropy is merely professional, systematized theft. In some sense this is more true than satirical: philanthropy and theft are related at least to the extent that they are the voluntary, legal and involuntary, illegal methods of redistributing wealth. But the joke also provides some insight to the

instruments of imperialism in operation during Bird's day: expansionism masquerades quite often as philanthropic benevolence but is in fact a large-scale, state-sponsored theft. *Nick of the Woods* confirms Bird's idea that, at the furthest reaches of empire, heroism and crime are sometimes difficult to tell apart: in that novel, one of the most valiant Indian killers and horse stealers "has his fault, poor fellow, and sometimes mistakes a Christian's horse for an Injun's" (66-7). It is while Sheppard inhabits a Quaker philanthropist, benevolent and generous to a comical fault, that he comes closest to admitting his control of others' bodies represents something like theft; he resolves, "'I will next time be certain I am not putting my soul, as the pickpocket did his hand, into a sack of fish-hooks'" (305).

By the time Sheppard has inhabited his third body, he has shifted to a model of completely willful and unilateral bodily imperialism, having apparently abandoned the idea that his body transfers are involuntary, necessary, or mutually beneficial. While he inhabits the body of the miser Abram Skinner, Skinner's sons try repeatedly to rob him; both sons eventually die, one by suicide and one through insanity. After a brief period of mourning, Sheppard-as-Skinner is wishing for death

> when the blessed thought entered my mind, that the wo [*sic*] on my spirit, the anguish, the distraction, were but a dream—that my very existence, as the miser and broken-hearted father, was a phantasm rather than a reality, since it was a borrowed existence—and that it was in my power to exchange it, as I had done other modes of being, for a better. I was Sheppard Lee, not Abram Skinner; and this was but a voluntary episode in my existence, which I was at liberty to terminate. (226)

Thus Sheppard-as-Skinner articulates the shift from longing for a different and better habitation to the belief that such territory is one's right.[46] To put it in Certeau's terms, Sheppard begins to transition from a tactical to a strategic approach to his metempsychotic, and by analogy imperialist, power.

Sheppard ultimately comes to understand his metempsychoses in terms of more or less explicit exploitation. When, as Skinner, he witnesses the murder of Zachariah Longstraw, he pities Longstraw but immediately recognizes his opportunity to profit from the Quaker's distressed circumstances. He quickly resolves "to take advantage of the poor man's misfortune, and convert his body to my own purposes" (247). Later, when Sheppard-as-Longstraw decides to occupy the body of Tom the slave, he demands, "If thou art dead, my sable brother, yield my spirit a refuge in thy useless body!" (327). Here, with the words "yield" and "useless," he introduces the language of capture and surrender while reiterating the essential worthlessness of the body of the other.

While Sheppard represents the bodies he borrows as empty vessels that would be wasted without his occupation, once he does inhabit them, he attributes their problems to the body itself. Thus, Bird reflects another characteristic of antebellum U.S. expansionism, and perhaps imperialism in general: the disavowal of culpability by the colonizer. Throughout his metempsychoses, but especially while in the reprehensible Skinner's body, he repeatedly excuses his bad behavior on the grounds that he is a mere tenant in foreign domain: "I entreat the reader to remember that I had got into Abram Skinner's body, and that the burden of my acts should be therefore laid upon his shoulders" (202). Since Skinner's material body performed the atrocious acts, the blame should return to the body;

[46] See Varg for a careful chart of this progression in American history.

in fact, Sheppard specifies an anatomical marker, the "shoulders." He further explains that if one swears and lies while wearing a borrowed coat, the blame goes not to the coat or the coat's original owner, but to the liar. Here the coat represents the soul, and the liar is the body, a position decidedly more materialist than either Christian or Cartesian essentialist ontology would suggest. "A man's body is like a barrel," Sheppard explains, "which, if you salt fish in it once, will make fish of every thing you put into it afterward" (209). Applying this line of thinking to geographical territories, the colony bears both the burden and the blame of any act the colonizer executes in colonized territory. In the antebellum period, the actions of filibusters, private soldiers or sailors who invaded foreign territory for their own profit and who were officially not connected to or encouraged by the U.S. government, permitted American citizens to forswear such expeditions as criminal—even though they closely resembled official expansionist policy.[47] On the continent, Jackson pursued a similar responsibility-skirting approach to Indian removal: he declared individuals' violence against Native American Indians a state matter outside the jurisdiction of federal troops or courts. Since the state courts often would not permit Indians to testify against whites, Jackson's disavowal of federal responsibility amounted to an official sanction of brutality against Indians (Watson 109).[48] Inhabiting previously occupied bodies or previously occupied land gives the invader the carelessness and lack of felt responsibility that accompany any temporary stay.

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[47] Greenberg, Charles H. Brown, and May offer interesting histories of filibustering.

[48] Watson ascribes this injustice to Jackson's search for "some means of coercing the Indians without appearing to do so." "If he simply declared his legal inability to protect the Indians from the onslaughts of their white neighbors, the frontiersmen would provide the force for him" (108-9). When the frontiersmen did, with impunity, attack the Native American Indians, Jackson the savior reminded the Indians that Congress could protect them—if they would only move further west.

Finally, Sheppard echoes a final fixture of antebellum expansionism (and of expansionist practices since): the *pro forma* apology. After his specious renunciation of guilt, Sheppard recommends that every guiltless person repent as a matter of form, in order to hedge one's bets, as it were. Sheppard confirms, "I hope that the acts I then committed may be laid to old Skinner's door; but," he adds, "for fear of a mistake, I have endeavoured to repent them, as being sins of my own committing: and this course I recommend to all those good folks who are persuaded their peccadilloes are the faults of others, and for the same reason,--namely, lest they should be mistaken" (211). In Bird's lifetime, as now, there were rarely official government apologies.[49] Nevertheless, one backhanded way in which the antebellum U.S. government executed the *pro forma* apology was by prosecuting individual imperial agents, such as Commodore David Porter, who was court-martialed in 1825 for invading Puerto Rico while on a state-sanctioned anti-piracy expedition. In a similar but perhaps even more hypocritical case, General George Mathews was prosecuted by the Madison administration for occupying East Florida—an occupation ordered by Madison and his Cabinet (Kruse 193-217, May 5-8).

The political valence of Bird's body/territory allegory, then, differs significantly from many of the frontier novelists that Bird specifically challenged. Bird does not challenge his era's notions of civilization and progress, and he does not elicit sympathy for the colonized. Instead, Bird attacks the imperialist theory of mutual benefit by allegorizing and ridiculing it. Identifying this nuance in Bird's anti-imperialist stance is essential to understanding not only *Sheppard Lee*, but also nineteenth-century thinking on empire in general. While the romances of Cooper and Sedgwick oppose U.S. expansion by

[49] For an interesting discussion of official state apologies and the lack thereof, see Nobles.

delineating the core nobility and humanity of its Native American Indian victims, a thinker like Bird sidesteps the question of the individual worthiness of any culture, race, or civilization, and instead opposes the philosophical and political justifications that undergird the expansion. In this way, despite his appalling racial hatred of Native American Indians,[50] he is able to align them with the defeated Aztecs sympathetically depicted in his Mexican novels, the Burmese whom he defends against British imperialism in his later newspaper reporting, and the nations of Central America, protected against U.S. and British colonization by the controversial Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850, which Bird unpopularly supported.[51] Thus Bird's opposition to imperialism is categorical rather than case-specific, and does not require sympathy, sentiment, or progressive racial attitudes, but instead is transnational and rights-based.

Fredric Jameson has claimed that "[t]hird-world texts […] necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: *the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society*" (69). But the binary he draws between third- and first-world literary traditions[52] leaves literary cultures that grew out of transitional historical periods like Jacksonian America in a liminal aesthetic position. This aesthetic limbo has assured that texts produced in the United States prior to the so-called American Renaissance of the 1850s have been all but neglected by scholars until fairly recently. Authors like Bird, while hardly classifiable as "third-world" intellectuals, experienced a phenomenon similar to the

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[50] Bird recognizes this racial hatred as an aesthetic, if not a personal, flaw; he calls reports of Native American raids on white settler households "a stumbling block to [his] imagination" (*Nick of the Woods* 29).
[51] For a concise summary of Bird's political newspaper writings, see Foust 141.
[52] A binary that is disappointingly limiting to both, as Aijaz Ahmad has shown (95-122).

one Jameson attributes to postcolonial writers, "bearing a passion for change and social regeneration which has not yet found its agents" (81). Without leveling the particularities of experience that divide early nineteenth-century America from postcolonial and third-world nations, I would like to suggest that there is enough affinity between the psychologies of their political situations to permit reading *Sheppard Lee* as a bodily national allegory. Examining the allegorical uses of the body in antebellum U.S. fiction invests socio-political importance in the material body and sheds light on the ways in which bodies are recruited into postcolonial, nationalist, and imperialist projects alike.

Ultimately, if we accept the overwhelming evidence that metempsychosis provides Bird a comic, fantastic trope through which to examine the operations of early nineteenth century expansionism, we must revise Poe's conclusions about the "very doubtful moral" of the satire. When Sheppard returns to his original body (or, strictly speaking, awakens from his reverie, since Bird strongly suggests that the entire narrative was Sheppard's hallucination), he discovers that his humble forty-acre farm on Watermelon Hill in New Jersey is the true source of contentment and modest wealth. The final sentence of the novel reads: "At all events—be my body what it may, hardy or frail, still or supple, I am satisfied with it, and shall never again seek to exchange it for another" (425). Bird echoes Voltaire's conclusion to his tonally similar satire *Candide* (1759), which ends with the advice that everyone should cultivate his or her own garden. Reading the concluding chapters of *Sheppard Lee* in isolation easily yields Poe's conclusion that the novel advocates a sort of blind contentment among the working poor. But considering Bird's engagement with questions of imperialism, not simply reading Sheppard as a representative citizen, but also reading his body as representative American nation-state, we can see the injunction to

remain where one is and work one's own land also gestures toward the containment of U.S. empire.

In this satire, Bird makes no ethical appeal; he does not suggest that the U.S. expansionist project may harm the invaded populations or violate any moral principles. Instead, Bird suggests that imperial acquisitions are not beneficial to the colonizer. In this way, he echoes contemporary British anti-imperialists like Sir Henry Parnell, who in 1830 urged Parliament to abandon its expansionist projects in Sierra Leone and other West African colonies by claiming, "They do not even afford any advantages, as some persons suppose, by enlarging the field for the employment of capital; for there are still means enough for employing capital with profit at home" (146). Sheppard comes to a similar conclusion at the end of his bodily invasions: He promises his brother-in-law, "I shall now bid adieu to indolence and discontent, that vile mother and viler daughter together, and do as my father did before me, that is, cultivate these few acres which my folly has left me, with my own hands" (416). Ultimately Bird does not seek to check the social mobility of individual American citizens, but to circumscribe mobility territorially by troubling the notion that imperialist expansion is a benevolent, beneficial practice.

Chapter 4

Edgar Allan Poe and the Imperial American Nightmare

A contemporary of Robert Montgomery Bird, indeed an admirer of his work, Edgar Allan Poe engaged with the same historical context as Bird: distrustful of social change and increases in both social and geographical mobility, Poe employs fantastical plots and images of interpersonal bodily incorporation to symbolize both individual loss of self-determination and territorial expansion. As with Bird, it is not immediately apparent that the scope of Edgar Allan Poe's work includes an embedded examination of early U.S. imperialism. In fact, much of Poe's work has attracted the ire of scholars who have found in Poe the distillation of all that was racist, misogynist, and anti-democratic in early American culture. F.O. Matthiessen disregarded Poe as unfit for inclusion in his "American Renaissance" because Poe was, he said, "bitterly hostile to democracy" and because his stories lack the "moral depth" of Melville and Hawthorne (xii). I would like to shift the conversation away from sounding Poe's moral depth (or superficiality, as the case may be), and instead argue that the historically specific way in which Poe embodies sociopolitical questions in his fiction clears the way for a complex staging of both the promise and peril of early U.S. imperial tactics.

Like Bird, Poe employs metempsychosis as a device to explore the ways in which a person can control another's body and, by extension, Poe's fiction constitutes a meditation on U.S. control over foreign territory. Poe also deploys two additional representations of corporeal control: mesmerism and cannibalism. In this chapter, I will examine how Poe uses metempsychosis, mesmerism, and cannibalism to examine early forms of U.S. territorial and commercial imperialism. These corporeal stagings of conquest and control establish the lens through which we can read the concluding episode of his novel, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), in which Poe depicts colonial contact between Europeans and a fictional Antarctic civilization.

Many of Poe's tales of metempsychosis undeniably address male anxiety over the idea that women have independent consciousnesses and wills. Frances Ferguson has persuasively argued that the Romantic movement responds to that anxiety through its emphasis on nature and solitude. She explains that in the work of Thomas Malthus and William Wordsworth, "a Romantic consciousness emerges in reaction to the proliferation of other consciousnesses, or rather to the claims of other consciousnesses—for example, women's—on the individual. Solitude comes to be cultivated as a space for consciousness in which the individual is not answerable to others" (106). Populated as they are with women whose minds or souls return after death to inhabit other bodies or objects, Poe's short stories fantastically project the uncanny conditions for the Romantic retreat from female consciousness into nature and solitude by depicting the horror of the never-dying female consciousness. As Peter Coviello argues, this horror helps explain the persistent pedophilic themes that recur in Poe: "little girls stand out as among the most stable and promising sites for heterosexual erotic investment in Poe's fictional world, which is

otherwise distinguished in the realm of adult eroticism by incest, necrophilia, and many varieties of sexual revulsion" ("Poe in Love" 878). The slippage between adult females and corpses in Poe's tales protects the white male from losing his identity in a morass of bodily indeterminateness, but that protection hardly leaves the adult female as a tenable recipient of sexual desire (Coviello, "Poe in Love" 875-901). In several of Poe's tales, metempsychosis suggests the dire personal consequences of unconquerable female consciousness and the congruently catastrophic social implications of gender equality.

In, for example, Poe's 1835 story "Morella," metempsychosis at once signals increasing mobility and its terrifying consequences. The narrator marries a woman to whom he is inexplicably drawn but nevertheless is not attracted: the "fires" Morella ignites in his soul are "not of Eros" (*Poetry, Tales, and Selected Essays*[53] 234). She is extraordinarily brilliant and leads him in studies; they read and discuss Fichte, Schelling, the Pythagoreans, and Locke. The most exciting philosophical concept they ponder is identity: both the way in which identity is located in the individual rational consciousness that separates one from others, and the theory that one's identity might transcend that consciousness and survive even through death. Morella's bright intellect and compelling power eventually agitate the narrator so much that when she becomes ill, he longs for her to die. On her deathbed, from which, the narrator suddenly reveals, she is also apparently giving birth, she vows that, while her death will bring him ostensible relief, she will continue to live, quite literally, in her child. This metempsychotic transfer, she promises, will torture him. Morella declares, "her whom in life thou didst abhor, in death thou shalt

[53] Abbreviated hereafter as *PTSE*.

adore" (236). The daughter does indeed grow up quite quickly and look exactly like her mother. The narrator laments that

> in the contour of the high forehead, and in the ringlets of the silken hair, and in the wan fingers which buried themselves therein, and in the sad musical tones of her speech, and above all—oh, above all—in the phrases and expressions of the dead on the lips of the loved and the living, I found food for consuming thought and horror—for a worm that *would* not die. (238)

It's not entirely clear why the resemblance between a dead woman and her daughter—a phenomenon that seems natural enough—would cause such "horror," unless the "consuming thought" bears a sexual tenor; apparently the elder Morella has condemned the narrator to the horror of incestuous desire. The verbal, rational expression of the mother Morella, once unattractive but irresistible when reincarnated in the words of his daughter, stimulates the narrator's phallic "worm." The narrator involuntarily christens the daughter "Morella," and eventually Morella the second also dies. When he buries the daughter, the narrator finds the first Morella's grave empty.

What is so bizarre in this story is actually *not* that the title character possesses the power to willfully transfer herself into different bodies, but rather the fact that agency is entirely absent from some of the traditional acts associated with decision-making. For example, the initial marriage is not an act of will at all; instead, professes the narrator, "fate bound us together at the altar" (234). Furthermore, the naming of his daughter, the archetypal act symbolic of agency and dominion, is also not willed: the narrator wonders, "What fiend spoke from the recesses of my soul, when, amid those dim aisles, and in the silence of the night, I whispered within the ears of the holy man the syllables—Morella?"

(238). The interpellated child responds, also without any apparent volition, "I am here!" (238). Contrasted with the elder Morella's singular ability to transmit her personality into her daughter's body are numerous contrary examples of bizarre inabilities to choose. As Duncan Faherty puts it, the genuine horror in such a story "resides in Poe's suggestion that an individual's capacity to determine his or her own destiny is severely limited. [….] Flying in the face of the dominant Jacksonian faith in self-sufficiency, Poe argues that the idea of a self-determined identity is an ungrounded fiction" (9-10). I would add that in "Morella" in particular, Poe juxtaposes men's inability to determine their destiny and identity with women's absurdly powerful ability to do so.

In "Morella," the advanced education and intelligence of a woman invert the normal order of things. Usually people get to decide whom to marry and what to name their children, but once women are granted the powers of knowledge and will, those abilities are elided, leaving women instead with the eerie power to possess and control bodies. Individual agency and thought itself emerge as a zero-sum game in which only so many acts can be willed, so many thoughts had, so many decisions made; in the face of female consciousness, male agency ceases to matter and male actions become involuntary. Thus in "Morella," metempsychosis signals the nightmarish potential of gender equality and unfettered social mobility. The willfulness of a woman precludes a man's ability to think and act, and the fictional analogue of absolute equality and mobility is a dissolution of the corporeal distinctions between persons.

The inextinguishable female mind uncannily inhabits corpses, objects, and other bodies in "Ligeia" (1838), "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839), and "The Oval Portrait" (1842), among other works by Poe. As in *Sheppard Lee*, metempsychosis

personifies social change in Poe's Jacksonian America, this time with special emphasis on what Poe perceived as the growing power of women and the corresponding unstable status of men. Satire and horror represent the two contrasting poles at which each author burlesques what he sees as uncontrolled change toward more broadly distributed social power. For Bird, however, this change is not only ridiculous but also transient, as the ending of his novel indicates.[54] In Poe's fiction, by contrast, social mobility is frightening and potentially permanent. Furthermore, many critics have connected Poe's use of women in these metempsychotic tales with his anxieties about the mobility of free black Americans and about the potential for slave insurrection and subsequent anarchy.[55]

Coviello argues that these nightmarish relationships eliminate the possibility of American nation-building forged through shared intimacy; "the nation consisting of a vast network of intimate relationships would be, by Poe's cosmology, the scene of unending panics and dissolutions" (*Intimacy* 89). But also embedded within these nightmarish fantasies of mobility gone awry is a complex meditation on property and possession. Morella's metempsychotic ability defies not only male authority but also John Locke's claim that "every man has a property in his own person" (287). For Locke, this primary

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[54] When Bird died, he was working on another satirical novel, this one ridiculing women's ludicrous attempts to gain social and political equality.

[55] For example, Joan Dayan's "Amorous Bondage" claims that in the logic of Poe's fiction, affection both between men and women and between white and black Americans requires dependence, subservience, and mastery. Maurice S. Lee points out that transcendental union between individuals appears as terrifying in Poe's fiction; Lee believes that terror derives from Poe's racial politics: "Poe cannot celebrate a transcendentalism that synthesizes black and white" (761). Bradfield concurs that mixture and merging between persons or races are the source of terror for Poe. He believes that the conclusion of *Pym* is meant to bolster the doctrine of the absolute distinction between races: "For Poe, black and white are not merely categories of race but of consciousness, biology, and chemistry. Each race possesses a chemical integrity which does not allow mixing" (80). This chemical integrity is exemplified by the fantastic rainbow-colored water in Tsalal that, upon closer inspection, is actually made up of perfectly distinct cords of color.

ownership of one's own body forms the basis of all property rights, including the observation of borders among nations. Once the body loses validity as prima-facie property, the agreements between people to observe property rights and between nations to observe territorial boundaries, based on the body as *a priori* and incontrovertibly owned by oneself, collapse in turn.

Poe explores these connections between the body and ownership in more detail in his mesmeric tales. Adam Frank has shown that mesmerism and telegraphy, another magnetic technology emerging in the antebellum period, provided Poe with analogues for the manipulative relationship between author and reader. I would add that Poe's "scenes of control's excess" (639) compellingly puts the author in the position of the colonizer and presents the reader as territory to be conquered. In Poe's "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), mesmerism shares much of the allegorical function that metempsychosis performs in *Sheppard Lee*. The tale is narrated by a mesmerist who wants to discover whether putting a very ill man into a mesmeric trance could delay his death. So he mesmerizes a patient, Valdemar, who is about to die. The effect is that the man is suspended for almost seven months in a state between death and life—in a mesmeric trance, able to answer the questions of the narrator with some effort, but with no pulse or respiration. Also, the narrator loses the influence over Valdemar's body that he had had while mesmerizing a fully alive Valdemar. When, after the seven months has passed, the mesmerist tries to awaken Valdemar from the trance, Valdemar clearly experiences agony at being suspended once again between death and life, and when the mesmerist finally succeeds in awakening the patient, Valedmar is instantly reduced to a "nearly liquid mass of loathsome—of detestable putridity" (*PTSE* 842).

The analogies between this semi-successful science experiment and nineteenth-century imperialism are many. Poe implies the affinity between body and land when he enumerates the rather gruesome details of Valdemar's disease:

> The left lung had been for eighteen months in a semi-osseous or cartilaginous state, and was, of course, entirely useless for all purposes of vitality. The right, in its upper portion, was also partially, if not thoroughly, ossified, while the lower region was merely a mass of purulent tubercles, running into one another. Several extensive perforations existed; and, at one point, permanent adhesion to the ribs had taken place [….] The ossification had proceeded with very unusual rapidity [….] Independently of the phthisis, the patient was suspected of aneurism of the aorta; but on this point the osseous symptoms rendered an exact diagnosis impossible. (835)

Valdemar's "ossification" offers a horrifying, near-hysterical correlate to Emerson's joyful merging between nature and the human body in "Nature" (1836). Valdemar's bodily tissue is hardening, literally turning into fossil or stone; as his body becomes more earth-like, it becomes impossible for the doctors to even examine it as a human body anymore. The analogy between body and territory is inscribed in Poe's (ostensibly superfluous and unnecessarily detailed) clinical description of Valdemar's diagnosis, a sobering version of the transcendental union with the natural world.

Valdemar's earthlike body inflects geopolitical meaning when the mesmerist-narrator reveals that Valdemar has no friends, family, or principles. First, Valdemar has "no relatives in America who would be likely to interfere" (834). The mesmerist also claims, "I knew the steady philosophy of the man too well to apprehend any scruples from

him" (834); that is, Valdemar subscribes to no strict religious beliefs or ethical doctrines forbidding an experiment that would potentially delay the afterlife and yield the control of his body to another person. Valdemar—weak, friendless, identity-less—can double as a nation or territory with no powerful allies and no unifying national culture—both, by design, vulnerable to conquest and control.

Next, the narrator-mesmerist justifies his experiment in two ways: it will benefit Valdemar and himself equally, and Valdemar has voluntarily submitted to it. The mesmerist will take control of Valdemar's body only when it has become completely useless to Valdemar, a caveat that imposes upon the narrative an implausible clinical scenario in which the doctor possesses nearly psychic ability: Valdemar's "disease was of that character which would admit of exact calculation in respect to the epoch of its termination in death" (834). Furthermore, even as Valdemar is in his death throes, the mesmerist "begged him to state, as distinctly as he could, to Mr. L—l, whether he (M. Valdemar) was entirely willing that I should make the experiment of mesmerizing him in his then condition" (836). Valdemar answers "feebly, yet quite audibly, 'Yes, I wish to be mesmerized'" (836). Thus Poe, like Bird in *Sheppard Lee*, demonstrates the imperialist justifications of *domicilium vacuum* and *occupatio bellica*, by which foreign territory could be legally appropriated by an invading power if it was declared vacant or peacefully surrendered. Here the two doctrines are symbolically established with the medical absurdities that, days in advance, a person's moment of death can be predicted and that a man with lungs of stone can speak with clarity in order to relinquish control over his own body.

As the representative colonizer, the mesmerist does evince control over Valdemar's body, the colonial territory, for a time; he succeeds in his "half effort to influence his right arm in pursuit of my own" (837). But, just as the colonizer finds colonial government unwieldy, the mesmerist soon loses control over Valdemar's body: "I should mention, too, that this limb was no further subject to my will" (840). Ultimately the mesmerist rejects responsibility for the body of Valdemar, and "earnestly struggled to awaken him" (841). When he finally frees Valdemar from the trance, however, Valdemar "within the space of a single minute, or even less, shrunk—crumbled—absolutely *rotted* away beneath my hands" into a puddle of goo (842). Thus the colonial territory is completely ravaged by the interference of the colonizer.

The link between colonialism and mesmerism, between remote control over territory and remote control over the body, becomes ever more apparent in Poe's "Tale of the Ragged Mountains" (1844), which combines the devices of metempsychosis and mesmerism. In the tale, Mr. Bedloe is an ill Virginian being treated for neuralgia (pain without cause), partly by the mesmeric methods of a doctor named Templeton. One day, as he is hiking through a remote area of the mountains, "a dusky-visaged and half-naked man rushed past" Bedloe, followed, even more unexpectedly, by a hyena (*PTSE* 658). The trees around Bedloe suddenly turn into palm trees, and he finds himself looking down upon an "Eastern-looking city, such as we read of in the Arabian Tales, but of a character even more singular than any there described" (659). When he descends into the city, he becomes embroiled in a battle between British colonial governors and Indian insurgents, during which he is killed by a poisoned arrow to the temple. But he is somehow shocked into second existence, arises, and retraces his steps back to the mountains. He explains, "I

became my original self" (662-3), and goes home to tell the tale to the narrator and Dr. Templeton, who interprets Bedloe's experience. According to the doctor, Bedloe looks exactly like one Mr. Oldeb, a British official killed in Benares during the 1780 insurrection led by Cheyte Sing. So, Templeton suggests, Bedloe is a reincarnation of the soul of Oldeb, and he has just experienced a metempsychotic flashback to his original avatar's death. A week after these revelations, Bedloe dies when Templeton accidentally applies poisonous leeches to his temples. The newspaper misprints the patient's name as "Bedlo" (664)—the reverse, of course, of "Oldeb." The newspaper also notes, for the reader's edification, "The poisonous sangsue of Charlottesville may always be distinguished from the medicinal leech by its blackness, and especially by its writhing and vermicular motions, which very nearly resemble those of a snake" (664).

Through the fantastic vehicles of metempsychosis and mesmerism, Poe creates two metaphorical correspondences: first, Dr. Templeton's power of mesmeric control over Bedloe is a metaphor for the Britain's colonial influence over India. Second, with the reincarnation of British colonial officer Oldeb in the neuralgic American Bedloe, Poe indicates that the post-revolutionary United States is replaying the drama of the previous century's colonial theatre.[56] Written in 1844, the tale is set specifically "[d]uring the fall of the year 1827" (655), during which the United States was involved in no less than three skirmishes with Native American Indians over disputed land. The Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) tribes located in Wisconsin Territory fought with the U.S. army and local militias in the Le Fevre War; Illinois Winnebago tribes resisted the Fever River expedition of volunteer

[56] Michael J.S. Williams has skillfully analyzed the transhistorical and transnational connection the tale draws between British colonialism in India and the American Revolution.

American militiamen; and Sauk and Fox Indians fought against the French in Illinois. Lest any doubt persist that Poe has Indian relations in mind with this story, he repeatedly mentions that this autumnal setting represents "the strange *interregnum* of the seasons which in America is termed the Indian Summer" (657, see also 658).

Furthermore, the strange paradox Bedloe registers in his perception of his mountain hike strongly suggests the incongruity of Euro-American "discovery" of previously occupied lands in North and South America. Bedloe imagines that he is the first person to explore a remote area of the mountains, even though he knows that others have been reported to live there. Bedloe thinks, "So entirely secluded, and in fact inaccessible, except through a series of accidents, is the entrance of the ravine, that it is by no means impossible that I was indeed the first adventurer—the very first and sole adventurer who had ever penetrated its recesses" (658). Nevertheless, he concurrently recognizes the impossibility of his being "the very *first* and *sole*" occupant, since he is afraid of encountering native inhabitants: "I remembered, too, strange stories told about these Ragged Hills, and of the uncouth and fierce races of men who tenanted their groves and caverns" (658). Despite his awareness of previous inhabitants, Bedloe in some way clings to his notion that he has discovered something new, since when a man runs by him, he calls it an "astounding source of interest and perplexity" (658). The arrival of a person one had already expected could hardly be considered astounding or perplexing, except in the context of Anglo-European incursions on Native American Indian lands, wherein the colonizer, having declared the land vacant or at worst peacefully surrendered, is astounded and perplexed to experience the resistance of the indigenous occupants.

In its fantastic delineation of the "discovery" of previously occupied lands, "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" retells an episode from Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly* (1799). In that novel, Brown uses the Gothic convention of the mysterious apparition to reflect the colonial American's fraught contact with the Native American Indian. After the title character successfully gropes his way through a dark cave in Pennsylvania, he emerges at a beautiful summit on the other side and congratulates himself on his singular discovery: "It was probable that human feet had never before gained this recess, that human eyes had never been fixed upon these gushing waters [….] Since the birth of this continent, I was probably the first who had deviated thus remotely from the customary paths of men" (99)—language clearly echoed in Bedloe's musings.

Edgar's perception of his own privacy augments his shock when his "attention lighted, at length, as if by some magical transition, on… an human countenance!" (99). But the irony of the entire episode lies in Edgar's seeming forgetfulness; the face's appearance does not seem magical or even unexpected to the reader because Edgar has already announced that this entire journey's purpose is to seek out the mysterious local laborer Clithero (93). In fact, when Edgar feels his courage faltering during his blind sojourn in the cave, he reflects that "Clithero had boldly entered this recess, and had certainly come forth at a different avenue from that at which he entered" (96). While this reflection propels him further through the cave, it does not inspire him to share the credit of "discovering" the wilderness beyond the cave with his acknowledged predecessor. Edgar's assumption that he has stumbled upon virgin land and his surprise at encountering a man—when he was explicitly searching for a man—can only appear ridiculous to the reader with an intact short-term memory.

Both Brown and Poe expose the irony of the American republican's willful ignorance of the prior presence of the Native American. The euphoria of false discovery and their presumed ownership of the land prevent both Edgar and Bedloe from anticipating an apparition already expected by the reader; this same euphoria and presumption incites the early republic to ignore the presence and consequent rights of Native Americans. Because Bedloe has already demeaned the personhood of the "uncouth and fierce races of men" by disqualifying them from the status of fellow "adventurer," he is able to be genuinely surprised when the actual body of one appears.

Poe extends the allegorical functioning of this ironic dissonance even further by linking U.S. imperial solipsism across time with the previous century's British imperial excursions in India. When Bedloe enters the city, which Dr. Templeton later reveals is Benares (today called Varanasi), India, he describes the scene: "A small party of men, clad in garments half-Indian and half European, and officered by gentlemen in uniform partly British, were engaged, at great odds, with the swarming rabble of the alleys" (*PTSE* 661). Without apparently choosing sides or deciding to do so, he reports, "I joined the weaker party, arming myself with the weapons of a fallen officer, and fighting I know not whom with the nervous ferocity of despair" (661). In other words, Bedloe does not choose but is compelled to join the white, British, colonizing side of the colonial conflict. After his apparent death, he also does not choose his removal from the scene: "Volition I had none, but appeared to be impelled into motion, and flitted buoyantly out of the city, retracing the circuitous path by which I had entered it" (662). In these scenes, Bedloe's body alone determines his fate, and presumably his body's being neither "dusky-visaged" nor "half-naked" ineluctably dictates his position as the colonizer. In this instance of

metempsychosis, then, Poe mounts a triple commentary on imperialism: he creates a parallel between the eighteenth-century British vis-à-vis South Asian Indians and nineteenth-century Americans vis-à-vis Native American Indians; tethers the subject-positions of colonized and colonizer to race and to Euro-centrically imagined markers of civilization; and divorces the actions of the colonizer from his will to power.

But the allegory exceeds even this triptych in its complexity, since the tale strongly suggests that Bedloe's metempsychotic time travel has merely been an illusion orchestrated by the mesmeric powers of Dr. Templeton. The narrator describes the medical relationship between Bedloe and Templeton in terms of conversion and submission that resembles the language of international hegemony more than that of either friendship or clinical care. Templeton "had struggled hard to make a thorough convert of his pupil, and finally so far gained his point as to induce the sufferer to submit to numerous experiments" (656). The doctor does not advise his friend or diagnose and treat his patient, but "converts" him until he "submits." Just as in Sheppard Lee's increasingly more aggressive and controlling approach to the corpses he inhabits, the doctor's mastery of Bedloe's body becomes more firm and exacting the longer he treats him:

> At the first attempt to induce the magnetic somnolency, the mesmerist entirely failed. In the fifth or sixth he succeeded very partially, and after long continued effort. Only at the twelfth was the triumph complete. After this the will of the patient succumbed rapidly to that of the physician, so that, when I first became acquainted with the two, sleep was brought about almost instantaneously, by the mere volition of the operator, even when the invalid was unaware of his presence. (656)

Therefore at the time of Bedloe's metempsychotic journey, he is already spending part of his time as a mere puppet of Templeton's will. Poe then places a double distance between Bedloe and culpability in the imperial project: it is merely his body, not his consciousness, that chooses to be a colonizer in his metempsychotic journey to India, and that body may be being controlled by Dr. Templeton. As an embodiment of the antebellum United States, Bedloe echoes the responsibility-skirting techniques enumerated in *Sheppard Lee*: the individual consciousness has little or no control over the body, compelled by natural disposition and the course of history. Metempsychosis, crossed with mesmerism in Poe's "Tale of the Ragged Mountains," provides a fantastical space for the exploration of imperialist themes—and for the disavowal of ethical responsibility in colonial contexts. Bedloe joins Sheppard Lee in the interstice between colonized and colonizer, since he violently defends imperialism in 1780s India, yet he is also the passive victim of Dr. Templeton's mesmeric control. Like the antebellum U.S., Bedloe practices tactical postcoloniality—reluctantly colonizing with one hand while valiantly fighting imperialism with the other.

Metempsychosis and mesmerism are not the only symbols of bodily incorporation to appear in Poe's fiction. In Poe's nightmarish fictional world, one's body might not only be inhabited by someone else's soul or controlled by someone else's will, but it might literally be incorporated into someone's body. In his single novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), Poe introduces cannibalism as a bodily symbol of imperialism. The novel's title character tells of his witnessing two mutinies aboard the whaler the *Grampus*, surviving the ship's subsequent wreck, and traveling to unchartered territories of the Antarctic aboard a sealing and trading vessel, the *Jane Guy*. The narrative

breaks off abruptly as Pym is describing the contact between the sailors and a fantastic civilization that lives at the apparently temperate South Pole.[57]

Early in the novel, a series of images connects the supernatural metempsychoses of his tales with *Pym*'s somber depiction of cannibalism. Leading up to the novel's cannibalism scene, Pym, Peters, Augustus, and Parker are the four remaining men on a floating wreck in the middle of the ocean, and they experience a number of eerie harbingers of cannibalism. A series of heavily laden symbolic images serve as a sort of warm-up to the tragic cannibalism scene. First, they spy a ship, a "large hermaphrodite brig" (80), that appears to be tacking back and forth toward their wreck. Her behavior is decidedly erratic: "The awkward manner in which she steered, too, was remarked by all of us, even excited as we were. She yawed about so considerably that once or twice we thought it impossible she could see us, or imagined that, having seen us, and discovered no person on board, she was about to tack and make off in another direction" (80). The brig's unaccountable tacks lead the sailors to presume "the helmsman to be in liquor" (80), but they soon discover the ever more terrible truth that the ship is unmanned: all aboard are dead, as in the ghost ship of Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Thus, the undead female from Poe's tales returns embodied in a ship, referred to with the traditional female pronouns but with added gender indeterminacy: her "hermaphrodite" masts, with both square and triangular sails.

Even more eerily, one of the brig's sailors apparently smiles and nods at Pym and his desperate shipmates: "He seemed by his manner to be encouraging us to have patience,

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[57] In this unexpected detail regarding climate, Poe follows the hollow-earth theory of John Cleves Symmes, Jr., and is possibly influenced by the anonymous, likely satirical novel *Symzonia: Voyage of Discovery* (1820). For a nineteenth-century defender of Symmes, see McBride.

nodding to us in a cheerful although rather odd way, and smiling constantly so as to display a set of the most brilliantly white teeth" (80). The smile, on closer inspection, turns out to be the dead man's exposed white skeleton, and his nodding is caused by the force of a large white sea gull's "busily gorging itself with the horrible flesh, its bill and talons deep buried, and its white plumage spattered all over with blood" (82). The sailor appears to be alive and to perform voluntary action, but in reality the violent ingestion of the flesh-eating white bird has transformed the sailor into an uncannily animated puppet controlled by the bird. The senseless, repetitive, acquiescent motions of the corpse set the limits of volitional embodiment for the subaltern subject; the bird is the first instance of the white motif that suggests Euro-American geopolitical predation throughout the novel. Like the white maritime bird, colonizing nations and cultures feed on and control the bodies of their territorial acquisitions. Forced motion takes on particularly fraught implications when considered in light of President Jackson's enforcement of the Indian Removal Act, which fatally culminated in the Trail of Tears in the same year that Poe published his novel.

The sailors' horror at such a repugnant sight, however, segues directly into their own semi-cannibalistic acts. They find a bottle of port wine in their ship's submerged hull; Peters, Augustus, and Parker drink it greedily. Then in desperation, all four try to ingest the leather covering of the captain's trunk. They drink a conventional symbol of blood and chew animal flesh just before they eat Parker. Clearly Poe is foreshadowing their consumption of a human body, an example of what Gillian Brown calls Poe's "anticipatory mode" ("The Poetics of Extinction" 335), but he also is indicting Pym's inability to link their experiences into a chain of meaningful events: Pym fails to notice the traumatic repetitions among the bird's eating the corpse, the sailors' chewing the leather, and their

cannibalizing Parker. This inability to discern and read experiential patterns will have catastrophic consequences later in the narrative when Pym cannot read the patterns of strategically affected inferiority among the Antarctic natives. Moreover, this blindness to patterns of experience unfolds on the macro-historical plane as the hypocrisy of American tactical postcoloniality: the young U.S. repeatedly fails to apply its righteous indignation at European imperialism to its own diplomatic maneuverings in the Caribbean, Pacific, and the massive territory that would become the American West.

The cannibalism scene aboard the *Grampus* rehearses the imperialist drama in symbolic terms, playing with the analogy between body and territory. *Pym*'s sailors believe they are only driven to such excessive measures by the extremely dire material conditions on the ship: "This was the sixth day since we had tasted either food or drink, with the exception of the bottle of port wine, and it was clear that we could hold out but a very little while longer unless something could be obtained," Pym reports (87). "I never saw before, nor wish to see again, human beings so utterly emaciated as Peter and Augustus" (87-8). Parker adds to this feeling of urgent necessity when he declares that "he could exist no longer without sustenance of some kind" (91).

The two desperate sailors' language here has a double suggestiveness. First, it echoes Poe's ambitious self-fashioning in his letters to his adoptive father. In one letter, Poe requests financial assistance and declares, "I have thrown myself on the world like the Norman conqueror on the shores of Britain &, by my avowed assurance of victory, have destroyed the fleet that could alone cover my retreat—I must either conquer or die" (*Letters* 10). Written in 1828, from the vantage point of having just survived a shipwreck while serving in the U.S. Army, Poe's letter evinces a martial understanding of his career,

in which death and conquest are mutually exclusive options that urgently demand immediate choice. No middle way exists that would permit the mutual benefit of all. The sailors' dire situation also corporeally reifies Thomas Malthus's influential theory of overpopulation and scarce resources. Malthus believed that whenever a community's population exceeded the availability of sustaining resources like food, some decrease in population would inevitably restore the balance between population and food. As he puts it, "The power of population is so superior to the power of the earth to produce subsistence for man, that premature death must in some shape or other visit the human race" (56). As in Poe's representation of his career, in Malthus's formulation, death *must* eliminate part of the population to permit the flow of resources to the rest. In Poe's conventional use of the ship microcosm, "premature death" arrives in the men's contractual cannibalizing of Parker. Thus *Pym*'s cannibalism scene combines a Malthusian perspective on population with Poe's idea that "conquest" is the only alternative to death.

As with Sheppard Lee's escalating metempsychotic episodes, Pym at first convinces himself that he is not a willful agent in the cannibalistic bodily takeover, even though he perceives its benefits: "I had, for some time past, dwelt upon the prospect of our being reduced to this last horrible extremity, and had secretly made up my mind to suffer death in any shape or under any circumstances rather than resort to such a course" (90). He soon determines that his compliance is unfortunate but necessary: "it became absolutely necessary that I should attend to my own safety, as a further resistance on my part might possibly be considered by men in their frightful condition for refusing me fair play in the tragedy that I new would speedily be enacted" (92). And, ultimately, like Sheppard, Pym begins to express his participation in increasingly exploitative ways. Given the task of

arranging the straws to be drawn to determine the victim, Pym "thought over every species of finesse by which I could trick some one of my fellow-sufferers to draw the short straw" (93). He excuses his behavior on the grounds of survival instinct: man, Pym explains, feels "a deep interest in the preservation of his existence; an interest momentarily increasing with the frailness of the tenure by which that existence may be held" (92-3). Furthermore, Pym claims, anyone in the same situation would act the same way: "Before any one condemn me for this apparent heartlessness, let him be placed in a situation precisely similar to my own" (93). Thus Pym accepts the willfulness of his cannibalistic acts but disavows moral culpability, since such actions are inevitable among all humans. Bodily conquest is merely an unfortunate by-product of self-preservation, part of human nature and unavoidable—the "must" imperative of both Poe's and Malthus's formulations ("I *must* either conquer or die"; "premature death *must* in some shape or other visit the human race").

When he draws the short straw, Parker, like Sheppard Lee's bodily hosts, does not fight against his conquerors; indeed he offers "no resistance whatever" (94). But it is important to note a distinction: while the consent of Sheppard's corpses is tacit and farcical—he asks the permission of the mute dead—Parker has given consent in advance of choosing the short straw. Indeed he is the architect of the plan that one sailor "should die to preserve the existence of the others" (90). In Poe's cannibalism analogy, then, hegemony is consensual; both the dominant and the oppressed are willing parties in a social contract that could require the sacrifice of one's own life. To put it in Locke's terms, while one's initial ownership of one's own body forms the basis of all property transactions, the application of that fundamental ownership to national territory is negotiated by contract

among nation-states (Locke 285-302). Poe analogically reflects the vision of hegemony proposed by Antonio Gramsci, who explains that hegemony does not operate as an exhaustive and transparent system of domination and victimization, but as a give-and-take between the subaltern and the dominant (Gramsci 123-202); he observes, "Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed" (161). Parker, the ultimate victim, suggests cannibalism as the Malthusian check on overpopulation and dwindling food supply, which indicates Poe's vision of a consensual and symbiotic hegemony.

In their description of colonial textuality, Tiffin and Lawson explain, "Colonialism conceptually depopulated countries either by acknowledging the native but relegating him or her to the category of the subhuman, or simply by looking through the native and denying his/her existence. [….] Only empty spaces can be settled, so the space had to be made empty by ignoring or dehumanizing the inhabitants" (5). In its depiction of the process of dehumanizing the colonized/cannibalized subject, cannibalism in *Pym* emphasizes the trauma of imperial enterprise. Pym, Augustus, and Peters must go out of their way to dehumanize the victim of their cannibal/imperial aggression. Pym explains, "having by common consent taken off the hands, feet and head, throwing them, together with the entrails, into the sea, we devoured the rest of the body, piecemeal, during the four ever memorable days of the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth of the month" (94). In *Sheppard Lee*, the corpses to be inhabited are already vacated in Sheppard's understanding, but as this passage shows, Pym and his companions must actively and consciously "depopulate" and "dehumanize" Parker. In this way, Poe's

narrative confronts the gruesome aspect of bodily, and by analogy territorial, conquest in a way that Bird's comic tone allows him to skirt. Overtaking the bodies of others presents Sheppard with slapstick difficulties, but it presents Pym and his companions with the physical, material reality of misappropriation. In Poe's analogy, there is no illusion that Parker benefits in some way from being cannibalized; Poe does not clearly delineate Parker's body as "useless" before it is consumed. Instead Parker's designation as the victim rather than the aggressor of bodily imperialism is a mere matter of chance: Parker has grabbed the short stick. Therefore, the doctrines of mutual benefit, *occupatio bellica*, and *vacuum domicilium* do not figure in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* as they do in *Sheppard Lee*. Rather, Poe's bodily analogy of territorial acquisition deals primarily with a Malthusian overpopulation theorum: there is simply not enough stuff to go around, and the aggressors have merely won the near-random survival lottery, to the detriment of the victims. While metempsychosis provides Bird with a flight of fancy sufficiently otherworldly that he can treat bodily conquest very lightly, the cannibalism scene in *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* is so traumatic that the narrative itself resists it; Pym moves immediately from a gruesome description of the mutilation and ingestion of Parker's corpse to a notably bland narrative detour about Galapagos tortoises (96-7)—a non-human object of consumption.

Just as Sheppard realizes at the end of the novel that his own property has always been an adequate source of wealth and contentment, Pym, Peters, and Augustus soon come to the heartbreaking realization that their cannibalizing of Parker was completely unnecessary. Not two days after they finish consuming Parker's body, Pym says that "there flashed through my mind an idea which inspired me with a bright gleam of hope" (95).

Pym remembers an axe he had stowed in the berth of the forecastle, with which they cut the deck over the submerged store-room and dive directly into it to obtain provisions. With access to the store-room, they secure two hams, five jars of olives, "a carboy containing nearly three gallons of excellent Cape Madeira wine, and what gave us still more delight, a small tortoise of the Gallipago breed" (96); in short, ample food and drink. Thus through his microcosmic analogy, Poe exposes Malthusian fears about the overpopulation and underproduction of the world to be delusive. Poe here deconstructs Malthusian scarcity theory in the same way Bird exposes the specious core of safety-valve expansionism. The food supply of one community need not be supplied by predation on others; instead, with greater ingenuity, a community can supply its own needs.

The cannibalism scene provides a legend with which to read the imperial cartography mapped over the novel's concluding episode, Pym's discovery of a remote civilization in the deep Antarctic. Pym and Peters, after being rescued from the wreck of the *Grampus*, are absorbed into the crew of the British sealing and trading ship the *Jane Guy*. They discover that, once one passes the southernmost previously navigated latitudes of the Antarctic, the temperatures actually rise dramatically and the icy waters become easily navigable. The crew discovers a number of novel flora and fauna before encountering a large community of brawny, very dark-skinned "savages" who inhabit an island called Tsalal and are led by a chief named Too-wit. The Tsalalians appear inquisitive and friendly, although irrationally afraid of all white objects and animals. Captain Guy arranges a labor and trade agreement with Too-wit: under the supervision of three of Guy's crew and in exchange for baubles like beads and cloth, the "savages" will gather and cure a valuable foodstuff, the *beche de mer*, in houses built especially for the

project. But the day most of the crew is slated to depart and continue its explorations, Too-wit and his people launch a devastating surprise attack. Of the *Jane Guy*'s men, only Pym and Peters, by a lucky fluke, escape the island with their lives.

The socio-political commentary is no longer embodied, as it were, in allegorical incorporations of individuals' flesh; here, at the end of his only novel, Poe literalizes an episode of contact between autonomous civilizations, but allegorizes the racial and economic politics of that contact. Poe offers sufficient suggestions to justify the frequent interpretation of the Antarctic episode as a fable of American sectional politics;[58] for example, the topographical features of the warm Antarctic islands include rock ledges that have "a strong resemblance to corded bales of cotton" (128). Furthermore, the mysterious hieroglyphs that Pym and Peters discover in a cave on Tsalal are later interpreted as "To be shady," "To be white," and "The region of the south" (177). Cotton, the juxtaposition of dark and white, and the reference to the south obviously evoke the contentious practice of race-based slavery in the American South.

But reading the cannibalism scene and the Antarctic episode in conjunction with one another brings into focus a less emphasized interpretive possibility: Poe's engagement with international imperialist practices.[59] As Paul Lyons has pointed out, scholarship about novels that represent U.S. encounters with oceanic islanders tend to elide Pacific island specificity, bleeding island identity into African-American identity: "To see works such as Poe's Pym as primarily a commentary on Southern slavery, despite its explicitly South

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[58] See Faflik, Nelson, Rudoff, for interesting examples. These concerns also circulate Kennedy and Weissberg's collection *Romancing the Shadow: Poe and Race*.

[59] Of course, U.S. imperialism and U.S. slavery are not unrelated. Certainly the forced emigration and coerced labor of Africans constituted what we might term "internal imperialism," employing the methods of social, economic, and psychological domination, without appropriating territory.

Seas location, or to see Queequeg as black, or to see the Taipi as analogies for U.S. slaves, are examples of how liberatory criticism can, in some contexts, participate in American Pacificism that (mis)read sources (take secondary sources for primary ones) through agendas unrelated to Oceanian interests" (38). John Carlos Rowe, perhaps the critic most concerned with Poe's engagement with imperialist ambitions, charges Poe with exploiting the "poetic will to power" to propel conventional racism and imperialism (90); in Rowe's view, Poe "dramatizes the rhetorical superiority that allows his concept of the modern author to be prototypical of Euro-American superiority over 'savage' mimicry" (100).[60] But I would like to argue that in *Arthur Gordon Pym*, Poe has the fantastically black Tsalalians demonstrate a great deal of rhetorical skill: racial inferiority is a performative game for them, and it is the white invaders whose intercultural illiteracy precipitates them to disaster. Therefore, interpreting Poe's depiction of the interdependencies of body and territory in *Pym* provides support for Dana D. Nelson's observation that "while on one level *Pym* is a racist text, on another the text provides a reading that counters racist colonial ideology and the racialist, scientific knowledge structure. In this way the two levels of the text exist in tension" (92).

As with many of the great unreliable narrators of American literature, perhaps most tellingly like Captain Amasa Delano of Melville's "Benito Cereno," what Pym does *not* see during his Antarctic adventure is as interesting as what he does see. Pym never discerns the connection between all the objects by which the Tsalalians are repulsed and frightened: a handkerchief (131, 173), the white men's "complexion" (132), sails (134),

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[60] Bradfield concurs: "The blacks in Too-Wit's village possess no real language, only crazed 'jabbering' (190). One of their few distinct words, 'tekeli-li,' acts as a primal enunciation of racial alterity" (79-80).

eggs (134), the leaves of a book (134), flour (134), an unidentified white animal (157), sailors' shirts (171), milky water (173), ashy white rain (173), and so on. The epilogue, written in the third authorial voice of the novel, hardly surprises the reader when it witheringly notes that all these items are "*white*" (178). Moreover, Pym never imagines that the Tsalalians might resist the crew's intrusion on their land and interventions in their way of life.

In order to demonstrate Pym's ethnocentrism, blindness, and intercultural illiteracy, Poe's prose becomes proleptic and narratively illogical. Pym repeatedly insists on some version of the claims that "not one of us had at this time the slightest suspicion of the good faith of the savages" and that "we should have been the most suspicious of human beings had we entertained a single thought of perfidy on the part of a people who treated us so well" (145). Yet he has already registered a great deal of suspicion. When he describes, for example, the large crowd of Tsalalians who accompany the crew of the *Jane Guy* on the road to the village, Pym adds, "There appeared so much of system in this that I could not help feeling distrust" (136). Also, he explains that the crew trusted "foolishly to the force of our party, the unarmed condition of Too-wit and his men, the certain efficacy of our fire-arms (whose effect was yet a secret to the natives), and, more than all, to the long-sustained pretension of friendship kept up by these infamous wretches" (146-7). Of course, if the crewmen truly trusted the Tsalalians' friendship, they would not need to "foolishly" trust technological superiority to win them a battle—there would be no possibility of battle at all. Thus Pym paradoxically registers both a lack of suspicion and a sustained, continuous distrust of the Tsalalians. As Gillian Brown explains, in "The Purloined Letter," "the legibility of human actions that the letter epitomizes is all too apparent. As an

anthropological parable, the tale projects both the ease and difficulty of recognizing traces, of seeing the obvious" (343). Like the baffled investigators of Poe's detective story, Pym and his crewmates fail to read their impending doom in the perfectly legible hints provided by Too-wit and his men. Naturally, Poe wants to foreshadow doom while still maintaining the guilelessness of his protagonists, and this apparent contradiction demonstrates a somewhat clumsy buildup of dramatic irony. Brown calls this Poe's "anticipatory mode" (335), evidence of "the anthropological imperative" (333)—Poe's compulsion to compile evidence of human existence in the face of nineteenth-century scientific understandings of the brevity of human life.

At the same time, though, Poe is exposing Pym and the other white explorers as incapable of comprehending colonial resistance to their exploitative plans. The crew of the *Jane Guy* exhibit a kind of cultural solipsism that renders them blind to the strategic maneuvers of what they falsely presume is a simplistic savage society. They can only envision Tsalalian life as an adjunct to their own economic advancement. As Albert Memmi has shown, the most lucid and self-aware definition of "colony" to the colonizer is "a place where one earns more and spends less" (4). Captain Guy consciously reflects such an understanding in his colony-building attempts on Tsalal. When they make contact, the crew's communications with the Tsalalians are explicitly targeted toward profit-making: the crew "endeavored to ascertain if they had among them any articles which might be turned to account in the way of traffic, but found great difficulty in being comprehended" (134); as soon as they finish their first meal there, they "commenced a series of cross-questionings in every ingenious manner we could devise, with a view of discovering what were the chief productions of the country, and whether any of them might be turned to

profit" (140). Just as Captain Guy's imperial logic immediately converts the Tsalalians into commercial profit, even a dull, interpolated narrative aside, taken from Benjamin Morell's *Narrative of Four Voyages*, shifts from the history, appearance, and behavior of the *beche de mer* to an analysis of its value in various markets (143-4). The European and American characters, then, practice a certain colonial alchemy, trying to convert everything they see into money, eventually hatching a scheme to convert Tsalalian labor into profit within the *beche de mer* bleaching room–effectively turning (black) bodies into (monetary) objects.

The crew is baffled when the logic of exchange is not reciprocated among Too-wit and his people: it comes "much to our surprise" when Too-wit "turned up his nose with some expression of contempt" at a gift of blue beaded necklaces (140). Tsalalian attitudes are completely illegible to the crew because they resist the colonial logic of uneven exchange. In fact, Too-wit's first demonstrative act is the exact reverse of Captain Guy's; he tries to convert an object into a body:

> The cook was splitting some wood near the galley, and, by accident, struck his axe into the deck, making a gash of considerable depth. The chief immediately ran up and, pushing the cook on one side rather roughly, commenced a half whine, half howl, strongly indicative of sympathy in what he considered the sufferings of the schooner, patting and smoothing the gash with his hand, and washing it from a bucket of seawater which stood by. (133)

Too-wit's emotional response to the ship's being "injured" reverses the colonial logic of objectifying human bodies in order to extract profit; Too-wit humanizes objects into bodies that feel pain. Thus colonial logic converts bodies into objects and anti-colonialism recruits

objects into the human project of shared sympathy. Of course, Pym considers Too-wit's display to be mere "ignorance," "some of it affected" (133).

Like Bedloe in "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," Pym can understand inter-cultural contact only as filtered through a hierarchical understanding of the raced body. The Tsalalians' "jet black" bodies mirror the "dusky-visaged" body of "Ragged Mountains." In *Pym*, the whites' attempts to subject the dark bodies to a colonial commercial scheme is as inevitable as Bedloe's biopolitical compulsion to join the white side of the Indian-British colonial conflict. Under Poe's Malthusian imperial imperative—"either conquer or die"—it ineluctably follows that the whites' inability to convert Tsalalian bodies into profit-producing objects results in death.

Pym's race-inflected inability to imagine that the Tsalalians would resist the *Jane Guy*'s commercial project provides an important deconstruction of U.S. neoimperialist thinking. The U.S. envisions its interventions in foreign territory more as corporate merger than conquest; Captain Guy's colonial scheme clearly envisions a mutual—albeit unequal—commercial relationship in his *beche de mer*-bleaching project. In Guy's plan, while the Tsalalians will be working for the British, they will get some fancy bleaching huts in exchange. Through the fatal conclusions of *Pym*, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," and "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains," however, Poe suggests that the violence of outright conquest still attends ostensibly peaceful and consensual imperialist strategies.

Epilogue

An American Leg in the South Pacific

A caged, decomposing body hangs from a tree. A woman entombs herself in a tiny attic sarcophagus for seven years in order to hear her children playing in the yard. A future president digs up buried Native American bodies. A man is tormented by the beating heart of a murder victim beneath the floorboards. A headless body on a horse frightens a superstitious teacher in a New York suburb. A three-fingered bandit terrorizes California, and after he's apprehended, his hand and his partner's head become a travelling freak exhibit. A man with one leg chases a whale.[61] To understate the case dramatically, the bodies that populate many of the most famous and important works of early nineteenth-century fiction are indeed extraordinary.

To understate a second point, this dissertation merely scratches the surface of the fruitful work that could and, I believe, should be done by studying the body and international politics in conjunction. Employing a cross-fertilization of the scholarly emphases on border politics and the body, I have argued that by attending to early U.S.

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[61] I am referring, of course, to J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), Washington Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820), John Rollin Ridge (Cheesquatalawny/Yellow Bird)'s *Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta* (1854), and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), respectively.

authors' depictions of the body, we can trace the United States' transition from a postcolonial democracy, through an era of competing nationalisms, to a hesitantly imperial nation-state. This trajectory I have traced by no means represents the totality of what the early American body could have to say about early American transnational politics. In the spirit of opening out and expanding my argument rather than pretending I have exhausted all the possibilities of this line of inquiry, I'd like to close this dissertation with a brief suggestion of the ways in which my approach could be applied to other works, by examining the sine qua non of canonical American writers, Herman Melville.

Melville's first novel *Typee* (1846) tells the story of a young sailor, Tommo, who recruits his Byronic shipmate Toby to desert their whaling expedition and live among the tribes of the South Pacific island of Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas Islands. Tommo and Toby, hiding from their captain at the top of a mountain in the center of Nuku Hiva, must choose which coast to hike toward; they believe they have chosen to live with the friendly Happar tribe, but soon discover they have accidentally descended among the Typee, rumored to be vicious cannibals hostile to foreign invaders. On the hike down, Tommo injures his leg, and the Typee permit Toby to leave to seek medical treatment for Tommo. Toby never returns. Alone, Tommo grows fond of the Typee, particularly his female companion, a beautiful and fun-loving girl he names Fayaway. He begins to believe the gruesome stories about the Typee have been exaggerations or misunderstandings. But as time wears on, he grows wary of the Typees' desire to tattoo his skin and fearful of their desire to cannibalize him. He escapes the island by swimming out to a passing ship and by murdering a pursuing Typee chief with a boathook.

Typee was published at an interesting time for both the American body and for American expansionism. The American Medical Association was founded in 1847, and although, as Cynthia Davis shows, that milestone does not necessarily demarcate an instant and stable consolidation of an American theory of embodiment, it does indicate "an increasing tendency to turn to embodied existence as both essential referent and source" (2). In 1840 and 1853, Orson and Lorenzo Fowler published editions of their *Illustrated Self-Instructor in Phrenology and Physiology*, a text explicitly intended to give nonexperts the tools to comprehend embodiment as "referent and source." At the same time that medical and scientific communities and the general public were beginning to systematize their perception of the body, the United States was expanding its borders in the most explicitly forceful way possible: war. Congress had signed a bill into law that annexed Texas in 1845, effectively assuring the war with Mexico that began in 1846. The U.S. also secured its dominion over the Oregon Territory south of the forty-ninth parallel in 1846 after agreeing to leave Vancouver Island to Canada. Most pertinently, perhaps, for Melville's novel, the U.S. was establishing outposts throughout the Pacific in order to strengthen its trade route to China, with whom it had established diplomatic ties through the 1844 Treaty of Wangxia. All in all, many American institutions were taking increased interest in both the body and foreign territory around the time of *Typee*'s publication.

Melville criticism has, in the last decade or so especially, seized upon the internationality latent in his later works and explicit in earlier novels like *Typee*, heralding Melville as the forerunner of postnationalist thinking. Robert Tally, Jr., for example, places Melville's global vision in novels like *Moby-Dick* in contradistinction to the literary nationalism that both preceded his time and dominated mid-twentieth-century literary

scholarship. In fact, Tally finds Melville's concerns so transnational that he imagines "Melville's ghost cry[ing] out in opposition to the tradition of the American Renaissance" (1). T. Walter Herbert identifies *Typee* as Melville's platform for "criticizing the imperialist perspective" of other observers of the South Pacific (72). Indeed, Melville scholarship has become so internationally focused that it is difficult to believe that as recently as 1997, a scholar demanded in the pages of *The Massachusetts Review* that Melville's "works be re-examined in an international frame" (Ellis 10).

The bodies in *Typee* have also received a good deal of critical attention. In fact, an entire issue of *Leviathan* was devoted to "Melville and Disability" in 2006, a collection that pushes away from seeing the body as a mere symbol through which to read either moral and spiritual characterization or social norms and normalization. That special issue also exemplifies a trend in Melville studies to focus on two figures: the missing limb of *Moby-Dick*'s Ahab and the ever-changing body of the titular con artist of *The Confidence-Man*, a novel that features a "society of extraordinary bodies" (Otter, "Introduction" 9). The two works that give extensive attention to the bodies in *Typee*, *Melville's Anatomies* by Samuel Otter and *The Sign of the Cannibal* by Geoffrey Sanborn, offer intriguing connections between politics and the body in Melville's work, but in their readings of *Typee*, both focus on tattooing and cannibalism, the spectacular bodily features of the Typee tribe, rather than on the disabled body of the narrator.

The approach I have laid out in this dissertation may offer new insights into even frequently commented-on works like *Typee*. By exploring the ways in which Tommo's role as an enchanted visitor, representative colonizer, attentive ethnographer, and ultimately violent antagonist relates to his experience of disability, I would like to suggest

that the experience of embodiment, real or fictionally represented, has something to tell us about encounters within modern hegemonic systems. What does it mean that Tommo's stay on Nuku Hiva is ostensibly perpetuated by his mysterious leg injury? Why does the injury itself, despite being sustained by the narrator, occur "offstage" in a manner of speaking, rather than being reported in real time? And why, although his injury is the ostensible reason for Tommo's pleasant immobility, does Tommo give almost no details of the injury? (Is there a laceration? Are the bones broken? Is the flesh gangrenous?) These narrative mysteries point to the ambiguities and complexities of the U.S. presence in the Pacific in the nineteenth century, specifically, and of the terms of U.S. hegemony more broadly.

Generally speaking, Tommo espouses a sort of proto-cultural relativity when he describes Typee practices that differ from Western customs. He usually suggests ways in which the apparently odd practice is self-consistent or useful within Typee culture. For example, he asserts that although the Typee houses are constructed radically different from Western-style homes, "a more commodious and appropriate dwelling for the climate and the people could not possibly be devised" (102). He explains how Western norms seem ridiculous to the Typee; for instance, his reluctance to bathe in front of women makes him seem like "a froward, inexperienced child" to his servant Kory-Kory (111). Tommo also claims that Christian missionaries misunderstand Marquesan "Paganism" because they disregard the islanders' perspective and try to understand native religions in Christian hierarchical terms (200-202). In other words, Tommo more often than not imagines that each community adjusts its cultural practices to meet its particular needs, and that notions of Western superiority stem from ethnocentric misunderstandings.

Tommo's narrative of his leg injury contradicts this tendency. The provenance of Tommo's leg injury remains obscure throughout the novel, even to Tommo himself. After chapters of describing mere discomfort—hunger, cold, and fever—Tommo reveals that he has been, despite extensive walking and mountain-climbing, suffering from "lameness" (68); he reports abruptly, "one of my legs was swelled to such a degree, and pained me so acutely, that I half suspected I had been bitten by some venomous reptile" (63). His descriptions of the Typee healer who attempts to cure him are uniformly condescending, calling him a "savage Æsculapius" and "old Hippocrates himself" (95, 99), the implied joke being the contrast between the advanced "civilization" of ancient Greek medicine and the primitive fumblings of the "aged islander" (99). According to Tommo, "I endeavored to resist this species of medical treatment. But it was not so easy a matter to get out of the clutches of the old wizard; he fastened on the unfortunate limb as if it were something for which he had been long seeking, and muttering some kind of incantation continued his discipline, pounding it after a fashion that set me well nigh crazy" (99). When the healer stops pounding, he rubs moistened herbs on "the inflamed part, stooping over it at the same time, and either whispering a spell, or having a little confidential chat with some imaginary demon located in the calf" (100). The strange intersection between Tommo's narrative distance from the event—he is looking back from a remove, both temporal and geographic—and the immediacy of intense physical pain results in uniquely disdainful condescension. Tommo identifies no redeeming value in these healing practices and comically dismisses the healer as a charlatan. He worries that "without better aid I might anticipate long and acute suffering" and longs for the "surgeons of the French fleet" (119).

This dismissive approach contrasts with Tommo's other, more open-minded encounters with foreign practices.

Tommo's leg and its treatment by the Typee is a rare site of cross-cultural opacity within the novel. Through his leg injury, Tommo "plunges into the opacities of that part of the world to which he has access," to put it in Edouard Glissant's terms (20). He generally makes an effort to accept Typee practices on their own terms, but finds physical, bodily pain and the possibility of its relief to be an experience of incommensurable difference between his identity and the Typee's. While other points of difference between Typee and Anglo-American practices are noted with interest and then tolerated, medicine, with its appearance of complete objectivity and scientific rigor, emerges as impossible to relativize. This opacity helps explain why all the cultural lines Tommo refuses to cross on Nuku Hiva are corporeal. While Tommo adjusts to life among the Typee and demonstrates his acceptance by assimilating much of his everyday behavior to their expectations, he is "[h]orrified" by the idea of having his skin tattooed (254), a prospect that transforms his idyllic life into "one of absolute wretchedness" (268). The body is traditionally the part of the human most associated with surface rather than substance, spirituality, or essence, yet the skin, apparently the most superficial aspect of the body, becomes Tommo's most closely guarded attribute, more than his daily routine, his national or religious identity, his sense of propriety, his attire, his morals. Tommo's experience of Typee healing, completely incommensurable with what he considers "the medical relief I needed" (269), bears witness to the mid-nineteenth century's increasingly medicalized comprehension of the body.

Tommo's injury also opens an ambiguous space for him to inhabit within the occupied South Pacific. Throughout the novel, Melville makes his anti-imperialist stance explicit. Tommo inveighs against "the shameless subterfuges under which the French stand prepared to defend whatever cruelties they may hereafter think fit to commit in bringing the Marquesan natives into subjection" (28). He laments "the foreign inflictions" that threaten to convert the previously "uncontaminated tenants" of the South Pacific into "the victims of the worst vices and evils of civilized life" (215). As David Reynolds puts it, Tommo serves Melville as "a vehicle of protest against oxymoronic oppressors, the white missionaries who are Christian but whose influence is corrupting" (*Beneath the American Renaissance* 279-280). But if the French are imperialists to be resisted, and the Marquesans are victims of European invasion and contamination, where does that leave Tommo, a lone invading American—and by extension the United States? By disabling Tommo, Melville can inscribe passivity and helplessness into a situation in which Tommo and his United States are otherwise analogous to the French colonizers the novel explicitly criticizes. Tommo may be the invading Westerner whose position as narrator gives him the power to selectively observe and judge the island characters, but his injury ensures he is not a harmful or forceful presence there. While he infantilizes the islanders, his injury infantilizes him. Tommo is an invader, but he is a harmless one, whose only act of violence is committed in self-defense against an "athletic islander" with a "ferocious expression" and a "tomahawk between his teeth" (291). Thus Tommo's leg injury is not only another sign of the mid-nineteenth century biologicalization but also an emblem of the unstable colonized world and the equivocal position of the United States within it. Melville continues to unpack this instability and its visibility on the body throughout his oeuvre.

This epilogue does not intend to declare itself the end of what can be said, either about Melville and *Typee* or about bodies in early nineteenth-century literature. My hope is that this dissertation can serve as a catalyst for further inquiry into the interpenetrations between corporeal representation and the international political concerns beneath their creation. I consider this dissertation the beginning of a conversation rather than the final word.

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