

THE SLAVE NARRATIVE'S USE OF AGAPE
AND HERMAN MELVILLE'S BILLY BUDD

by

ROLANDO LEODORE JORIF

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

2005

UMI Number: 3187445

Copyright 2005 by
Jorif, Rolando Leodore

All rights reserved.

UMI[®]

UMI Microform 3187445

Copyright 2005 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest Information and Learning Company
300 North Zeeb Road
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Copyright 2005

Rolando Jorif

All rights reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Date _____ Prof. Neal Tolchin
Chair of Examining Committee

Date _____ Prof. Steven Kruger
Executive Officer

Prof. David S. Reynolds

Prof. James de Jongh

Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Abstract

THE SLAVE NARRATIVE'S USE OF AGAPE
AND HERMAN MELVILLE'S BILLY BUDD

by

Rolando Leodore Jorif

Adviser: Professor Neal Tolchin

Like John Locke and Tom Paine, who argue that slavery is an unnatural condition to all men, and who posit that, let on their own, all men would join together into communities for their mutual benefit; Frederick Douglass and Herman Melville reject the arbitrary subjugation of one man by another. In Douglass' three narratives, the writer's life, before he discovers a community for himself among the lowly black slaves, lacks moral value. This is so because, by slavery's institutional protocols, he lacks any moral value by which to shape his life. Therefore, Douglass cannot master himself because, as a slave, others must master him. Similarly, Melville creates a "Baby" Budd that does not take responsibility for himself, although he is the exemplar of manhood, the Handsome Sailor. The protocols of mastery, by which another man receives no consideration for his natural independence, thereby, sustain the two protagonists' failings. It is only when they contrive to join society as equal members of community in rites that recall the primitive Christian ceremony of agape that they become fully men. They do so, however, in imperfect societies. Therefore Billy and Fred enter into brotherhood in societies that persist in error. Consequently, decency and indecency challenge decorum. Nevertheless, this ambivalence does not prevent agape from uniting men.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my patient adviser Professor Neal Tolchin. I also thank Professor David S. Reynolds and Professor James de Jongh. My undergraduate mentors at Hunter College were my friend Professor Allan Brick and Sylvie Weil. They encouraged me to continue my studies at graduate school.

I am grateful to all those people who had confidence in me. I include among these souls the late Professor Elton.

I dedicate this effort to my brave mother Victoria Jorif (November 6, 1919-April 3, 2005). Her noble Christian example has taught me that all life is good. My sister Paulina Jorif also deserves my gratitude because her constancy made this dissertation possible.

PREFACE

The primitive Christian rite the love feast agape celebrates the brotherhood of man. In this way, it discovers equal value in everyone by positing that each individual contributes to community. It could not be otherwise because the natural human impulse is to join together for the general good.

This idea forms the basis of the Declaration of Independence's complaint against monarchical Britain. The document sees the integrity of the individual as being extensible to the community and so to the nation. Therefore, it justifies the formation of a new society that would defend the right of the individual to live in security and to profit from his well being.

However, the Constitution of the United States compromised the Declaration of Independence by accepting slavery as a protocol of its government. Consequently, the nation experienced a growing division between pro- and antislavery factions. Slavery became the defining conflict of social policy until the nation fought a civil war to resolve it. Nevertheless, despite the victory of antislavery and the corrections of the Reconstruction era, at the end of the nineteenth-century, the nation turned its back on its reforms.

In the nineteenth-century, slavery's protocol of mastery triumphed over the Founding Fathers' advocacy of universal brotherhood. Therefore, the unifying rite agape would strive against the common national support of mastery. Mastery did not mean self-mastery; it meant the domination of others. As such, it represented a lack of self-restraint in those claiming superiority and was, therefore, illogical.

However, the Declaration of Independence understood self-improvement as a human, inalienable right. Consequently, the reciprocal nature of slavery deprived the slave owner and his supporters of the same worth they sought to steal from the slave. This reciprocity sustains the slave narrative and is a principal argument of all three of Frederick Douglass' autobiographies. It also appears in Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin. In these works, agape appears as a principal means of demonstrating a positive reciprocity that counters slavery's attack on community.

The conflict inherent in the differences of purpose between the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution concerned the debate between the individual and government, especially when government did not arise out of the people but was imposed on them.

The argument was over the fact of the people and the form of their government. Obviously, man prevails by preceding government. Therefore, his rights are undeniable and inalienable. This supremacy of man proposes his fundamental nobility. In the nineteenth-century, Stowe's novel succeeded because it emphasized this nobility by alluding to the Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man. Stowe saw God in man when she insisted that slavery opposed the Creator's purposes. She saw the nation as having fallen away from its destiny. Her novel affected all those who protested slavery; it even influenced Douglass.

Abraham Lincoln also believed that slavery proved the nation had lost its way. When he said that the nation like a house could not long stand, divided slavery, he quoted Matthew 12.25, and by implication he meant Matthew 6.24 ("You cannot serve God and Mammon"). More fully than Lincoln and Stowe and much more particularly, because

slavery actually determined the life Douglass led, the black abolitionist referred to all of the above texts and arguments in defense of his right to live fully in a society that saw his participation in it as improper.

Nevertheless, Douglass and others knew that slavery was only part of the nation's problem with the individual. It also stood for the prevalence of mastery of others as a social practice. This prevalence permitted the arbitrary oppression of anyone for any reason. Douglass termed it rowdyism.

In the 1880's, when the United States turned its back on the reforms brought about by the Civil War, Herman Melville wrote Billy Budd. In it, the writer depicts the eighteenth-century political quarrel of Tom Paine (Rights of Man) and Edmund Burke (Reflections on the French Revolution). Their subject was revolutionary democracy versus conservative monarchy. This is the old debate on fact and form. Indeed, Melville has Captain Vere state that forms matter more than people.

In these ways, Douglass' life-long struggle to live his own life reappears in Billy Budd. Similarly, the sailor's remarkable death recalls the slave narrative's use of agape to counter isolating oppression. Thereby, Melville's account of Billy's time in the Royal Navy joins Douglass, Stowe's, and Lincoln's protests against the national disregard for the dignity of the individual.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgments	v
Preface	vi-viii
Chapter One: Slavery's Law of Compensation	1-49
Chapter Two: Frederick Douglass' Providential Rediscovery of Africa: Agape	50-75
Chapter Three: The Slave Narrative's Use of Agape and Hermann Melville's <u>Billy Budd</u>	76-116
Bibliography	117-123

CHAPTER ONE: SLAVERY'S LAW OF COMPENSATION

The Anglo-Saxon Handsome Sailor in Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative) (BB) by Herman Melville and the black narrator of the autobiographical Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself and of the autobiographical narratives, My Bondage and My Freedom and Life and Times of Frederick Douglass demonstrate the condition of slavery as a state of existence resulting from the deliberate, active deprivation of a person's consciousness of his natural human worth. However, Douglass' various autobiographies reject slavery as the inevitable degraded condition of blacks. They do so by depicting scenes in which the author regains his full consciousness of his human worth by participating in versions of the primitive Christian rite agape, the love feast of brotherhood. This first chapter considers how society attempts to isolate Billy and Douglass' Fred from the community.

In Billy Budd, the sailor's lot in life corresponds to black chattel slavery because the consequences of his being an orphan and of his impressment in the British Navy retard the young man's full moral development. Melville's comparison of the sailor to Caspar Hauser (BB 1362) and the author's description of the effect on Billy of the flogging he witnesses (BB 1376-1377) throw light on the degree of the sailor's deprivation. By these means, Melville illustrates the young man's lack of access to a morally independent life. The Royal Navy's freely taking him from on board the Rights of Man for service as a "King's bargain" provides additional evidence of Billy's condition (BB 1401).

The sailor's capture illustrates Paine's charge that monarchical governments persist

in a perpetual state of war and extortion against the people, in which citizens are treated as property (Rights 557). In his defense, in Rights of Man, Paine seems to refer to John Locke when he says, “Man has no property in man” (Rights 438). Locke’s assertion is that “every man has a Property in his own Person” (Two Treatises 328). Locke writes that men’s natural condition is “a State of perfect Freedom to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they see fit . . . without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other Man” (Two Treatises 309).

On the other hand, by expanding on Locke’s statements, Paine claims government functions by force and fraud, in the attempt to make men forget what they naturally know so that they will comply with its arbitrary laws: “The means must be an obliteration of knowledge; and it has never yet been discovered, how to make man unknow his knowledge, or unthink his thoughts” (Rights 466-467, 513).

It is to this process that William Lloyd Garrison points when he refers to “the banishment of all light and knowledge” as a “natural result” of slavery (Narrative 8-9). This deprivation may correspond to what John Locke means by a mind being defaced (Dunn 73). When assessing John Locke's An Essay Concerning Human Understanding [editor Peter H. Nidditch; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], John Dunn summarizes Locke as follows:

Men can think, know and judge for themselves, and must do so since they cannot in the end trust others to do so for them (100-1, 7, 264). The minds of children at birth are like white paper (81, 104). Although at first they are marked plainly by the purely natural impact of ideas through the senses, they are also speedily defaced [emphasis added] by the often superstitious and irrational teaching of adults (81-4, 394-401). Once so defaced, since custom is a greater power than nature (82), only a lifetime's unrelenting ef-

fort, fired by a genuine love for truth itself (697), can do much to repair the damage. (Dunn 73)

The above abridgement implies that a child depends on circumstance and education for its moral survival. In Dunn's summary, Locke seems to place the responsibility for an adult's moral consciousness on the society in which the child finds itself.

Although Douglass' three autobiographies begin logically with the author's childhood, they also do so to show how a black child must find his own way in life against the damaging circumstances of slavery. Similarly, Billy is also young and seems so much younger than he really is that an old sailor, the Dansker, names the youth "Baby" Budd (BB 1354). The new, oppressive society in the Royal Navy forces Billy, like slavery does to Fred, to fall back into himself in order to survive. In this way, his life resembles a slave's condition by its isolation from community.

In both Billy's and Fred's cases, the boys' lives take on the moral isolation that reflects on their deliberately neglectful societies that provide them with it. The children's difficulty arises from their being under the control of institutions that ignore their human worth in the interests of claims to a good greater than the value they give to the individual. In order to do so, American black chattel slavery and the British Royal Navy undertake to break down or to prevent the spontaneous sympathetic responses that unite men in community.

Moreover, Douglass' and Melville's narratives also rely on direct and indirect references to the scandalous instances of children raised in near total isolation from any society, and who are called "wild." Melville links Billy to such a case by mentioning Caspar Hauser (BB 1362). Like that unfortunate adolescent, Billy too might be a by-blow

of a noble family (BB 1361). In the Narrative, young Fred's knowledge of his origin is also obscure (Narrative 15).

Douglass' own first narrative begins with the shocking revelation that the boy's age is to be reckoned like a farm animal's life; that is, by the season of his birth. The boy is not only kept ignorant; he is left naked and barely fed (Narrative 16-17). This physical and moral deprivation recalls the concept of the "wild child" that fascinated late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century thinkers. For them, feral children were occasions for contemplating "what human qualities, especially moral and spiritual qualities, were innate or natural and what were products of society and language": "If only they could be taught to speak, wild children would tell for the first time of human existence outside language; they would give testimony of Eden, just before Adam named the world and before he learned transgression" (Berger 346).

Notably, both Billy and Fred, in their narratives, finally do speak directly and clearly. Their revelations are testaments that refer to their communities and conditions. Their testaments are gestures toward those communities and extend fellowship to their members. Yet, both boys are the detritus of those communities; Fred by the deliberate processes by which the natural affection and care of a slave mother for her child are proscribed, and Billy by his probable past as a victim of primogeniture which, as Paine defines it, tends to create bastards and orphans (Rights 479).

James Berger cites Jeffrey Masson who argues that feral children "should be regarded more as testimonies to terrible abuse and neglect than as tests of nature and culture" (Berger 346). However, Douglass' and Melville's narratives maintain that their protagonists naturally resist abuse and so do test culture.

Their resistance confirms Locke's dictum, "no body can desire to have me in his Absolute Power, unless it is to compel me by force to that, which is against the Right of my Freedom, i.e. make me a slave." Locke states that the transgressor puts himself in a state of war with his victim. That victim has always the right to self-defense (Two Treatises 320-321).

Therefore, in the narratives, the two protagonists fight for self-possession in societies that would take it from them. One of the societal means to that end is the exhibition of scenes of humiliation, like flogging. For Billy and Fred, the first participation at such a scene instructs them so well in the protocols of debasing mastery, by which a person is forced to submit to the will of another, that they always dread being the next soul to be punished (Narrative 19; BB 1377). This fear is the display's purpose.

Consequently, the boys retreat into themselves to employ the traditional decorum of masquerading as docile, dependent, and complacent perpetual children. In this way they accept that, in order to survive, they must live by indirection by hiding all evidence of moral independence. When it is applied to blacks, this characterization is the Sambo of Southern literature. In Billy Budd, it is the practice of the average sailor in the Royal Navy who has his life "externally ruled" for him by its protocols (Blassingame 223-248; BB 1393).

Authority resorts to flogging in a failed society that must use force to continue. However, according to Locke and Paine, men join together naturally in societies as equals for their mutual benefit (Two Treatises 310; Rights 66). Both thinkers form the backgrounds of Melville's and Douglass' works by their influence on the political formulations of the American Founding Fathers to which the authors look in protesting

slavery and impressment (Zuckert 5).

For example, Paine's Common Sense offered timely protests against monarchical British rule during the American Revolution. The polemic galvanized popular sentiment in favor of the war. Paine writes, "It is repugnant to reason, to the universal order of things, to all examples from the former ages, to suppose, that this continent can longer remain subject to any external power" (Common Sense 27).

Whenever Douglass implies that he imitates the Founding Fathers' acts of rebellion, he refers to Paine's defense of self-rule. Melville also makes use of it. He even bestows the title of Paine's book Rights of Man on the merchant ship that provides Billy with a happy family (BB 1358). Therefore, both Douglass and Melville, like Locke and Paine, evidently reject any form of slavery as an acceptable condition for mankind.

In White-Jacket, Melville's thought coincides remarkably with Douglass' life when he chooses a black slave as the model of a worthy sailor. This ideal sailor would not ever let the Royal Navy defeat his manhood. Melville writes about him, "He is unendurable, as an erect, lofty-minded African would be to some slave-driving planter" (White-Jacket 754). Evidently, then, slavery is understood to mean a degraded state, unworthy of a self-respecting man, especially of an American man, even when he is black (White-Jacket 496, 500). Moreover, because the slave-driving planter receives the support of law, it is an institution that degrades everyone.

However, because Douglass writes specifically about slavery, his work, as a black man's testimony of the world he lives in, is the main focus of this study. The peculiar institutions' reciprocal extension of its shame over the general society will be proven by Melville's references to it as the model of oppression and neglect. The primitive Christian

rite of fellowship, agape, that counters slavery's division of men will stand for community. The intention is to examine how Douglass' work offers men instruction in how to join together, even in a nation that cannot surrender its shameful practices of division and the humiliation of men.

Moreover, in comparing Melville's narrative to Douglass' three autobiographies, it is possible to juxtapose American institutions with British ones because Melville joins the societies together in White-Jacket, by comparing the nations' two navies. Furthermore, just like Melville employs the slave narrative's heroic slave in that book, in Billy Budd, he links the two nations' navies together by the American service's Articles of War that copy the British Mutiny Act. Melville also claims to find a similarity between the fictional trial he creates for Billy and the actual Somers case (1842) of attempted mutiny in the American Navy (BB 1417).

There is an additional connection. Melville's disapproval of flogging, which appears in Billy's shock at witnessing it, also appears in White-Jacket's five chapters protesting the practice. Melville writes that flogging is opposed to the essential dignity of man, and that it is "a lingering trait of a barbarous feudal aristocracy" (White-Jacket 500). He proposes that every man-of-war's-man should resist the scourge even to the act of mutiny itself.

Melville dares incite rebellion because he can support his argument with this nation's stated principles. In fighting for government to support the essential dignity of American man, Melville uses the Englishman Paine's language. The thinker writes, "When I contemplate the natural dignity of man; when I feel . . . for the honour and dignity of its character, I become irritated at the attempt to govern mankind by force and fraud as if we

were all knaves and fools, and can scarcely avoid disgust at those who are thus imposed upon.” For Paine, governments either arise “out of the people, or over the people” (Rights 466-467).

On the other hand, aristocracy puts one man over another and is the union of superstition and conquest. This is Melville’s “feudal aristocracy.” To set one man above another -- which aristocracy promotes even in noble British families, as well as in the general population -- is “out of nature.” It is, therefore, “monstrous” because the unity of men guarantees only one degree among men; that is, of MAN (Rights 478, 463, 476).

Paine urges that we consider man in this light and that we instruct him to consider himself in this light. This devotion will place him “in a close connection with all his duties,” which are only to his God and to his fellow man (Rights 463-464). Unfortunately, in the nineteenth-century United States, the superstition of aristocracy, by which one man’s sense of superiority -- when it is authorized by the state -- allows him to master another, still prevailed; mainly as black chattel slavery. This prevalence was the reason for Melville’s and Douglass’ protests.

Clearly, in such a society, because common sense and general experience make it unlikely that there will ever be many encounters with persons who have escaped the “often superstitious and irrational teaching of adults” (Dunn 73), general humanity forms a self-defacing and damaging mass.

Anyone who appears to have withstood the instruction would be phenomenal. The discovery of this exceptional person would argue for the surety of something integral to mankind, the acknowledgement of which the general mass denies to itself. Yet, the revelation of the phenomenon often impels the observer to investigate the wonder’s

previous life for an explanation of its remarkable nature.

This is the case, for instance, with Douglass when Garrison reports their first meeting. The abolitionist is moved by what he sees and hears, although he is already fully committed to ending slavery:

I think I never hated slavery so intensely as at that moment; certainly, my perception of the enormous outrage which is inflicted by it, on the godlike nature of its victims, was rendered far more clear than ever. There stood one, in physical proportion and stature commanding and exact -- in intellect richly endowed -- in natural eloquence a prodigy -- in soul manifestly "created but a little lower than the angels" -- yet a slave, ay, a fugitive slave.

(Narrative 3-4)

In Billy Budd, after briefly establishing the historical background of the "inside narrative," Melville begins a peroration on the same theme: "a stroller along the docks of any considerable seaport would occasionally have his attention arrested by a group of bronzed mariners. . . . In certain instances they would flank, or, like a body-guard quite surround, some superior figure of their own class. . . . That signal object was the Handsome Sailor" (BB 1353). Melville continues, "Such a cynosure . . . was welkin-eyed Billy Budd" (BB 1354).

As objects of attention, Billy and Fred are at ease with themselves. For example, after the incident involving spilled soup, Claggart easily satisfies Billy that there will be no trouble by alluding to the youth's being the ship's Handsome Sailor (BB 1380). Douglass' beauty was equally remarkable. A contemporary noted that he was more than six feet in height and admired his majestic form, adding that Douglass' voice rivaled Webster's

speech (Logan 19).

The above references assume that the men's admirable qualities are innate. Dickson J. Preston assures us that the child Fred was recognized by his white masters as unusually gifted and was treated as such (Preston xv). "Baby Budd" (BB 1354), as the crew calls the sailor, "was young; and despite his all but fully developed frame, in aspect looked even younger than he really was, owing to a lingering adolescent expression in the as yet smooth face all but feminine in purity of natural complexion" (BB 1359). Billy's good looks appear to have been "cast in a mould" of the Saxon race, and "noble descent was evident in him like in a blood horse" (BB 1360-1361).

Billy and Fred's confidence indicates the degree to which they feel sure of the effect they have on others. It is significant that, despite much neglect, Billy and Frederick have kept at some primitive level a measure of self-interest, as Locke terms it, because their trust in themselves depends on the workings of their own minds and the lessons of their own experience (Dunn 62).

Both men are accustomed to being chosen, or singled out for special lives. Billy's easy departure from the Rights of Man seems to be based partly on his childlike enjoyment of this cynosure. For little Freddy the word that he must wash himself clean and go to Baltimore seems logically providential. In both cases, the captives cooperate with their degraded condition (BB 1354-1355; Narrative 33-34).

It seems at first that the uninstructed youths agree with their mentors (Captain Vere and William C. Coffin, respectively -- and also Garrison) that it is appropriate in the last, special circumstance of each narrative to expose their degradation to public view. For the sailor, the understanding seems to be that he should participate willingly in his own

execution. For the "hunted fugitive" Frederick, it means presenting himself to an audience of potential slave catchers (Narrative 4).

Billy's and Fred's mentors seek the youths' participation in rituals that endanger their well being for the sake of a greater good. The prominent, older, more socially established men require that the youths put aside self-interest as if relying on their enacting an instinctive, blind obedience on demand (BB 1430).

However, despite the young men's seeming to conform to their mentors' persuasion, the youths' consequent displays undermine the older men's intentions. Whereas the older men require that the youths surrender themselves to their mentors' purposes, the young men seem to assert the authority of their independence and to compel the public to accept it. For instance, Billy's death gives rise to speculations on its remarkable "singularity" (BB 1427). Although the death is "to the wonder of all" (BB 1427), the ship's surgeon refuses to account for it (BB 1428). He will not ascribe the phenomenon to the "force lodged in will power" (BB 1427). It seems that the sailor could not possibly have exercised the self-control everyone has just observed.

Similarly for the fugitive slave, Garrison rises after hearing the black man speak, hoping to persuade him "to consecrate his time and talent to the promotion of the anti-slavery enterprise" (Narrative 4-5). Apparently, Garrison is not conscious of what he means when he admits that William C. Coffin "prevailed" on the young man (Narrative 4). In the second autobiography, My Bondage and My Freedom, Douglass writes that Coffin "invited" him to say a few words (Bondage 364). Possibly, Coffin's demonstration of civility becomes, for Garrison, an exercise of authority over its traditional victim.

Yet, Frederick does prove to be a "prodigy" (Narrative 4), whose appearances

before the public gives rise to speculation. Nevertheless, later on, Douglass informs us that he was “generally introduced as a 'chattel' -- a 'thing' -- a piece of southern 'property' -- the chairman assuring the audience that it could speak" (Bondage 366). However, the “mechanical” repetition of his life's story does not suit the young man's nature. He has been reading and thinking on his own and seeks actively to denounce wrongs (Bondage 367).

It is important to note how the narratives record the triumph of resistance. It must not be forgotten that Billy and Fred emerge from the limitations placed on them into lives that rise only to the level of common humanity. This commonness symbolizes the youths’ un-shackling themselves from “superstition and irrational thinking” (Dunn 73). By means of it, the abolitionist’s wonder at the effect on him of Douglass’ plain speaking resembles the surgeon’s bewilderment at Billy’s stillness in death (Narrative 3-4; BB 1427).

Both Billy’s and Fred’s gestures denote self-mastery where it is least likely supposed to be; that is, present in the deprived and uninstructed young men. After all, such people should be uncontrolled, inarticulate near-savages as a result of living in the degrading conditions society allows to exist.

Arguably, Melville's and Douglass' intentions meet in the attempt to instruct their readers in the lives they really lead because, as the public, they provide the circumstances that inform Billy and Frederick about themselves.

In establishing the value of the Narrative to American literature, Russell Reising insists on the significance that Douglass gives to his life: he writes that Douglass inquires “what is a human being?” (Reising 256). For Reising, the text “poses [Douglass’] questions and wrenches his answers in the material and historical context of a racist society” because the autobiography “refuses to answer the question in the abstract” and is true to Douglass’

own “lived experience” (Reising 256).

Reising argues that Douglass’ three thematic concerns -- Douglass’ complex perspective on the relationship between the individual and community, his fusion of theory and practice, and his own method of defamiliarizing conventions of reality -- link him with his American contemporaries as a literary artist and thinker of the first rank (Reising 257).

For Reising, Douglass’ Narrative concerns itself with “the nature of the self” (Reising 271): “Douglass forces us to recognize . . . that any self is a social construct, not a natural integer and it is in that sense of human sociability and in Douglass’ ability to render the institution of slavery as an ideological construct subject to change that provides the Narrative with its final act of defamiliarization, and, perhaps, its finest moment of literary and historical power” (Reising 271).

When Reising looks at the Narrative, it is possible for him to agree with Henry Louis Gates’ comment on the similarities between Douglass and Melville: “both saw that in American society is to be found as much that is contrary to moral order as could be found in pre-revolutionary Europe” (Reising 267).

This is the world of men at sea at the beginning of the nineteenth-century. The policy of capturing men to provide the manpower needed for the navies of that time impels Melville, in White-Jacket and Billy Budd, to speak against enslavement. He does so by joining Paine in condemning the restrictions on free commerce among men that belligerent monarchical navies symbolize and that commerce also stands for the free interchange that supports community (Rights 602-603).

Douglass relates to Melville by “his complex working out of an individual’s relationship with his community” (Reising 257). Both men struggle in isolation because in

a society that supports slavery, “friendship and community, thus, have little or no support from traditional, biological, domestic, or social contexts.” Therefore, the Narrative “anticipates the themes of isolation, orphanage, and alienation that pervade so many texts of the American Renaissance” (Reising 257). It does so by elaborating on the fact of slavery which as the “truth of American life is its most terrible nightmare” (Reising 267): “the dynamics of slavery [as the slave narratives present them] made the less specific . . . meditations of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Stowe and others possible” because “their writings represent the imaginative ramifications of a slave system” (Reising 271). Billy Budd is one of those meditations.

Examining Douglass’ presentation of his life helps us to understand how Billy Budd proceeds from the same impulse. It explains how, for Melville, the lives of the Negro and other dark races seem to reside happily in an elemental meerness. He defends this estimation by statements like those used in describing the black Handsome Sailor who, by virtue of his unadulterated blackness, merits homage (BB 1353). Yet, Melville’s white protagonists often struggle to survive bourgeois society’s restrictions of the white male’s access to his true nature. Because of them, the white male’s free, masculine potential is at the mercy of others, even at sea, which is all that is left to him as a frontier. There, beyond land, the savage can still become a hero. Nevertheless, even at sea, remarkable Billy must finally “act” in order regain the cynosure of that lost natural quality.

Melville’s heroes take on the aspect of the black slave, of the internally exiled, of the forsaken orphan. His novels are often a kind of slave narrative. Like fugitive slaves, his men must overcome the society that defaces them by presenting themselves directly before it for its acknowledgment of their independent, complete existence. Therefore, to focus

initially on Douglass' Narrative illuminates the study of Billy Budd because Melville's appropriation of the slave narrative's dynamics and arguments focuses on the final attainment of independent, masculine self-worth.

For example, in Douglass' first autobiography, Garrison sets about appropriating Frederick for the abolitionist cause. In turn, Douglass exhibits himself in order to take on the role of true believer, required by the abolitionist, by confessing his past, unintentionally "wayward" black life as a slave. Nevertheless, the later accounts of life after slavery become accusations leveled against America for its degrading the black man's citizenship back to the level of the past life of the ex-slave.

For Melville, after a lifetime of failed attempts at sustaining an early success, there could also only be the frustrating consequences of what he has become. Like Billy, Melville had at the end only the willful demonstration of manhood in the circumstances life gave him. In the final analysis, Melville's early praise for things "ten times black" produced the failure he sought as the true proof of greatness (Hawthorne 1158, 1164). Ultimately, both Douglass and Melville fully intend to tell us about marginalized life, according to their experiences of it in America.

We begin our readings well in the past. In Billy Budd, we are "in the time before steamships" when men were stolen and forced to work in the British Royal Navy (BB 1353). With Douglass, we begin in a sort of pre-history because the child has no accurate knowledge of now. It is deliberately kept from him by slave owners (Narrative 15). However, at the Narrative's end, when Frederick rises to speak he does so now. The text's last paragraph propels the author out from the past where he felt himself a slave, weighed down by the fear of speaking to whites. From that time until an ongoing "now," he speaks

to us about his brethren, leaving it to us to judge with what success he does so (Narrative 96).

Whereas Fred enters into public life, Billy dies into a legend, known only to sailors. Thereby, he too enters into an ongoing present that sustains a dialogue as an “inside narrative” about his value.

The circular patterns of both Douglass' and Melville's narratives engage the reader in understanding that “properly speaking, there are in the world no such men as self-made men.” The term implies that an individual can be independent of the past and present (Zafar 113). Consequently, Douglass' texts do not focus attention on the person Elizabeth Cady Stanton called the “African prince, conscious of his dignity and power,” but rather looks back at the bitterness of slavery and the shameful life of being a harassed black citizen (Logan 19).

At the end of the third autobiography, Douglass' summation of his narrative confronts the readers' probable, complacent self-satisfaction with the writer's career. He insists, however, that in the earlier days of his freedom, he was called upon to recite his experience in order to make slavery odious to them (Life 938-939).

The lengths to which Douglass had to go to make the general white public accept black chattel slavery as evil is implicit in his having to do what he could to make the institution “odious.”

Nevertheless, the third autobiography reveals that fifty years later, Douglass finds himself summoned by what is called “the Negro problem” to give evidence about his emancipated brothers and sisters who still need an advocate (Life 939).

Douglass protests that the American people are “interested and mystified about the

mere matter of color as connected with manhood.” They seem to attribute moral or immoral qualities to a man based on his color. White is always good; all other colors, especially black, are bad. Evidently, white Americans have difficulty accepting that other races have the same humanity and, thereby, merit the same rights they have (Life 939-940).

The mature Douglass continues to claim for himself the posture he assumed when he first entered the public arena: solidly erect. In his youth, even when consigned to the best master he ever had, a Mr. Freeland, the black man understood that he should create his own role for himself. Anything else would suggest “a want of manhood” (Narrative 72-73).

Hence, at the Narrative's close, when the fugitive slave comes forward to address an abolitionist meeting, he sheds the weight of slavery evident in his initial reluctance to speak to whites. The Narrative leaves black Douglass standing before the white public, man to man, engaged in pleading the case of his brethren (Narrative 96).

Similarly, Billy's death presents another possibility to the oppressed seamen. The Handsome Sailor establishes a legacy that bypasses the official estimation of the crew as a mob (BB 1429). Like Fred, Billy rises to the challenge to his integrity, occasioned by his execution. He enacts self-mastery by not soiling himself. Basically, he stops nature. This refusal to be naturally spontaneous after sufficient provocation grants sailors a maturity that reveals just how much their juvenile tendencies previously accommodated their condition. Billy makes the crew men again.

William L. Andrews notes that the Narrative does not imitate the previous slave narratives: “The conclusion [Douglass] chose . . . indicates that in his mind the high point of a fugitive slave's career was not his arrival in the free states but his assumption of a new identity as a free man and his integration into the American mainstream” (Andrews 171).

The course that Douglass traces then refers to normality because, during its career, a boy becomes a man by declaring his independence. Of course, because of slavery, this progress was never supposed to occur. Evidently, as a black man who has escaped the peculiar institution, fought for its abolition, and received honors for the effort, Douglass' public persona signals the natural invalidity of slavery as an institution: slavery entails the constant extinguishing of the spontaneous eruption of intellect that distinguishes humanity. It is an eternal boyhood for men.

Furthermore, by his Narrative, Douglass also attests to how “the escaped slave . . . brought out of slavery a complicated social persona that derived from the adoption of those subtle strategies of masquerade necessary to combat the daily pain and indecency of slavery” (Sundquist 86). Previously, the question might have been about just how sure Southerners were that these masquerades represented true black personalities: “Antebellum whites apparently focused on two extreme forms of slave behavior -- childlike docility and rebellion” (Blassingame 236-238).

John W. Blassingame judges that whites “felt that the relationship between the planter and the slave was one of continual war requiring eternal vigilance in order for the master to maintain the upper hand” (Blassingame 231). Their interest was in these two extremes because they stood for what chiefly interested the slave owners; that was, whether the slaves would obey their masters or not.

Douglass mastered the art of masquerade. The narratives show just how much he relies on racial stereotypes. The writer employs what Blassingame calls “the major slave characters [of] Sambo, Jack, and Nat.” These characterizations of blacks so fully entered Southern literature that they shaped public attitudes towards slaves (Blassingame 224).

Douglass called on these attitudes and was also their victim.

On the other hand, although it is understood that Billy is the Bellipotent's Handsome Sailor (BB 1360), the young man makes little conscious use of the stereotype. He mainly accepts that it makes him the center of attention. Perhaps that is why he enters so easily into the new circumstance of the warship: he mistakes the crew's interest for the genuine concern his being "Baby" Budd previously obtained for him. Melville indicates this new circumstance when he writes that Billy is hardly the object of cynosure in the Royal Navy that he has been in the merchant marine (BB 1359). Instead, he arouses speculation that hints at shame by the mention of his being like the stereotypical rustic beauty among court ladies (BB 1360).

At first, the narrative almost proceeds only by Melville's many references to stereotypes, by the author's interchanging and contrasting them. The description alone of the attributes and history of the Handsome Sailor preoccupies the tale's first chapter to the degree that Melville has to announce eventually that Billy is "not presented as a conventional hero, but also that the story in which he is the main figure is no romance" (BB 1363).

Melville contradicts the narrative's early romantic tendency by afflicting Billy with a stammer. More to the point, Billy possesses "little or no sharpness of faculty" (BB 1361). In addition, because the sailor is "by no means of a satirical turn," playing with double meanings is not part of his nature (BB 1358-1359). Thereby, there is an inherent conflict because childlike Billy cannot fulfill the heroic role life at sea grants him.

A Handsome Sailor should be more than merely beautiful. Ashore he should be the champion; at sea, the spokesman, and "on every suitable occasion always foremost" (BB

1354). It is probably to encounter just such a paragon of manhood, surrounded by the lesser nautical types, that the respectable public takes itself off to the fiddler's green (BB 1353).

In order to fulfill the demands of office, Billy would have to have a greater knowledge of the world than his morally impoverished life allows him. Billy's being like Adam before the Fall proves a liability. He needs to know and to accept the discipline of manipulating the stereotypes that would protect him and advance his career at sea. This skill was central to a slave's existence and to a sailor's life and is probably what the Dansker attempts to impart to the sailor, but with no success (BB 1390-1392).

The old sailor does so by speaking indirectly, like an oracle. This strategy befits the stereotype that sustains the Dansker's fading naval career: "Long experience had very likely brought this old man to that bitter prudence which never interferes in aught and never gives advice" (BB 1392). Of course, Billy can make no sense of the Dansker's hints. He is naïve enough to believe only what he sees (BB 1392-1393).

In order to make sense of American culture, Eric Sundquist closely examines the manipulation of some of slavery's stereotypes, principally the Nat [Turner] and Sambo characters in the works of several black writers and in Melville's Benito Cereno while focusing mainly on Douglass' autobiographies (Sundquist 27-134). In these three books, Douglass depicts his early life with an eye kept on these stereotypes in order to refute the immutability of supposed black traits. For example, Julien Virey, a widely read nineteenth-century supporter of stereotypes, argued that "all the facts which have been collected, concur to prove how constant and indelible are the natural and moral characteristics of negroes in every climate, notwithstanding a diversity of circumstances, which condemn him to indolence and degradation" (Blassingame 228).

The Narrative puts to good use the concepts used against blacks, especially those in the above quote. Surprisingly, instead of being indolent, Douglass is clever and manipulative according to the situation in which he finds himself. For instance, Fred admits that he employs animal training techniques to provoke the white working-class boys in Baltimore to teach him. He brings them food from his master's table as a reward (Narrative 41). This confession precedes Fred's getting hold ("I got hold of a book") of the Columbia Orator.

Further along, Douglass makes it clear that a slave's stealing proceeds from the condition in which he is forced to live his life: "Make a man a slave, and you rob him of his moral responsibility" (Bondage 248). The writer argues, "As society has marked me out as privileged plunder, on the principle of self-preservation I am justified in plundering in turn" (Bondage 247-248).

A sailor's moral life also relates to the condition imposed on him. In suggesting ways and means to social reform, Paine reminds his reader that "a world of little cases are continually arising, which busy or affluent life knows not of, to open the first door to distress" (Rights 631). He questions how civilized society could ignore these cases, especially when the result is the scandal of old age going to the workhouse and youth to the gallows: "there lies hidden from the eye of common observation, a mass of wretchedness that has scarcely any other chance, than to expire in poverty or infamy."

Paine argues for education, so that the people, "bred up without morals" and cast out into the world in its wretchedness, do not become "the exposed sacrifice of vice and legal barbarity" (Rights 604). Paine cites his own case in which he throws himself away at the life at sea available to the heedless youths of his class. Only the earlier moral

instruction of his good father redeems him (Rights 604-605).

Those many men who do not have the benefit of as good a mentor from the crews of navies. Even the merchant ship Rights of Man is a “rat-pit” before Billy’s arrival (BB 1356). There is, however, no remedy that Billy can bring with him onboard a warship.

The Bellipotent’s men reflect their means of entry into service even more than those of the merchant marine do. They are not only the consequences of social distress; they are also sometimes the victims of enslavement because they are impressed. This policy remains in effect in the Royal Navy even after the Nore Mutiny provoked some necessary reforms. The justification for this lapse in judgment is that muscle is needed for the sailing vessels that guard the nation (BB 1367-1368). For this reason, the people witness the scandal of sailors dragged like felons into naval service to serve against their will (Rights 653).

Billy is yet such another case. Yet, his cheerful surrender earns him Captain Graveling’s disapproval, as if he regretted that the youth did not resist his shame. Melville tells us, though, that resistance was futile (BB 1355). Fortunately Billy adapts easily to his new situation. Of course, the orphan is self-invested in terms of family life. Unlike the men who suffer forced separations from families probably left behind in doubtful circumstances, Billy can be a fatalist. He probably has always had to be (BB 1359).

The sailor’s previous difficulties apparently never taught him that he does not have to accept the life that he is given. Although the incident with Red Whiskers tells us that an immediate threat to Billy’s well-being obtains an instinctive, angry response from him, the sailor’s lack of early instruction has not taught him the true nature of his condition. If he knew it, his education in life would be complete.

On the other hand, Douglass' own training in slavery was complete. When he worked at Covey's farm, he was "wrecked, changed, and bewildered" and at another time "goaded almost to madness" (Bondage 289). However, in order to make a man a slave, you must stop him from thinking "because it is the sober thinking slave who is dangerous" (Bondage 596-597), and Douglass was always thinking. By thinking, a slave steals himself in increments from his master.

When Douglass works for Mr. Freeland, he admits, "I was up to my old tricks." What were they? The slave's "mischief" means this avowal, "I early began to address my companions on the subject of education, and the advantages of intelligence over ignorance, and . . . I tried to show them the agency of ignorance in keeping men in slavery" (Bondage 298).

In this story, Douglass defeats the readers' expectations and, then, rewards them with another tale of black life. This story tells how blacks undermine the limitations inherent in white stereotypes of them. The blacks do so by using white racist terms to describe black resistance. For example, at the Narrative's beginning, when the indirect references are to the "savagery" of the wild black boy with no history, hygiene, or culture, like the actual Wild Boy of Aveyron, there is evidence that the stereotype does not account for what we have before us. The keen later account strongly indicates a child's sharp mind at work.

Melville emphasizes a significant aspect of Billy's persona. That is, that he is so exceptional, that, under the circumstances, there must be an additional story to be told. For, although "the gallows and the sea refuse nothing" (White-Jacket 745), Billy's physical perfection indicates that he is the discarded offspring of nobility (BB 1361; Singh

289-291). That social class can afford to cultivate beauty for itself. It cannot, however, provide for the well being of all its members because of the laws of primogeniture (Rights 478-479).

Therefore, Billy's presence in the Royal Navy is a reproach to a society that left him unclaimed, uninstructed, and available to anyone, like a work-dog trained to follow whoever makes use of him (BB 1361).

For Melville, Billy's acquiring the role of Handsome Sailor needs more explanation. The mention of Caspar Hauser suggests a dynastic tragedy typical of monarchical governments. In this particular instance, a royal child is stolen away and kept hidden until his adolescence. He is then let loose into a world about which he knows nothing. The inevitable result is death because of the danger of the youth's acquiring sufficient speech to tell his story (Singh 361-365).

Here, we can see Berger's judgment of the value to be obtained from the testimonies of children raised in extreme isolation. The implication is that the revelation of the degree to which man can absent himself from community with others is so horrible that his victim must be obliterated in body, after the failed attempt at soul-murder (Singh 311-312).

In the celebrated case at Aveyron, Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard informs us that after escaping from hunters and spending the winter in the mountains, the boy Victor returned "of his own accord" to a village where he entered an inhabited house. After recording this report of the boy's unexpected action, Itard adds a cautionary note: "If the expression Savage has been understood until now to mean a man but slightly civilized, it will be agreed that this term has never been more truly merited" (Itard 3).

Itard criticizes the disappointment of those who flocked to see the boy. They believed that the wild child's education would not take much time. Then, he could tell them his unusual story. These otherwise intelligent people forgot "that human organs are by so much less flexible, and imitation made so much more difficult, in proportion as a man is removed from society and from his infancy" (Itard 4)

Consequently, when the boy did not reward curiosity, the crowds abandoned him. Itard charges that this "general indifference" is neglect, because "society, in taking over this unfortunate youth, had contracted towards him binding obligations that must be fulfilled" (Itard 5). Here is an instance of the defacement against which Locke argues. In addition, if "one of the main ways in which human understanding undergoes this corruption is through the words in which men express their thoughts" (Dunn 73), then even the temporary use of the term "savage" implies a willingness to demean the phenomenal boy rather than to rescue him from neglect.

Yet, because of his readings of Locke and others, Itard was convinced that man is not "born" but "constructed." The doctor set out to "disprove his opponents by awakening the boy's mind" (Malson 72) because "MAN can find only in the bosom of society the eminent station that was destined for him in nature, and would be, without the aid of civilization, one of the most feeble and least intelligent of animals."

Itard explains further:

Man is only what he is made to be by his external circumstances; he is necessarily elevated by his equals; he contracts from them his habits and wants; his ideas are no longer his own; he enjoys, from the enviable prerogative of his species, a capacity of developing his understanding by

the power of imitation, and the influence of society. (Malson 91; Itard xxi)

Similarly, by implication, applying the above term “savage” to young Fred results in a confrontation between the innate but deprived humanity of the boy as the Narrative presents him and the text’s carefully detailed description of the black child’s degrading circumstances. The boy is a victim.

This victimization depends on Freddy’s being available for arbitrary abuse. Slavery would facilitate the availability by keeping the boy ignorant of his worth for life. For Billy, the situation is the same because, although the sailor is no longer a child, his is a special case, in which a limited intelligence has advanced while simple-mindedness remains unaffected (BB 1393).

In the merchant marine, Billy’s ignorance might let him survive because he would acquire some of the caution that experience obtains from the “promiscuous commerce with mankind where unobstructed free agency on equal terms” exercises distrust. However, there is no point to civilian life’s indirection in the Royal Navy. In that service, orders are given to be promptly obeyed. The proper decorum for this protocol is the “juvenility”, which pertains perfectly to typical sailors. Even their deviations are marked by juvenility (BB 1393).

In this way, naval authority keeps maturity for itself and marks out others as “the people” who, having the “native sense” to submit to its strictures, demand them (BB 1416).

Douglass records a series of events that demonstrate how whites seize superiority and freedom for themselves, while denying them to others. For example, after Fred’s reprieve from savagery, the clean, dressed black boy arrives at the Auld's Baltimore home. There, he meets their little son Thomas. The white boy is told that Freddy belongs to him

and the black child receives instructions in how to take care of his little master Thomas (Narrative 35).

Whatever innocence of intention is ascribable to the above transaction disappears in the well-known confrontation between the husband and wife over her teaching their son's Freddy to read: "Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world" (Narrative 37). The husband explains that the un-reciprocal relationship that the first meeting denoted must be maintained no matter how much the wife reacts spontaneously to her nurturing, maternal instincts. Slavery must be made to work.

Likewise, when the Claggart reports on Billy to Vere, the Captain's disbelief that the sailor might foster mutiny seems to mean that he genuinely concerns himself with the young man. Moreover, we discover that because Vere approves of Billy's willingness to conform to naval decorum, the officer intends to promote the sailor to the captaincy of the mizzen-top. Vere seems to favor the sailor as a man. Yet, the promotion will keep the Handsome Sailor under the Captain's scrutiny for his own unnamed, private purpose. It will also augment the profit the Navy gains from the sailor's impressments.

Ultimately, Vere proves to be like Douglass' master Auld because the Captain is only concerned with the profit to be gained from his "King's bargain" (BB 1400-1401; Bondage 275).

It is interesting that part of that profit derives from how easily how Billy enters the service. Later, when Claggart reports on the youth, Vere refers himself to the sailor's compatibility with his forced enlistment. Billy seems to have learned well the decorum he at first lacked. He learned that lesson from the flogging he attended the second day of his impressment.

However, although the sailor seems to gain from the experience out of instinctive fear, he does not yet really apply it to himself and learn true caution. His reaction is only the animal instinct of self-preservation. The proof is that when an unknown crewmember approaches Billy, the sailor cannot yet surpass the child's affability natural to him. Melville writes about the Handsome Sailor's lingering boyhood, "Like his sense of fear, his apprehension as to aught outside of the honest and natural was seldom very quick." Consequently, Billy does not promptly reject the offer of a stranger (BB 1387-1390).

However, for Fred, the world of boys still allows for free and easy reciprocal relationships. In Baltimore, "the dear little fellows" that Fred bribes for lessons "would talk this matter of slavery" with him. They would trouble themselves over the doleful fact that the black boy would never outgrow slavery. Instead, he would be a slave for life (Narrative 41).

With the young man's approaching manhood, and while he labors under the slave breaker Covey, the full experience of bondage prompts the young Douglass to regret his life. One Sunday, looking at the ships sailing on the bay, Fred delivers an apostrophe to them. He hopes to be free. He consoles himself: "Besides I am but a boy, and all boys are bound to someone" (Narrative 58-60). However, only black boys are bound for life.

Fortunately, the battle with Covey "rekindles the few expiring embers of freedom." Douglass trumpets that it revived in him a sense of his own manhood. The resultant gratification will offer full compensation for whatever else follows, even if it is death itself (Narrative 65).

This statement is the clarification of the native-born Douglass' being a completely American male. He knows that "the stereotypical image of the whipped and bleeding slave

might serve to raise the audience's indignation, but not its admiration" (Zafar 112). In the Life and Times, Douglass states, "Human nature is so constituted that, it cannot honor, a helpless man, although it can pity him; and even this it cannot do long, if the signs of power do not arise" (Life 286). The understanding is "a man, without force, is without the essential dignity of humanity" (Life 286).

Douglass counts on the effectiveness of his claim to the full American citizenship that should have always been his birthright, no matter what compromises the framers of the Constitution sought. Research reveals that "the public record of [Douglass'] black forbears dates from June 1746 . . . when the name of his great-grandmother, Jenny or Jeney, appeared in an inventory of slaves belonging to one Richard Skinner" (Preston 3).

In Douglass' attempts at a public black manhood, Richard Yarborough discerns the argument that the "environment in which most blacks lived prevented the full development of those very capacities that white readers appeared to value so highly" (Yarborough 169). Furthermore, although in the Preface, Garrison tells us that the public does not "deny the slaves are held as property," surprisingly "that terrible fact seems to convey to their minds no idea of injustice, exposure to outrage, or savage barbarity" (Narrative 8).

Therefore, to focus attention on slavery's reality and not on Douglass' too evident progress, his remarkable presence earned him the abolitionists' warnings, "Better have a little of the plantation manner of speech than not; 'tis not best that you seem too learned" (Bondage 367). Abolitionists told Douglass these things because he did not fit any of the stereotypes of a slave. They seem to understand that the ex-slave needed to remind the public of what it already knew. It was not yet the time to offer the white public another possible way of looking at a black man.

In a way, this is same advice the Dansker gives Billy about how the world the youth enters is dishonest. The veteran's "unsentimental old sapience" causes him to warn the Handsome Sailor that he should pay better attention to Claggart who is probably behind the afterguardsman's strange solicitation.

However, Billy cannot believe his mentor. His reply, that the officer "always had a pleasant word for him," is a mistake. In his immaturity, the sailor refuses to accept the world's malign imperfection because it sometimes has honeyed words for him. The Handsome Sailor's reply answers too well the question the old Dansker asked himself about him, at first meeting:

what might eventually befall a nature like that, dropped into a world not without some mantraps and against whose subtleties simple courage lacking experience and address, and without any touch of defensive ugliness, is of little avail; and where such innocence as man is capable of does yet in a moral emergency not always sharpen the faculties or sharpen the mind. (BB 1377-1379)

This is also the world Fred enters. There, despite whites' protests that they were "profoundly ignorant of the nature of slavery," (Narrative 8), the conviction was deep in them that blacks were less than whites: "blacks were not granted the same freedom of action as whites, and yet they were condemned for not meeting popularly held norms of behavior" (Yarborough 174).

Once again, the dilemma was that whites judged blacks by the circumstance and condition in which they encountered them. The logic was that black men were slaves because they were black.

Faced with these racist conventions, Douglass risked alienating the white audience he sought because he had no effective racial characterization to offer it. Douglass would have to invent a persona that embodied virtues the public acclaimed. Patriotic American self-determination served the black abolitionist's purpose (Yarborough 180).

Therefore, Douglass often employed the abolitionist "gambit" of establishing a connection between black male self-assertion and the American War of Independence (Yarborough 180). Wendell Phillips does so, addressing Douglass: "They say the fathers, in 1776, signed the Declaration of Independence with the halter about their necks. You, too, publish your declaration of freedom with danger compassing you around" (Narrative 12).

However, resorting to discovering any resemblance between the Founding Fathers' right to action and a slave's efforts at self-determination avoids the fact that "whites were quite capable of viewing the same trait that signified heroism in whites [that is, being "warlike"] as signifying degradation and inferiority in blacks" (Yarborough 169). Any evidence of masculinity that a white could appreciate in a black was permissible, however, if that black were seen as an isolated, qualified manifestation of that quality. (Evidently, by 1880, Herman Melville felt that the same stratagem would be still effective. In Billy Budd, isolated spectacular black beauty works to prepare the reader for Billy's phenomenal personification of Anglo-Saxon manhood as the Handsome Sailor [BB 1353]).

Nineteenth-century white bourgeois masculinity allowed for itself "nobility, intelligence, strength, articulateness, loyalty, virtue, rationality, courage, self-control, courtliness, honesty, and physical attractiveness" (Yarborough 168). The attribution of these qualities to blacks was unlikely because the estimation of black worth returned to the

actual value whites gave to the black man's condition. For Douglass, the argument against white complacency, when faced with slavery, was to ask, what would a white man do when, "he only can understand the deep satisfaction [of beating the slave-breaker Covey] which I experienced, who has himself repelled by force the bloody arm of slavery" (Narrative 65)? That Douglass dares relate the story of his beating a white man to a white audience lies behind this challenge.

It would seem that exceptional black accomplishment was always the result of exceptional circumstances (Yarborough 169). In general, whites refused to acknowledge those circumstances because they knew that their conventions and ideals did not allow for them. For this reason, the fact of anyone black being exceptional had to be redeemed constantly -- perhaps, in the hope of accumulating enough examples of excellence to obviate the need for exemplars. Douglass was, of course, an exemplar. He had successfully emerged from slavery's deprivation. Only a lifetime's unrelenting effort, fired by a genuine love for truth itself, repaired the damage (Dunn 73).

The third autobiography intends to show the boy Fred at the beginning of the creation of the world-famous public personality "Frederick Douglass." Therefore, in Chapter Six ("A Child's Reasoning"), we find him in an active, dynamic, resisting slave community. Besides the example of his two relatives, the famous public figure now feels free to tell us about how, during his childhood, there were several slaves on Mr. Lloyd's place who remembered being brought from Africa. Others told him that their parents had been stolen from Africa (Life 498). Douglass finds that this pattern of group memory repeats throughout the community. This recourse must have served him well by assuaging his internal exile when he would rediscover that as an ex-slave he could no longer return to

his roots, or really recreate them in a hostile anti-black North.

However, it only appears clearly in the last autobiography. In the first one, the Narrative, Douglass' account of his childhood tends towards what is shocking, pathetic, and isolating in order to cement in the audience's mind that slavery is a deliberate process of deprivation. It isolates an individual from community. In the case of the Narrative, it keeps a child from both his father and his mother.

The "bloody gate" through which the black child must pass appears to the boy in one of the Narrative's opening scenes when Aunt Hester learns that she must identify only with her master. Mr. Anthony is determined that the woman accepts that he intervenes between her and community. After witnessing the violent scene, Fred hides in a closet because he expects that it will be his turn next (Narrative 19).

The adult male points to the child:

It is only when we understand the personal circumstances of [Douglass'] early environment that we can appreciate the pathos and power with which he was wont to insist upon the true measure of the progress of the American Negro, not by the height already attained, but by the depth from which he came. (Miller 226)

The child also points to the authors of the circumstances of his life: "I was just as well aware of the unjust, unnatural, and murderous character of slavery, when nine years, old as I am now" (Life 521). If in the Life and Times, Douglass can say of himself, "as I grew older and more thoughtful, I became more and more filled with a sense of my wretchedness" and "there are thoughtful days in the lives of children -- at least there were in mine -- when they grapple with the great primary subjects of knowledge, and reach in a

moment conclusions which no subsequent experience can shake" (Life 520-521), Douglass means to prevent the later public from congratulating itself on its own inconsistent progress towards equality.

Douglass knew that progress was a painstaking internal process that paid for each small success with life itself. He probably felt that each member of the white public should match his own honest, personal achievement. For, although Douglass sought brotherhood, he demanded that it be true reciprocal fellowship.

Like the old Dansker, whose inquiry into the Handsome Sailor's probable fate stems from his knowledge of the ways of the world, Douglass must have wondered what could befall a nation that would not grow up into a settled community. In 1859, rowdyism was a national failing and malicious violence its rite. As a result of quick, superficial growth, the nation exhibited a strong disregard for the frailty of human in all its aspects (Contradictions 363-368). In Douglass' old age, in a wayward nation, there was still a need to battle to repair the damage of a lifetime in the struggle against the consequences of defacement (Dunn 73).

In the 1880's, the return to legalized anti-black sentiment provoked an old Douglass to chastise a nation that had turned its back on fraternity. He reminds the hardheaded Christian nation that the black man offers an occasion for community. A younger Douglass ends the Narrative by taking on his "severe cross" (Narrative 96; Matt.10.37-42), which is his particular contribution to the national mission. So, when Douglass justifies his fight with Covey, he also conveys the message that he has forsaken his wayward ways and is reborn into civility. He challenges whites to match his own baptism (Rom.6.3-4). There are, however, no true national rites of fellowship. There are,

though, the perpetual divisions that racism generates (1Cor.10).

Although racism does not directly concern Billy Budd, division does. It is the protocol of the Royal Navy. For example, after years in its service, the old Dansker knows that he cannot help Billy, although he at first tries to do so. Billy does not yet understand the condition of his life. He believes he remains the ship's darling, even though his cynosure on the Bellipotent is nothing like the regard he attained on the Rights of Man (BB 1359). Billy does not appreciate the moral isolation that is his lot. For this reason, the veteran withdraws his concern for the sailor (BB 1392).

Douglass could not do this. He knew that, because the nation matched his own defacement, they would have to struggle together. He knew that it would be difficult because whites counted on division to separate them from each other. Consequently, the author would mock white audiences in his later speeches. For instance, while delivering the address "Our Composite Nationality" (7 December 1869), he once apologized for mentioning blacks before speaking of whites. At another time, he asserted that his being part white allowed him to speak for the white race (Papers 4: 598-599).

Interestingly, Douglass' "composite" genetic makeup makes him merely an ordinary American because the American mission is "plain and unmistakable": "our already existing composite population, all conspire to one grand end, and that is, to make us the perfect national illustration of the unity and dignity of the human family that the world has ever seen" (Papers 4: 253).

Indirectly indicating himself, Douglass continues, "The whole of humanity, like the whole of everything else, is ever greater than a part." Furthermore, "All [races] are needed to temper, modify, round and complete the whole man and the whole nation" (Papers

4:255).

Consequently, the manhood Douglass formulates treats as open warfare the relationship between slave and master (and between the free black man and American society). According to Michael P. Zuckert in Natural Rights and the New Republicanism, John Locke seems to discover a similar relationship between the races: "slavery . . . is nothing else, but a state of war continued, between a lawful conqueror and a captive" (Zuckert 241; Locke, Two Treatises 325-326). Locke assumes that the slave's resistance to the master brings down sure death, and is therefore suicidal.

Douglass does not deny the prevalence of Locke's belief in the rightful supremacy of white domination of other races. The Narrative's several early scenes of swift retribution for actual or suspected slave resistance confirm the writer's awareness of the extent of this belief. However, because the Narrative culminates in the display of the fugitive slave to a white audience, enacting pure resistance by means of free speech, Douglass evidently rejects Locke's conclusion. Furthermore, with Douglass' later references to himself as another Nat Turner (Life 559; Bondage 231), he ties himself directly to the militancy that terrified whites.

Ironically, Billy's non-resistance also ties him to militancy, even to black militancy. Although the sailor is no rebel, the sailor's honoring himself by means of the unnamed singularity acquires all the worst attributes of the feared stereotype of the mutineer. For Vere, this figure obliterates whatever facts Vere considers in the sailor's defense when Claggart denounces him. The speed of the Captain's resolve to execute the sailor indicates the degree to which Vere has surrendered himself to government, as Paine means it, and not to man. The constant threat to government is the natural impulse to

self-preservation. That is why, in battle, the marines stand guard behind the gunners and why men like Claggart survey them, like plantation slaves, for signs of any intelligence (BB 1368; Bondage 292).

Evidently, when at Billy Budd's beginning, Melville posits that there is a white male ideal discoverable in a triumphant black man, he also knew that, in order to do so, he would have to situate his remarkable instance away from respectable daily white life. In Melville's experience, it was possible to do so on the waterfront, where all humanity meets. There, face to face, after the intimate confinement of life at sea, man sees in man the thoroughness of the individual, and therefore, the integrity of his humanity.

In White-Jacket, when a mere sailor intervenes in command and saves the ship, that man proves that, despite his station, he is "best fitted to command" (White-Jacket 463). Melville concludes that there are only a handful of such men in all of human history. He adds, in appreciation, "Thank God, I am free from all national invidiousness" (White-Jacket 466).

This was not the general attitude in the United States of Melville's lifetime. Heroism was an exclusive Anglo-Saxon prerogative, then, and was reserved for whites only.

In 1845, John O'Sullivan supposedly coined the term "manifest destiny" to express the belief that the continent should belong to the Anglo-Saxon race (Gossett 310). Douglass points out that, in America, skin color indicates merit and there was a disposition to see civilization as a matter of good white forces winning out over bad darker races (Gossett 185). The conviction was that Anglo-Saxons had a different successful future, unlike the other inferior races destined for extinction (Gossett 181).

By the Spanish-American War, the period after Melville's death, the racist sentiment was that the "American was superior because he was 'at bottom a Saxon-Norman'" (Gossett 313). The conflation of Saxon and Norman contradicts Melville's opposition of the two white races in Billy Budd. He divides them between Billy (Saxon) and Vere (Norman), so that the sailor is the vanquished people and the Captain their conqueror.

However, in the confusion and eagerness to confirm a unique English-derived white destiny for the United States, race took many permutations to establish color as the basis of superiority.

The notion of an American Anglo-Saxon heritage is an old one. In the 1840's, that heritage incited patriotism and figured in Fourth of July oratory because it was seen as being related to American political institutions. So, Anglo-Saxon could also be Anglo-American for Daniel Webster (Gossett 311). Nevertheless, the notion linked The United States with England. For instance, Thomas Carlyle wrote Emerson that there should be an annual "All-Saxondom" meeting (Gossett 320).

Thomas Jefferson was also concerned with the Anglo-Saxons. While studying their language, he found that the Anglo-Saxon system of law and government had been almost destroyed by the Norman Conquest. Jefferson believed that freedom descended from the Anglo-Saxons. He may even have tried to prove that American government was older than the monarchical British government. He wrote that the rebellious American government derived from Anglo-Saxon sources (Gossett 126-127). This was also Paine's theory. He posited that Anglo-Saxon society was right because it sprang spontaneously from the people. The American Revolution was, therefore, an act of reform and not an act of

rebellion by which the people reclaimed the lost ways (Rights 649).

Therefore, the invocation of Anglo-Saxonism underlies Douglass' repudiation of the Fourth of July as a day of universal celebration. After all, how could a black man celebrate progress in the United States when "for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without a rival" (Bondage 431-435)?

Douglass begins by asking, why was he invited to speak on the nation's most important holiday? He remarks that the day should be one on which the entire black race can bring its "humble offering to the national altar," and confess the benefits, and express devout gratitude for the blessings of life in the nation. The understanding is that the holiday should be a celebration of universal brotherhood. That is why Douglass resorts to quasi-religious terms and invokes the primitive Christian rite of agape.

The rite signifies a return to the lost impulse to American community. Douglass first employed it to symbolize what the accidental meeting with Sandy Jenkins accomplished for him: it recovered the adolescent's integrity. This rite would attain its most specific American civil form in the national day of thanksgiving with which Harriet Beecher Stowe would mock Lincoln after she had visited a black celebration of the feast (Hedrick 304-305).

For Douglass, the challenge was the same. He acknowledges that a day of brotherhood should warm him, if he were to receive its celebrants' unqualified sympathy. He does not. Instead, he hears the laments of blacks less fortunate than he is. The truth is that America is "false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future" (Bondage 431-435).

Douglass considers the invitation to speak to be an insult. He asks if whites intend

to mock him because the holiday celebrates that all men are created equal and are endowed with inalienable rights. Yet, his presence before the white audience attests to the disparity between his black life and theirs. For, although Douglass can speak well enough to be a guest, he and his brethren are not good enough by law to be equal citizens.

The abolitionist then lists the trades and functions blacks accomplish daily in plain view. These actions are, however, no proof of black civil competence, according to law.

This scandalous situation recalls what Paine says is the shame of a nation, which is that what it claims for itself is not what it shows to the world. The ideal society manifests agape so that, for its citizen, “the rational world is his friend because he is the friend of its happiness” (Rights 649).

According to Douglass, this is not the United States of 1852. So, even the invitation to speak is an imposition on him that asks him to lie to the assembly that he is the exception to the general condition of blacks. Thereby, whites demonstrate that they feel free to impose on the man’s self-worth by denying him autonomy. This insult worsens when the invitation is understood to confirm Douglass’ intelligence because anyone can see that slavery is odious. No one would ever choose it.

Therefore, the national day of celebration maintains disparity among its citizens -- and Douglass does claim full citizenship for the blacks who labor and die among the other legalized members of society.

This great shame is a matter of law. Douglass wonders if he appears before the public to debate the slave as a moral, intellectual, and responsible being. He answers that the law’s forbidding the enactment of the slave’s human attributes proves that he is human; otherwise, there would be no need for the legal proscriptions. In these ways, Douglass turns

back the insult so that it reflects on the public that has come to hear a black man speak.

Melville uses the same strategy in White-Jacket. In that book, when Ushant is flogged for resisting the denial to him of his rights, the old sailor announces, “‘tis no dishonor when he who would dishonor you, only dishonors himself” (White-Jacket 734). This teaching also seems to support Douglass when he says that the nation never looked blacker to him than it does on the Fourth of July 1852 because of the national crimes and failings that shame him as he utters them.

If, as Gossett informs us, the holiday’s typical patriotic rhetoric employed the racial myths of Anglo-Saxonism, then Douglass’ recourse to color in order to call for reform repudiates those racist theories. He would mean that the laws made by the government to exclude blacks from participating in democracy cannot deny that they share in the actual daily life of the country.

It is interesting that Douglass’ complaint against the Anglo-Saxonisms demanded of him on the holiday repeat Jefferson and Paine’s arguments that the Norman Conquest corrupted the Anglo-Saxon legal tradition. Paine’s Rights of Man paints life before the arrival of the Normans as a true, perfect pastoral society. He notes, “The hatred which the Norman invasion and tyranny begat, must have been deeply rooted in the nation, to have outlived the contrivance to obliterate it” (Rights 556).

If Paine’s and Jefferson’s thought is that the true Anglo-Saxon is a republican, then Douglass takes on that mantle in speaking against slavery on the Fourth of July. Therefore, the black man’s confrontation of a white public uses white racist rhetoric to argue a black cause. The complications inherent in arguing for truth while employing a masquerade disappear, though, when gesture matters more. That is Douglass’ point. He is there; he is

speaking; and he was invited to do so; and can do so very well. Douglass is the fact and not the form suitable to the occasion (Bondage 286).

Like Douglass in his speech, Melville intends to recall the Norman Conquest of Anglo-Saxon Britain. Melville's narrative enacts Paine argument with Edmund Burke in Rights of Man in order to debate citizenship and government. Billy, the free citizen employed in reciprocal free commerce with other men to the best of his ability, is captured by a belligerent government for its own purposes. Thereby, Billy takes on slavery like a black man.

There are expectations of a captive Anglo-Saxon. The stereotype does not accept the humiliation of slavery. Death would be a better fate. Hence, Graveling's disapproval of Billy's easy departure from his ship. Furthermore, the captive should be unendurable to his captors. Apparently, this is not Billy in the Royal Navy. Just as he is not the noble captive, Billy is not really the Handsome Sailor, except by his beauty. He lacks the role's inner nature.

Billy's natural failings, and those society has fostered in him, disable him. Naturally, the sailor cannot speak under pressure. Intellectually, the guardian who somewhat raised him kept him illiterate. Morally, he has never been properly instructed in the ways of evil, so he is at the mercy of others who can mimic virtue and its good intentions. Moreover, Melville tells us that Billy resembles most of the crew in his preparation for life. His immaturity almost matches their juvenility. He is their "Baby Budd."

The racist attributes of Anglo-Saxon superiority do not appear in the above list. Theories of class differences could account for them, but they are useless because Melville

tells us that Billy is an apparent by-blow of nobility. Therefore, Melville seems to propose that the narrative relates what happens to an abandoned, neglected Anglo-Saxon of exceptional beauty. It is no romance by virtue of what society does to him. Billy's life cannot impersonate a romance because of his unadulterated meerness. Consequently, there is little that can be done with him and there is little that he does.

This new version of the Anglo-Saxon myth obviates a myth for a reality. Despite Melville's beginning his narrative with a stereotype, he ends with a man who would deserve the ancient Pope's wonder at the evident divinity of man. In this way, Melville addresses what is the value of unadulterated man in Cain's city. By returning to the author's assessment of what is noble in an unbroken sailor -- the assessment is made by means of a comparison to an intransigent black slave -- it is clear that Melville does not seek an Anglo-Saxon exemplar formulated according to the criteria stated above.

Instead, Melville divests Billy of history and moral merit. He leaves him only the instinct to survive. This meerness is the sailor's value as a man. Because of it, Billy's life equals those of the captive Anglo-Saxons in that those men are also reduced to nothing -- the lives of slaves -- and yet inspire admiration for merely being. Therefore, the Handsome Sailor's degradation has nothing to do with who he is. It has to do with who he is said to be, and that is matter of law.

By law, the sailor is available to the over-riding interest of the state. Resistance is futile. Billy's condition is like black American life in the 1880's after the revocation of the gains made in the Reconstruction. It also recalls Douglass' estimation of the condition of black and white life in 1852 as a result of the Fugitive Slave law. That law over-rode the citizens' autonomy in the interests of momentarily preserving the corrupted Union.

It is an example of the effects of what Douglass terms “the law of compensation.” He uses this term to describe what takes place between the slave boy Fred and the white child Mas’ Daniel: “Mas’ Daniel could not associate with ignorance without sharing its shade; and he could not give his black playmates his company, without giving them his intelligence, as well” (Bondage 169).

However, in matters of law, it is impossible to ignore the people’s right to act in their own cause. Direct force and indirect suggestion must work to force an undesirable law on the people. Therefore, the Fugitive Slave law reduced a black man to a legal thing and the white man to a functionary of the state, in the perpetuation of slavery. It made the condition of whites and blacks equivalent by abjuring the integrity of their meanness for the arbitrary interests of authority. This is the general national humiliation for which Douglass chastises the public in his Fourth of July speech of 1852.

Although Douglass’ first two books pre-date the Dred Scott decision, the texts develop their arguments in the moral climate that produced the Supreme Court’s judgment. The Fugitive Slave law attempted to throw a barrier across the slaves’ physical rejection of slavery by their flight from bondage. It hoped to destroy the human impulse of self-affirmation by means of a law.

The Supreme Court’s ruling in the case of Dred Scott versus Sandford continued to perpetrate the moral failure of the Founding Fathers. The decision was “a nasty reminder of the racist barriers that blocked the path toward abolition even more securely than the Constitution” (Mayer 473) because it improved on the document’s original compromises. Lincoln warned that the Dred Scott decision risked advocating lawful slavery in all the states (Mayer 473).

Chief Justice Taney's Court prevented Congress from restricting the expansion of slavery in the territories and found no basis for bestowing the rights of citizenship on blacks: "the second ruling reinforced the concept of chattel slavery and the constitutional recognition of a slave master's property rights and thus took the most extreme white supremacist view of the moral question." Therefore, blacks were permanently excluded, as Garrison saw it, from the political community.

Taney permitted blacks only the degraded condition of slavery in the attempt to undercut the moral and philosophical basis of abolitionism. He held that in historic 1776 blacks had "no rights that white men were bound to respect." In stating this opinion, Taney distorted received history in order to advance an idea of an America that never really had existed. Garrison opposed Taney's revision of history by citing William C. Nell's studies of early black participation in the American Revolution. Supreme Court Justice Benjamin Curtis also dissented by "demonstrating that free blacks during the founding era had possessed political rights, including male suffrage, in at least five states" (Mayer 470-472).

The impulse to revolt shaped the participation of the American slave in the life of the United States. The Court's denial of a voice to blacks necessitated its rejection of the evidence of past and present history in order to reinforce the institutions that lent themselves to that denial. Fundamentally, according to the tenets of these institutions, blacks were not comparable to whites.

Nevertheless, a comparison does allow for an emphasis on the circumstances of slavery. If the white man "has no powers of endurance, in such a condition, superior to those of his black brother" (Narrative 6), then he must never receive more than he can bear lest he become the equivalent of a black man. Therefore, his superior position in face of the

black man is artificial and requires force and suggestion to enforce it.

Nevertheless, slavery also must submit to the "law of compensation" (Bondage 169). When Patrick Henry spoke up for liberty, he owned black slaves. The law of compensation determined, however, that he would confess that his slaveholding revealed him to be a personal failure because "[slavery] has a natural, an inevitable tendency to brutalize every noble faculty of man" (Narrative 6). Henry said of his owning slaves, "I will not, I cannot justify it; however culpable my conduct, I will so far pay my 'devoir' to virtue as to own the excellence and rectitude of her precepts and to lament my conformity to them" (Tyler 346-347).

Clearly, then, Taney's denial to blacks of the right to protest, to have a voice worth hearing in the community, and coming at the instigation of a black man's claim to citizenship, proved his misunderstanding history. Faced with the man, who refused to accept himself as mute property, Taney had to deny humanity to Scott and to negate the value of the fugitive's having voted for freedom by taking flight legally for his freedom.

The reliance on the strength of evident gesture operates in the Narrative as it does in Billy Budd. In both texts, the central figure cannot expect others, with a traditionally established, oppressive authority over him, to understand his words; nor should they: Locke's argument for autonomy claims that that no one can expect others to think for him (Dunn 73). In a way, in the Narrative, Fred remains mute until he understands the word "abolition." He does not trust himself to believe what whites tell him. It is as if he were not yet one of those exceptional few "at the highest stages of colored culture" gifted with intelligible speech. Rather, he was still only a black man whose "Ethiopian lips were not framed by Nature to articulate" (Higginson 112).

Similarly, in the “inside narrative,” Billy's ejaculations earn him the suspicion of his auditors because they cannot always deem them apropos to the situation, as they perceive it. Inevitably, the sailor and Douglass must rely on gesture to make themselves heard, like the slave whose flight gives the lie to the myth of the happy, plantation extended family.

Moreover, Garrison’s astonishment at Douglass' oratorical skill belies his stated belief in black equality. Although the abolitionist argues that whites must comprehend the condition of slavery "as it is" (Narrative 7), like Higginson and Taney, he ignores the circumstances that produce the language that he hears. Arguably, the culture that shapes the speech remains indistinct enough to Garrison that Douglass’ eloquent manifestation of that culture's expressive possibilities seems prodigious to him. When faced with Douglass’ oratorical skill, Garrison exclaims, that it “gave the world assurance of a Man” (Narrative 3).

Garrison’s wonder speaks to the power of gesture that determines the intent of Billy Budd and the Narrative. In both narratives, action must take the place of words. Douglass stands up and offers himself as proof to a white audience that he struck a white man and lived. Billy's life-long habit of protesting infringements on his autonomy by resorting to blows leads to his hanging. In both cases, the absence of a validated speech provokes a more eloquent resort to gesture.

Similarly, Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard’s report on the Wild Boy Victor’s progress ends with an announcement of success:

You have seen, my lord, how civilization awoke the intellectual faculties of our savage from their lethargy first by applying them to the satisfaction of his needs, then by extending the scope of his ideas beyond his animal

existence. Your Excellency will now see the same order of development in his emotional faculties, first aroused by the feeling of need inspired by the instinct of self-preservation, then stirred by less selfish feelings, by more generous impulses and finally by some of those noble feelings which are the happiness and glory of the human heart. (Malson 168; Itard 87)

Hoping to establish that punishment and instruction have more than corrected the boy's habit of stealing food, and that they have promoted or discovered in him "one of those feelings which form what we call righteousness . . . the inner sentiment of justice" (Malson 173; Itard 93), Itard relates that, although the initial chastisement and deprivation were successful, he was still unsure that he "had inspired the sentiment of justice in [Victor's] bosom" because it was probable that only fear of punishment restricted the boy's former habit. Therefore, Itard informs us, "I decided to submit my pupil to a test based on another kind of injustice which, being unrelated to the nature of the crime, could not possibly be a well-deserved punishment and because of this was as detestable as it was outrageous."

Itard then arbitrarily punishes Victor. The boy "set up the most vigorous resistance," which pleases the doctor because "when faced by a just punishment, [Victor] had always endured it without the slightest air of rebellion." The boy's resistance was "an incontestable proof that the idea of justice and injustice, the basis of the social order, was no longer foreign to [Itard's] pupil's mind." Itard concludes, "By giving this feeling to him, or rather by stimulating its development, I had raised savage man to the full stature of moral man through the most striking of his characteristics and the most noble of his powers (Malson 173-175; Itard 95-96).

Itard's argument is for accepting a spontaneous, indecorous gesture as the proof of an interiority that denies the term "savage" to the enactor. It is rather the evidence of a human will. As evidence of humanity, however, this will depends on the nutritive social

circumstances that arouse it and confirm its worth. The Savage of Aveyron was an ordinary human being who had suffered unusually. He was not a marvel because of this suffering. He was yet another instance of human possibility.

Similarly, in the Narrative, Douglass is more than a mere personality because his power lies in an "irrepressible inner something, which, for want of better designation, the old philosophy used to call the freedom of the will, which counts for most in the making of manhood" (Miller 227). Miller outlines a series of lessons by which to instruct colored youth. For example, "there must first be aroused dormant consciousness of manhood with its inalienable rights, privileges, and dignity;" and there is also, "it is not the treatment that a man receives that degrades him, but that which he accepts" (Miller 229-231). The liberating gesture may both accept and refuse. In either case, the articulation inherent in choosing to act from moment to moment defines freedom in action and proves the enactor to be "a part of the human family" (Narrative 27), worthy of all its rights. By means of such gestures, Fred and Billy enter into participation in the universal brotherhood that the rite agape defines.

CHAPTER TWO: FREDERICK DOUGLASS' PROVIDENTIAL REDISCOVERY OF AFRICA: AGAPE

Frederick Douglass's 1855 autobiographical narrative My Bondage and My Freedom appeared in the same world that acclaimed Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin of 1852. Douglass' new work expanded the first narrative's testimony of a slave's experience of American life. It included the black abolitionist's beleaguered life after his escape from the South. Stowe's fictional account of slave life also looked closely at that peculiar institution and charged that both the North and the South were complicit in supporting it. Stowe's complaint was, therefore, against the national community (Gilbertson 147).

Both writers fought for public reform by teaching that the nation had lost its way. They proposed that people should try to feel right about themselves. Stowe and Douglass' revelations of life among the lowly intended to support the belief that the natural satisfaction that comes from doing good produces true community (Stowe 385; Narrative 65).

When Abraham Lincoln met the Stowe, he is supposed to have acknowledged Stowe's success in arousing popular sentiment against slavery. Lincoln allegedly remarked, "So this is the little lady who made this big war" (Gilbertson 273). However, Stowe did not meet with her president in order to receive what might pass for a

compliment. Instead, a high point of her visit to Washington was her attendance at a Thanksgiving dinner for a thousand fugitive slaves (Gilbertson 272-273, Hedrick 304-305). The blessing before the meal and the hymn sung afterward was a strange and moving sight. The feast assured Stowe that the Fugitive Slave law was not being enforced and that the nation was moving towards reconciliation. Here is evidence of the power of the love feast agape to activate community among men. This chapter will examine how Frederick Douglass grew in his understanding of the power of the love feast and made increasing use of it in his narratives. Arguably, he learned how to do so by following Stowe's example of striving for community.

Stowe's activism involved her strongly. Her family also valued the Bible's moral teachings. For instance, Henry Ward brought a slave into the pulpit to raise its ransom money. Edward Beecher helped fugitives to earn a living or to go into Canada. His untalented wife regretted that, unlike Stowe, she could not write "something to make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is" (Gilbertson 137-138). Eventually, this mission became so primary to Stowe that from her biblical learning, she found the form for her narrative (Cady 40).

Despite slavery's poisoning American religion, Stowe could still defend her beliefs to her friend Douglass. She explained that her family had never avoided helping the fugitives, and that it was the influence found in the church and by the altar that made them do these things. Stowe resolved, "This movement must and will become a purely religious one" (Gilbertson 147).

However, the novel Stowe wrote became successful because of its memorable scenes that were easily transferred to the stage. The public reveled in its violence, pathos,

and sentimentality (Gilbertson 162-163). The author's recourse to humor and irony further eased the novel's passage into popular culture (Gilbertson 163-164).

Catherine Gilbertson reminds us that Stowe's seemingly specific references to slavery as it really was had another appeal to the public. The novel's astonishing popularity indicates to what degree the public found itself in the work. Stowe's stand against slavery also included her opposition to some aspects of the Industrial Revolution. Slavery was another part of its servitude and it darkened the promise land of material prosperity. Consequently, Stowe's religious perspective enabled her to explain to her readers that the society they labored for, in most cases, often excluded them from its benefits. That is why they could not attain community and lived lives of desperation.

Stowe has St. Clare warn, "I tell you . . . if there is anything that is revealed with the strength of divine law in our times, it is that the masses are to rise, and the underclass become the upper one" (Stowe 234). It is with this sense of destiny that Stowe aroused the general public to reform itself by giving up differences of all sorts (Hedrick 216).

However, the public did not give up its notion that there was a difference in humanity between itself and blacks. Even Charles Dickens, who had traveled throughout the nation, could not accept Stowe's closing arguments. He counseled, "I doubt there being any warrant for making out the African race to be a great race" (Gilbertson 160).

Stowe had written her novel, though, in order to inspire a community of reform. The living Gospel would melt away "dark, misanthropic, pining, atheistic doubts, and fierce despair" (Stowe 122). Yet, in some ways, the author's subversive rhetorical strategies failed because of the society she addressed. Even before the minstrel adaptations of Uncle Tom's Cabin appeared, comic versions of the Amistad mutiny and Nat Turner

revolt soothed whites (Sundquist 139).

However, when Stowe visited England after the novel's publication, she found that its success made her "the single most powerful voice on behalf of the slave" (Hedrick 234). Then and now, the author's concern for the lowly triggers a response that is not always easy to understand. Jane Tompkins argues that the sentimental novel moves its audience because they can read its conceptual categories that include sustaining, religious beliefs (Tompkins 126-127).

In the system of belief that underpins Stowe's enterprise, "dying is the supreme form of heroism" that the community acknowledges. It becomes a form of living (Tompkins 127). For Tompkins, Stowe's religious outlook begins and ends with the individual human heart as the locus of any social action (Tompkins 128). Stowe's concern is with a change of heart (Tompkins 132). In this approach to literature, Stowe reveals her debt to the African American slave narrative that often sees social change for the black man as beginning with the moral quality of the individual (Wimberly 64; Tompkins 132).

In black literature, conversion often follows the discovery of a need properly to reenter the world, both socially and spiritually (Wimberly 100): "right thinking" generates a responsible, authentic person fully in charge of his own life, gaining happiness through a meaningful life of self-giving" (Wimberly 97). This moral independence is incompatible with slavery because the institution misinterprets the religious nature of the slave's self-sufficiency as dependency.

Stowe makes use of these contradictions. In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Stowe's account of Eliza's escape employs "humor of character in action" (Bense 187). She bypasses her white readers' probable objection to the black character Sam's independent self-interest.

Apparently, Stowe was aware of her own reaction to the black humor she witnessed in her own life (Bense 187), and so, she accepted minstrelsy's darky figures as part of her novel's conversionary operation" (Bense 188).

James Bense points out that, in the case of Sam, Stowe subverted the myths of slavery propaganda. She deflates "major tenets of American ideology that had made his 'creation' possible" (Bense 189).

Stowe does all these things by having the reader enjoy how resourcefully Sam obeys Mrs. Shelby in helping Eliza to escape. However, in order to do so, he must at the same time disobey Mr. Shelby. Afterwards, because Sam has succeeded at being unsuccessful, he and both Shelbys join together to normalize the unusual situation. They all play out a travesty of "the 'family' myth upon which slavery was defended" (Bense 197). Thereby, the child-like slave is rebuked and sent off to the kitchen for a good supper.

Stowe writes, though, that once in the kitchen, a debate begins among the blacks about the value and purpose of the day's events. Sam defeats all objections because he constantly reinvents his moral position against the others.

In this way, Stowe involves her readers, through humor, in a slave's exhibition of self-sufficiency. Ultimately, Sam's amoral mock heroism before both his white and black audiences anticipates Stowe's depiction of true heroism; that is, Uncle Tom's truly Christian death (Bense 203).

Bense repeats Quarles' claim that Stowe's novel owes much to the slave narrative (Quarles 67). He adds, though, that My Bondage and My Freedom has Uncle Tom's Cabin as its model of how to use humor. Stowe's novel presented autonomous black life to a public that had laughter as a means of resisting it (Bense 203). Stowe employed the comic

character Sam to undermine that resistance by the laughter she generated for her own purposes.

For Stowe, there were two paths open to regeneration; “one through resistance, the other through martyrdom” (Bense 203) -- both projected by Sam. Douglass saw in self-sacrifice “the millennial assurance that slavery was neither ‘natural’ nor a reflection of God’s design” (Bense 203). Stowe influenced Douglass, therefore, to join her in the sympathetic, national community that appreciated her rhetorical strategies. Consequently, he too used them to bypass white refusal of equal humanity to blacks, even to free blacks at the North (Bense 201).

An example of Stowe’s influence on Douglass appears in Sam’s closing speech after the debate in the kitchen. He ends, “Here I comes to shed my last blood fur my principles, fur my country, fur der gen’l interests of society (Stowe 66).

Similarly, Douglass attests after the battle with Covey (in which he does not fight with the slave breaker) that his no longer being afraid to die makes him a freeman in fact (Bondage 286). Both speeches are traditionally American and versions of George Harris’ clear revolutionary statements (Cady 42-43; Stowe 170-172) and all refer to Tom’s dying speeches (Stowe 357-360).

Douglass refers to the tradition of frontier humor in which the hero exhibits the qualities of a true American in his “brash self-confidence” in the face of overwhelming adversity (Reynolds 452). Douglass appropriates the persona of the “self-reliant common man taken to an extreme” by passively resisting the white man to whom his master has consigned him (Reynolds 452).

Principally, though, Douglass relies on the absurdities of minstrelsy to sweet-coat

the purgative he administers. He is confident that it will be effective because “minstrelsy was a conversation white culture had with itself,” and Douglass could speak the language (Malcomsen 323). He understood that “minstrelsy’s energy came from white fantasies about black life, rather than black life as such” (Malcomsen 323).

Therefore, Douglass could dare to fight Covey but he could not say so. Instead he is impassive, and Covey struggles. The absurdity is our witnessing the agitation of supposed superiority when faced with resistant fancied inferiority. This is how Douglass, like Stowe in her sentimental novel, fixed his adventurous narrative “not in the realm of fairy tale or escapist fantasy, but in the very bedrock of reality (Tompkins 127).

For Stowe, that reality was the Christian conversion. Like Stowe, but also differently, for Douglass, conversion gave a name to the search for a community that could confirm the truth of the American black man’s religious belief and that would allow for it. Otherwise, without that confirmation, society would daily sacrifice him publicly for his belief in the worth of his own existence. Therefore, in order to understand Douglass’ need for true communion, it is necessary to follow Stowe’s successful and acclaimed map of it.

The scenes of religious conversion in African-American literature are often central to its slave narratives. From before Equiano's narrative and onwards, they seem to claim that Christian faith transforms their black characters from brute chattel slaves into self-reliant, empowered men and women. Even Harriet Beecher Stowe, in Uncle Tom's Cabin, attempts to dramatize the power of religious belief in African-American life. In Stowe's novel, Tom’s conversion is an even more significant fact of his existence than his being a slave. Stowe has a character say of him, “Tom is a good, steady, sensible, pious

fellow. He got religion at a camp-meeting, four years ago; and I believe he really did get it" (Stowe 2).

Against any argument that a black man is incapable of true Christian belief, Stowe offers Tom's martyrdom as proof of the depths of the slave's faith. Tom's murderer Simon Legree, a "soul resolved in evil" for whom "perfect love is the most fearful torture" (Stowe 323), reenacts the role of Satan in the temptation of Jesus in the desert (Luke 4.1-13) by offering Tom "wealth"-- the position of overseer: "Come, Tom, don't you think you'd better be reasonable? -- heave that ar old pack of trash in the fire, and join my church!" (Stowe 339).

Tom's refusal and death galvanize the other slaves. The blacks' consequent transformation proves how well Tom serves as the Christ-like example of a man's life. Tom's story demonstrates the powerful role religion plays in a slave's rescue of his endangered humanity.

For Stowe, "Uncle Tom's Cabin was the Protestant equivalent of the Roman Catholic mass, a dramatic re-enactment of the Crucifixion. Tom's body, given for others, was to be the bread and wine of a social revolution that would bring the kingdom of heaven" (Hedrick 215) [emphasis added].

By this indirect reference to St. Paul's admonitions against dissension and to his instructions for the love feast agape (1Cor.11.17-27) the author joins all those who claim to be Christ's followers, by continuing in the right way of community. However, because Stowe has Tom forgive Legree before his death, James Baldwin in "Everybody's Protest Novel" seems to be one of those critics who regard Tom to be "a symbol of the cowardly, boot-licking slave" (Crozier vii). The writer thinks that Tom "has been robbed of his

humanity and divested of his sex” (Baldwin 18). However, Stowe means for the slave’s peculiar death to represent the lofty Christian virtue of self-sacrificing love:

Tom dies, as Mrs. Stowe believed Christ died, sustained by God and moved to bear his pain that others might live. Tom is motivated by Christian love. He exists for no other purpose than to demonstrate to the reader that such love is powerful enough to reconcile the bitter members of a society on the verge of civil war. This is the message of the novel. (Crozier vii)

Tom serves a purpose, and, to that purpose, Stowe subordinates him and others. Nevertheless, Baldwin thinks that in Native Son by Richard Wright, Bigger Thomas is “Uncle Tom’s descendant, flesh of his flesh,” because, like the slave, “he has accepted a theology that denies him life.” Baldwin decides that the wayward youth does not need to participate in the brutal criteria bequeathed him. Baldwin proposes, “our humanity is our burden, our life; we need not battle for it; we need only to do what is infinitely more difficult -- that is, accept it (Baldwin 22-23).

Yet, this is Stowe’s point and the point of the slave narrative. The world that Legree offers Tom is a stolen one that inspires terror and requires constant vigilance. It is the opposite of the one that the converted slave achieves. He inhabits that different world as he really is. It is a place where the condition society imposes on him falls away as a superficial thing. Crozier maintains that the controversial, provocative word is “love,” that is embedded in Stowe’s “melodramatic and evangelical language” (Crozier vii-viii).

Part of Baldwin’s misunderstanding lies in his not being aware of “what such language and such feeling once meant” (Crozier viii). The language appeals directly to feeling, not only to provoke an immediate response from us, but also to invoke the

Christian concept that we all have reactions in common that designate our humanity (Gal.3.26-28). That is why, to indicate the extent of Legree's decline, Stowe tells us that the only way to reach him is by superstition and by knocking him to the ground (Stowe 364).

The chapter "The Young Master" capitalizes on our sense of decency by introducing young George Shelby who undertakes, at last, to do something against slavery, which, until his arrival, triumphs in the novel. Stowe shows how the youth's having previous experiences in common with the dying slave posits feeling as a possibility of avoiding impending war: "tears which did honor to his manly heart fell from the young man's eyes, as he bent over his poor friend" (Stowe 362). In this way, Stowe recalls the reader to a forgotten, inherent national feeling of brotherhood. This solidarity is a problem for critics like Baldwin. They object to the novelist's having Tom extend his final happiness to include his murderer, Legree. The slave exclaims, "I loves every creatur' everywhar! -- it's nothing but love! O, Mas'r George! what a thing 't is to be a Christian!" (Stowe 363).

Furthermore, Baldwin asserts that Stowe's novel relies on scenes of brutality. He claims that it fails to address "what it was, after all, that moved her people to such deeds" (Baldwin 14). Baldwin ignores that the author is writing history -- providential history -- which concerns itself with "reminding the nation of its historical commitments, recording its present struggles, warning of the impending wrath of the Almighty if the nation should betray its covenant and its destiny." Stowe argues for self-renewal by urging "all alike to cleanse themselves and renew their historical purpose" (Crozier 6-7).

Stowe's purpose shares the interest of the slave narrative in counseling that only

“when the nation learns to see itself as family and when its hostile members recognize each other as brothers, then will the wrathful God of Jeremiah, who now threatens such awful doom, show himself to be a kindly father” (Crozier 33).

According to Stowe’s understanding of the nation’s providential history, Tom must die. His sacrifice testifies to the truth of the moment she records in “the unfolding drama of providential history” (Crozier 6-7). In that history reform seems impossible and the resultant failure requires death in or flight from the United States for its forsaken blacks.

For Stowe, all America is responsible for the scandal of black chattel slavery. This is why St. Clare’s wife complains about her husband, “He says we have made them what they are, and ought to bear with them.” She means that blacks have been made into grown-up children (Stowe 150-151). Yet in Uncle Tom’s Cabin, the most important child is the slave owner’s evangelical daughter who teaches by example because she feels deeply. On hearing about a slave’s torment, Evangeline admits, “These things sink into my heart, Tom” (Stowe 190). This child is, therefore, the ideal of feeling humanity (Matt. 18).

The complaint then is scandal: whites are not sufficient models of propriety for blacks. Stowe bluntly states that “the whole frame-work of society, both in Europe and America, is made up of various things that will not stand the scrutiny of any very ideal standard of morality” (Stowe 159). Moreover, there is no place in America that can prove a model for community of “a living Gospel, breathed in living faces, preached by a thousand unconscious acts of love and good will” (Stowe 122).

It is not Tom’s death that holds the complete message of the novel; it is Evangeline’s life -- about which her father exclaims, “O’ Evangeline! rightly named . . . hath not God made thee an evangel to me?” (Stowe 157). The child creates a love feast out

of her own death, dividing her hair among the congregation, counseling it to love in memory of her life (Crozier 18).

The love feast agape is a meal shared by early Christians when they met together for fellowship and the Lord's Supper (1Cor.11. 17-34). Greek manuscripts support the term "love feast" and they use the Greek word for love in their descriptions of it. The meal was originally intended to be a rich experience of God's love. Communal meals were celebrated in both Jewish and Greek cultures to express friendship. Passover is an example of this practice. It was natural, therefore, for early Christians to unite the dual experiences of a communion meal and the Eucharist (Acts 2.46). The practice eventually declined but some groups continued it (Agape).

An example of the revival of the practice appears in Equiano's narrative after the author prays to be directed to someone holier than the company in which he finds himself. One day in London, he encounters an old sailor filled with the love of God. Having never before heard "the love of Christ to believers set forth in such a manner," Equiano accepts the old man's invitation to a "love feast."

The "supposed banquet" takes place in a chapel where no food is evident. Instead, the members of the assembly recount their religious experiences, pray, and sing. Finally, they distribute bread among themselves and sip water from different cups. Equiano admits,

This kind of Christian fellowship I had never seen, nor ever thought of seeing on earth. It fully reminded me of what I had read in the holy Scriptures, of the primitive Christians, who loved each other and broke bread, in partaking of it, even from house to house. (Equiano 136-138)

The difference between the congregation's behavior and what the black exile has

seen in “the world, that lieth in wickedness” attracts the visitor to their communion. Its significance resides in the congregation’s sharing bread and wine (or in this case, water) among themselves (Equiano 138). In the first four chapters of 1 Corinthians, St. Paul advocates this practice as an alternative to schisms (Orr 269). St. Paul teaches,

As for the cup of the blessing that we bless, is it not a partnership of the blood of Christ? As for that loaf we break, is it not a partnership of the body of Christ? Since there is one loaf, we, the many, are one body; for we all share from the one loaf. (1Cor.10.16-17)

The prefatory blessing establishes that it is not the contents of the cup but, rather, the benediction (which figures prominently in Jewish worship) that is important. Partaking of the offering makes the congregation God’s guests and requests the bestowal on it of the benefit of Christ’s death, which is eternal life. Similarly, breaking and sharing the bread, which is Christ, unites the participants in table fellowship with Him (Orr 251-252). Furthermore, these comparisons of the group with the individual provide “a kind of ideal or norm by which members of a society are urged or advised to act in harmony with one another” (Orr 285).

St. Paul reminds the congregation that the communion meal should be offered in Christ’s memory in order to actualize His presence (Orr 252). Therefore, St. Paul stresses the benefit of example. By asking Christians to imitate him, St. Paul explains they imitate Christ, his model (1Cor.11.1). At the love feast, it is this adherence to the saint’s instructions that so impresses Equiano and that strengthens the African’s resolve to prove worthy of the community of true believers he joins (Equiano 145-145).

In such a community of love lies Stowe’s solution to an imperfect society. Her

“Christian solution to slavery is expressed primarily in nineteenth-century evangelical terms” (Crozier 16). In Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Tom’s martyrdom reveals a step toward such a society, but “in quite other than political terms” (Crozier 16).

Henry Mayer’s analyzes how Uncle Tom’s Cabin, which was Harriet Beecher Stowe’s answer to the Fugitive Slave Law, contains what Garrison called a “triumphant” illustration of the principles of Christian nonresistance.” Yet because it also culminates “in an act of armed resistance,” Garrison wondered, “Are there two Christs?” Stowe’s novel seemed to teach quiet submission for blacks and violent action for whites (Mayer 420-421).

What bothered Garrison in 1852 about Stowe’s religious beliefs must have worried him in 1845. In advocating the Narrative, Garrison added a preface to it that passed over Douglass’ battle with the slave-breaker Covey, even though the rebellious slave teaches the white man to submit to righteous force. Garrison would have thought the battle conflicted with the Douglass’ professed nonresistance (Mayer 350).

In Stowe’s case, the piecemeal construction of her novel opened her anti-slavery argument to the time’s changing demands (Mayer 417-420). Consequently, her novel gathered material and ideas from Garrison, Weld, Grimke, and Douglass (Mayer 422). In this way, the slave narrative guided Stowe and she entered into its practices. For instance, Stowe’s famous work resembles Josiah Henson’s autobiography that spoke about the condition of being black in nineteenth century North America (Winks 132). That condition subjected blacks to speculations on the human value and spiritual worth of their lives.

However, being black mattered. Therefore, Garrison would have no success in

teaching that race was irrelevant (Mayer 352) and Stowe's rejection of America as a suitable place for ex-slaves needed answering. On the other hand, Douglass accepted race. It shaped his understanding of what religious conversion meant for blacks and for whites. In My Bondage and My Freedom, Douglass demonstrates this difference in contrasting his own conversion to Thomas Auld's religious experience.

Douglass' complaint is that, despite Auld's Christian conversion, the man maintains a difference between them (Bondage 251) because Auld disregards the revolutionary instructions that mandate universal brotherhood. He clings instead to the biblical statements the pro-slavery factions uncovered that justify human bondage. They used these statements to prove that blacks were "still everywhere the 'servants of servants'" (Gossett 63). Auld's own misuse of sacred texts for personal gain shook Douglass' confidence in the truth of Southern religion (Bondage 251). The black convert finds Auld lacking in the highest evidence the slaveholder's conversion can have because Auld does not free his blacks (Bondage 251).

Auld's version of his religion does not allow for the communion of men, not even when they meet for the purpose of improving the mind and heart, as they do at Douglass' Sabbath school (Bondage 254, 299). Auld does appreciate, however, that religion promotes autonomy in a slave and that it leads to reprisals like Nat Turner's recent revolt (Bondage 254).

Douglass' intense observation of Auld's conversion underscores a certain interpenetration of the races in antebellum culture. Each race watched the other, hoping to learn what was the other's evaluation of it. When we encounter in the literature of the time how the contradictions of the slave system were everywhere evident and at play, we begin

to understand how people busied themselves with interposing concepts and protocols between themselves and lived reality. Yet, against the direct encounter with a fugitive slave, Stowe tells us, self-evasion proved difficult (Gilbertson 147).

Nevertheless, Auld mastered self-evasion. In My Bondage and My Freedom, Douglass intensifies his denunciation of Auld's religiosity while noting the naturalness of his own faith. Nature itself takes on the horror of Fred's personal predicament. Previously, it provided him with moments of repose and insight into his deepest interior where a memory of another possibility persisted.

The second narrative is more specifically critical of American society than the first narrative. It gains a good deal of its impact by referring to sacred texts known to its audience. It is possible to consider the narrative's ninth and tenth chapters to be elaborate paraphrases of Luke 12. The sin of presumption receives an excoriating examination in those texts. Yet, Luke 12 reserves its approbation for nature as the indicator of how a man should live his life. He should read in it what he needs so that he is truly directed to God. There is in Luke 12 the sense that a natural religion is available that corresponds to Christianity.

For young Fred, the initial beautiful experience, before the peculiar institution contaminated it, is his boyhood idyll while in his grandmother's care. Then, "happy as any little heathen under the palm trees of Africa," the untutored child lived "in the veriest freedom" as a "genuine boy" (Bondage 144-145).

Later on, for the adolescent Fred, the memory of his grandmother's self-sufficiency in a pastoral setting sustains an older vision of the world. With nothing else to call upon, and prepared by the Bible's instruction in moral autonomy and genuine

community (especially when abolitionism is an influence [Dumond 40]), Fred undergoes a conversion that pits God and nature against slavery (Bondage 231).

On returning again to plantation life, Fred witnesses a phenomenal heavenly spectacle that recalls Nat Turner's apocalyptic vision. If, for the adolescent, the night sky filled with falling stars "might be the harbinger of the coming of the Son of Man" (Bondage 245), for Turner it is this revelation: "the time was fast approaching when the first should be last and the last should be first (Aptheker 138). Yet, unlike the real Nat Turner, the adolescent Douglass turns his conversion experience into an opportunity to practice brotherhood. In this way, he combines a black folk millennialism, that is "less a threat of punishment and judgment than it is a promise of glory for [Christ's] saints," with the typology that finds the New Testament's fulfillment in contemporary history and the Second Coming of Christ (Lowance 174-181).

Although the coming of the Son of Man could mean "the father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father" (Luke 12.53), Fred chooses instead to spread the Good Word among "some twenty scholars" who are "lovers of knowledge" and who will form "a company of good friends." This communion would take place under the tutelage of a young white man, Mr. Watson, and in the home of a free colored man, James Mitchell (Bondage 254). This simple but fervent portrait of true Christian fellowship owes much to the need for the fraternity, which Douglass often claimed his childhood lacked. It depicts an attempt to establish future glory in the here and now by fulfilling the coming of Christ in a millennial kingdom (Lowance 173-174).

Eventually, the adolescent boy cannot sustain his rage because he feels "the need of God, as a father and protector." However, Christian faith must find its equivalent in real

life. So, although a white preacher named Hanson awakens the boy's religious nature, it is two black men that impart to him how to live with dignity, even though he remains a slave. Charles Johnson's good counsel brings about "that change of heart which comes 'by casting all one's care' upon God, and by having faith in Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer, Friend, and Savior of those who diligently seek him" (Bondage 231).

The boy now loves all mankind, but his disappointment increases, probably because, as Mcfeely insists, he longs for a white man to claim him (McFeely 12-13). However, a black man named Lawson takes the place Auld ignores. He reinforces what the boy already knows from his childhood, free in nature's fields; that is, that everything has its time (Bondage 231-233).

The end of childhood coincides with the end of innocence. The slave's childishness must also end then. Stowe has St. Clare express the understanding that a slave is a child because it takes no responsibility for itself (Stowe 150-151). Douglass claims, "Make a man a slave, and you rob him of moral responsibility" (Bondage 248). If "freedom of choice is the essence of all accountability," then, in order to be of any genuine use to himself and to others, the slave must proclaim his moral manhood in a community that is willing to accept his choice (Douglass, Bondage 248; Wimberly 64-77).

If we accept Mcfeely's thesis that Fred really loved Auld, then we have an explanation for the severity with which, later, the former slave spoke of his former master. For instance, when complaining about Auld's selfishness, Douglass "was reaching for a quick, simple indictment, to get himself past the fact that his feelings about his former master were complex": in order for Douglass to free himself completely from slavery, he had to break with Auld (Mcfeely 41).

Douglass had to see Auld in the complete horror of slavery and to hold him responsible for all of it because of what it (and Auld) nearly did to him. To the extent that Douglass accuses Auld of trying to break his will, he charges him with attempting “partial soul-murder” because “the whole earliest part of his life was taken from him” (Singh 312): Douglass’ own extended metaphor for Auld’s breaking his will is rape, and the writer has it take place in a landscape that pre-dates the coming of the Son of Man.

Douglass refers frequently to scenes of violation in which women are whipped. They form a “blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery,” through which the boy Fred will next pass. Consequently, his fear of brutality includes an anxiety about his own sexual identity as a black male slave (Narrative 18-20). Paradoxically, the little boy Fred understood more than he was aware of when he peeked in on his aunt’s suffering because the “gate” opens in [emphasis added]. The violation resides in the sense that slavery also enters into the child’s life, against his will. Therefore, the child joins his aunt in being violated. The resultant confusion of genders culminates at puberty. Then, the success of Auld’s sending Fred to Covey depends on the adolescent’s letting Auld’s surrogate enter him at will. Douglass terms the process “mastery” (Bondage 258).

He admits to his moral collapse by saying, “The man had obtained complete control over me; and if he commanded me do any possible thing, I should, in my then state of mind, have endeavored to comply” (Bondage 272). Fred confesses, “the dark night of slavery closed in upon me; and behold a man transformed into a brute” (Bondage 268).

The adolescent obeys Auld’s damning command to go away to have his will break. Yet Fred’s obedience hides the boy’s fervent hope that religion would save both of them, and reunite them. The text’s reliance on Christianity as a point of reference for moral

conduct proves this claim.

Nevertheless, a place in which a black slave dares to combat his white owner would be, to that black man's hearers, at that time, an extraordinary place. Similarly, for a pubescent boy who must confront the emasculating prospect of slavery for life, especially after he has experienced the unifying love of the Christian conversion experience, his future depraved existence can never happen where Christ could ever be (Gal.3.26-29). Therefore, Douglas locates Covey's farm in a place next to -- but not in -- the same realm as the campground of Christian conversion where he witnessed Auld's religious experience (Bondage 256).

In this way, Douglass makes peace between what his readers would not have yet considered barbarity in themselves and the African in him, which they would consider outlandish. Whites could not yet accept Africa as a Christian possibility. To them, Douglass would have been a fugitive member of an "ignorant, inexperienced, half-barbarized race, just escaped from the chains of slavery" (Stowe 386). A respectable Africa was in the future (Stowe 374-376; Westra 144).

In the narratives, when faced with the denial to blacks of the integrity of the African Christian religious experience, Douglass has no recourse but to operate within the limits of the public's prejudices. Examining My Bondage and My Freedom makes it apparent that Douglass carefully defends his experience as a possibility for Christianity in the black community. First, though, the writer has to redeem Africa of its designation of barbarity. He does this by situating the narrative's scenes of ultimate depravity not in the jungle, but in St. Michaels, at Covey's farm.

Covey's farm would have represented the opposite of religion. The slave breaker's

demonology opposes decency, and, furthermore, the ease of passage from a sacred site to his infernal farm represents how easily those who compromise with slavery can fall into grave error. There is no middle ground.

Covey's farm seems a waking nightmare. There, Auld's double Covey reigns as an energizing principle of disorder emerging from out of Auld's vacillation. Like the ancient god Pan, Covey bewitches his subjects into bestial states of pan-ic or pan-demonium (Schama 527). This bestiality would have recalled the chaos of pre-Christian barbarity. Dark Africa would not have seemed so wild compared to this landscape, especially because earlier, at the second narrative's beginning, Douglass already has "knowledge quite worth possessing" that black men were not always slaves; they were "forced from their homes and compelled to serve as slaves" (Bondage 179). Douglass also remembers his grandmother's high reputation for skills in nearly lost folk arts that form her successful resistance to the grand aim of slavery "to reduce man to a level with the brute" (Bondage 140-142).

Nature rescues the youth. The sight of sailing vessels mocks and torments his subjection (Bondage 268). The vision inspires him to risk all to be free. Douglass saves himself by seeing in nature the natural order of things in which nothing remains the same: "There is a better day coming" (Bondage 269).

Questioning whether there is a God (Bondage 268), young Fred also forgets for a while that he can also call on his community. He forgets now that he is not the only slave in the world.

However, when Auld refuses to intervene to protect him, the youth can successfully break with his master because previous models of black autonomy sustain the adolescent.

So, Sandy Jenkins' providential encounter with the brutalized fugitive proves the youth's suspicion that he ought to belong to someone, not by "legal" right, but by common humanity.

The "old adviser" Jenkins returns the lost ways to the unmanned boy. Professing to believe in a system Douglass claims not to know, Jenkins seems a genuine African who "inherited some of the so called magical powers, said to be possessed by African and eastern nations." Jenkins prescribes a root found mornings that, if worn in the right front pocket, will protect Fred from Covey.

Although at first scoffing at this lore, perhaps for the benefit of his Christian readers, Fred accepts it. He argues, "how did I not know but that the hand of God was in it?" (Bondage 279-282).

Douglass' ascribing a Christian interpretation to the root is consistent with the providential history that interests Stowe. In 1852, Uncle Tom's Cabin satisfied the need to act against the spoliation of the American soul, as she saw it (Hedrick 207). The writer was not only in dialogue with the public, she was also examining the depth of her own experience of her time. By giving blacks an interior life, Stowe's novel joined a purpose of the slave narrative. In addition, the author's work testified about her own white Christian life's struggle to attain its place in the nation's providential history (Crozier 6-7,15).

In looking at black life, Stowe concluded that Africa held a possibility of wholeness for blacks that America did not have (Stowe 374-376). Years before, in the Narrative, Douglass had sketched a similar conclusion. He argued that the black community contained whatever it needed to repair its soul. He agreed with Stowe that self-reform was needed before blacks could re-enter Africa by having African traditions rescue him when

he despaired of his own existence.

Douglass made a claim to which he and others gave substance. He argued that Africa's survival among American blacks made it possible for all of them to succeed. The public probably would have preferred to deal only with exceptional cases. Douglass posited that the community would heal itself when let alone by white society. In order to underscore this charge, Douglass contrasts Auld's self-serving version of Christianity to Jenkins' simple generosity.

Food is necessary for life. So too is community. In Douglass' second narrative, the lack of sufficient nourishment and of a benevolent society to bestow it guides the writer's progress towards manhood. The same food under different conditions can have a different meaning. Its significance depends on the intention that prompts its disbursement. So, for little Fred, the mother's gift of a mere "sweet cake" means he is cared for (Bondage 155); his manipulation of the street boys becomes honest payment of a tuition fee (Bondage 224); and the "lightness of Indian corn-meal," although substantially remaining the same, becomes, when eaten in the bosom of the brave Jenkins family, the meal which all of Douglass' life remains the sweetest and most vivid in his memory (Bondage 280).

This last example is an instance of a then contemporary, true, and dangerous love feast, which imitates primitive Christianity's secret communions. In 1855, it addresses the growing, resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law. It depicts the ease with which a fleeing slave finds aid and comfort. It also indicates the willingness of blacks to risk all in order to help each other.

When they help Fred, the spontaneously human, and yet, secretively so, Jenkins family reaches for community as it is universally understood to be, but legally, and in print,

their gesture displays a slave's dishonesty. Indeed, as Douglass says about the danger of explaining his suffering to Auld, any independent activity declares a slave's impudence (Bondage 275).

So, in many ways, Douglass impudently exposes the vacillations of a slaveholder who desires what a good man should never want; that is, dishonest relationships he would honor as true community. This is Douglass' strategy in writing about Auld.

In this way, the coming of the Son of Man becomes "a mere covering for the most horrid crimes" because in Southern religion, "it is the sober, thinking slave who is dangerous" (Bondage 288-302). Evidently, Southern religion needs a successfully broken black male for its communion.

Douglass debates resistance and non-resistance. Taking the pro-slavery argument that a slave must obey its master (Eph.6.5-9), he counters by demonstrating just how not to resist evil. It is, of course by doing good. In this case, Fred teaches the snake Covey to be a lamb (Bondage 288).

The neighborhood's wild man is, however, no Nat Turner. Douglass does not advocate death for whites. Moreover, Fred is not willing to be Stowe's dead Tom. Instead, he offers himself up as a living sacrifice (Rom.12.1), as the embodiment of a new possibility, a freely living American black man.

Therefore, Douglass applies the avowed principles of the slaveholders to their actual practices in order to incite revolt among the blacks. The strategy is based on the American Christian belief that a free spirit generates a free body. When the writer proclaims, "I was nothing before, I was a MAN NOW" (Bondage 286), he expands on the first narrative's declaration: "You have seen how a man was made a slave; you shall see

how a slave was made a man” (Narrative 60). We see that Douglass’ own change of heart frees him.

The narratives’ statements emphasize the effect of circumstances on an individual. It implies that, with the end of slavery, black life changes. Douglass understands that slavery creates a nullity.

The horror of this condition lies in the future political life it delimits for blacks. That is why the second narrative intends to prepare a way for the freed slave. In order to do this, Douglass clearly identifies himself, while still a slave, as a freeman. He speaks about the fight with Covey as a renewal of his determination to be “A FREEMAN” (Bondage 286): “it was a resurrection from the dark and pestiferous tomb of slavery, to the heaven of comparative freedom” (Bondage 286).

Tellingly, Douglass begins a life of comparative freedom. This is a political life, whereas before he had no civil status. Yet, and certainly in Douglass’ case, there is an opposite process of Africanization. It is located in the black community’s nearly obliterated culture of lore, skills, gestures, and rhythms, and attitudes. It honors them, calling them “magical” (Bondage 281).

The rediscovery of this magical past reveals that all men are equal. If this is so, then all abuse and neglect are brutality for its own sake and are wrong. For the citizens of a just society, law affirms it as being so. Douglass argues that slavery is only a matter of law. It is a form, he is a fact (Bondage 286). Therefore, like any true citizen, Douglass is willing to die for his country. However, because of the lapse of the rule of law, he limits his citizenship to himself where “he has a domain as broad as his own manly heart to defend, and he is really a ‘power on earth’” (Bondage 286).

Resurrected into himself as an example of African manhood, Douglass, as the Son of Man, can now speak the barbarity of universal brotherhood (Equiano 144; Gal.4.16). He also confronts American moral insufficiency, evident in the nation's dependency on notions of black inferiority. By these means, Douglass questions, "When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on earth?" (Luke 18.8). As a black man, Douglass speaks for the general good. This speech is each citizen's duty because he must be of service. Douglass takes up his cross, therefore, in order to participate in a society that would refuse him entry.

In assuming the postures and gestures of a citizen, Douglass asserts, "I was no longer a servile coward, trembling under the frown of a brother worm of the dust, but, my long-cowed spirit was roused to an attitude of manly independence" (Bondage 286). This attitude demonstrates "instrumentality" and stems from understanding that in any society "who aint a slave?" (Melville, Moby-Dick 798; Westra 153; Eph.6.5-9). It also means that for a Christian every occasion inspires a revolutionary love discoverable in the existence of each person:

For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus.

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

(Gal.3.26-28)

CHAPTER THREE: THE SLAVE NARRATIVE'S USE OF AGAPE
AND HERMAN MELVILLE'S BILLY BUDD

In this last chapter, the examination of the operation of decorum in the narratives of Douglass and the inside narrative of Melville emphasizes the intricacies of the two authors' ambivalence to the societal designations of decency, indecency, and even of obscenity as they argue for universal brotherhood (agape).

In Douglass' first two narratives and in Melville's Billy Budd, the authors express ambivalence about how decency functions in an unjust world. This ambivalence appears in their questioning, what is the correct action to take in the extreme circumstances of slavery and impressment? When Douglass warns that slavery robs a man of moral responsibility (Bondage 248) and Melville speaks about how a sailor's condition maintains his juvenility (BB 1393), they intend to make it known that, under these conditions, men are wrong to let others ever think for them. Locke warns that no one can trust another to do so (Dunn 73). Otherwise, even obedience becomes suspect because it does not arise from a personal moral consideration. Being "externally ruled" ignores the value of interiority (BB 1393). This is the indecency of Fred and Billy's condition.

However, at the end of the Narrative, when Douglass has Fred rise to address whites directly, the young black man understands that such presumption risks the public's disapproval (Narrative 96) because a slave -- an it (Bondage 366) -- acts on his own behalf and in his own interests. Moreover, in the second narrative, Douglass makes clear that his life after slavery forms a series of tableaux in which whites challenge his right to live freely among them (Bondage 349-363). In turn, he persists in being a public citizen. Douglass even appends an insulting letter to the narrative, addressed to his former master Thomas

Auld, in which he demands the old man match his former slave's civility (Bondage 412-418).

This new life testifies to Douglass' deliberate assault on the uncivil protocol by which a black man accepts that society sees no worth in him and expects him to be discrete in presenting his offensive existence to its socially designated more decorous members (Bondage 711-712).

Melville's own inside narrative culminates in the lowly sailors' blasphemous veneration of the spar from which Vere hanged Billy (BB 1433-1434). Although the sailors' superstition illustrates their childishness, it also indicates the integrity they discover in Billy's condemned life. The men appreciate that, by an unmentionable singularity, the Handsome Sailor has given his brief life meaning to himself and, so, also to them. Similarly, Melville and Douglass posit their protagonists' indecorous gestures as righteous calls to universal brotherhood.

For Douglass' and Melville's protagonists, and contrary to sense, accepting decorum means being indecent because the protocols of society demand it. These protocols see arbitrary differences among men as impenetrable barriers that separate some men from humanity and from full participation in society. Degradation and humiliation become, thereby, general practices in which everyone participates, even to the point of legitimizing obscenity. Decency is revolutionary in such a world.

In the previous chapter, we see that the primitive Christian rite of agape stands for the natural, spontaneous expression of fellowship among oppressed men. Agape proves the common humanity of the oppressed by their discovery of themselves in others. Consequently, in practice, the rite encourages an indecorous juxtaposition of humanity

without regard to race, class, or other differentiating circumstances. Agape promotes, then, the promiscuous union of men and opposes the protocols of institutions like slavery that isolate men. According to Paine, such institutions are belligerent impositions on the societies men create naturally for themselves (Rights 652-657).

This final chapter concerns itself with how both Douglass and Melville seem to accept Paine and Locke's claims that, when government lets men alone, they naturally unite for the general good (Paine, Rights 551; Locke, Two Treatises 374-375). The societies men create, then, accord with nature. For that reason, Paine designates America as the only place in the world where universal reform takes place: "it is the best place in the world" (Rights 548).

Yet, for Douglass, the extreme misery of his early life establishes that slavery does not accord with nature. The proof for how his life should be is the brief idyll spent with his grandmother. Then the black boy's life was a happy one because it was in harmony with nature and innocent of the knowledge of slavery (Bondage 140-142). In Billy Budd, the sailor's life on the Rights of Man before the Royal Navy captures him stands for the same thing. Unfortunately, black Fred and white Billy are deliberately deprived of their happy lives by belligerent societies.

Nevertheless, the narratives' use of agape joins Fred and Billy to all men. The rite does so by accepting their worth as men, while not avoiding their condition. Agape accommodates their place in society because the rite addresses the lives men actually experience, despite antagonistic institutions' protocols. That is to say, lives lived individually and, thereby, lived internally. For this reason, Douglass still possesses an un-appropriated self that can confess how he survives slavery. Similarly, because Billy

retains a part of himself that the Royal Navy has not seized upon, Melville tells us what really happened to Billy Budd, foretopman. Whereas the various accounts relate the events of the protagonists' lives, they also inform us about the men's personal expression of those beleaguered lives, which do not accord generally with decorum. Indeed, under the circumstances, they are edifying acts of resistance to the protocols that designate decorum.

That is why, in the narratives, after the fight with Covey, Douglass challenges his readers to ask themselves what they would do in the same circumstance (Narrative 65). For the same reason, in Billy Budd, Melville acknowledges that Billy participates in the typical vices of a restricted seaman's life. He adds, though, that Billy remains very much like Adam before the Fall (BB 1362). In these ways, the authors intend that we postpone judgment of their protagonists and accept them as worthy and imperfect men.

Because Christian agape concerns itself with self-sacrifice for the general good (1Cor.11.18-33), it also involves the human body exhibited in extremis. It could not be otherwise. In an imperfect world, everyone is shaped by failure and compromise with evil. Yet, the best life remains one that indicates a willingness to improve itself. For example, in Douglass' narratives and in Billy Budd, the abuse the men suffer is increased by the humiliation of their being aware that the logic for it is that their abject lives justify their subjugation. This judgment contradicts nature (Gal. 3. 26-28). Furthermore, these humiliations extend to all society because, by them, all men fail in their duty to each other. Melville questions, after all, "Who aint a slave?" (Moby-Dick 798). Therefore, agape appears to us in the frailty of human life.

The rite proposes that the life in the body transcends its mortal shelter and is transferable to those who enter into communion with it: its corporeality indicates its

spirituality. Moreover, by agape, the value of each life matters to the benefit of the whole community. For this reason, Cain's question whether he is his brother's keeper receives its answer in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Billy's finding a home onboard the Rights of Man and Fred's finding shelter with Sandy Jenkins suggest this communion. It is the memory of this communion that sustains Fred and Billy later on, in its absence, when they are deprived of decency by custom and law.

The point is the one Melville cites to protest the application of laws that demand flogging only to the common sailor: laws should be "universal" in their practice. This law is "coeval with mankind, dictated by God himself, superior in obligation to any other, and no human laws are of any validity if contrary to this." It is the law of nature by which "every man should be rendered his due" (White-Jacket 499).

By this statement, Melville means that law should be a testament to communion and not to division. It is also what Douglass means by "the law of compensation" (Bondage 169) because the reciprocal aspect of human relationships supercedes arbitrarily invented laws that propose to bypass communion, although men's lives are with each and for each other.

Agape's communion proposes that the exhibition of the body in extremis serve as a model to others. It refers to Christ's self-sacrifice. Agape's communion entails resistance to the abuses of authority because it appreciates that the life in the offended body is good. This perception agrees with nature which is "good" (Gen.1). Consequently, because the application of societal protocols -- otherwise understood to be the application of law -- to that body patterns the life it seeks to control, therefore, "the end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man" (Rights 537). In this

way, laws prove the quality of government by establishing whether or not they comply with the natural order of things by “encouraging the combining of a moral and political happiness and national prosperity (Rights 537).

Douglass’ public life serves as a model for others. In the same way that Harriet Jacobs admonishes, “Let every colored man and woman do this [stand up for his or her rights], and eventually we shall cease to be trampled under foot by our oppressors” (Jacobs 492), Douglass’ lack of decorum condemns the restrictions whites impose on his life at the North as a free man. This life becomes a lifelong sacrifice; a Calvary experienced to benefit those blacks who look for someone to show them how to survive oppression (Bondage 309).

This is the testament with which Douglass confronts Thomas Auld in “Letter to His Old Master” (Bondage 412-418). In it, like Billy to Vere, by means of the sailor’s final ejaculation, “God bless Captain Vere!” (BB 1426), Douglass offers Auld one more chance to join him in community. However, just as Billy’s blessing might merely follow convention, and fails to deter Vere from not choosing the heart as a guide (BB 1415), the black man’s attempt at reconciliation must also give way to inhibiting protocols of mastery. Melville summarizes why this must take place: “The symmetry of form attainable in pure fiction cannot so readily be achieved in a narration essentially having less to do with fable than with fact” (BB 1431). Ultimately, it is Douglass who must make some sort of peace with the failings of his persecutor (McFeely 294).

Douglass needed to demonstrate his moral maturity. Similarly, in its remarkable stillness, Billy’s mysterious singularity at his death demonstrates this maturity. For once, forsaking the barbarity evident in the lack of restraint typical of his kind (BB 1361-1362,

1379-1380), Baby Budd exercises self-control. Instead of barbarity, the Handsome Sailor contradicts the dictates of nature by which a hanged man lets go of all that his interior contains and soils himself. By his stillness, Billy retains his inviolate masculine self. This interpretation of the sailor's death is consistent with the "will power" to which the surgeon alludes (BB 1428).

Nevertheless, in an unjust world, this death's prudent singularity is unmentionable, although it is discreet. Therefore, Melville can only allude to what, if mentioned, would be obscene. Instead, in silence, and by gesture alone, in the extreme circumstance of the execution, Billy's discretion enacts an unprecedented, indecorous communion with his fellow man. His singularity inspires agape.

The common seamen who witness the sailor's self-mastery react inarticulately, being unable to enunciate their complaint; a rising wave of sound sweeps through their ranks, but to no avail. It is only afterward that, among them, the legend of Billy's unjust death takes shape (BB 1429-1431).

Melville's inside narrative ends with the sailors' version of what took place. The author quickly dismisses the official account of Billy's time in the Royal Navy. The narrative receives its resolution, thereby, among the lowly.

When St. Paul advocates agape, he does not ignore social differences among men (Gal. 3.26-28). Instead, he makes clear that agape operates across those differences. Therefore, the categories the Apostle lists compose a community in which agape unites all men. By means of it, they act for the common good, but without sacrificing each man's individual worth. So, neither a man's virtues nor his failings gain him entry into the feast. Instead, agape opens its doors to mankind's unfortunate common condition. It is the same

one Locke means when he speaks of a life distorted by superstition and irrational teachings that entails a life-long struggle to correct it (Dunn 73).

According to Locke, the following protocol should form the basis of the ideal community. He posits, “We must consider what state all men are naturally in, and that is, a State of perfect Freedom to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Power as they see fit.” He writes that, in this state of equality, all power is reciprocal because “creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature” should be equal to each other. In support of his claim, Locke cites Richard Hooker’s belief that men’s inherent equality is the basis of the obligation to mutual love among men (Two Treatises 309-310). Apparently, Locke posits an ideal community.

In discussing Locke, Raymond Polin stresses the importance of the integrity of the individual to the Englishman Locke. Yet, Polin argues that Locke remains ambiguous about slavery, while affirming the inalienable rights of the individual. Nevertheless, according to the laws of nature, slavery is incompatible with human existence (Polin 277). Furthermore, because as a slave, a person has no property, he has no property in himself. Therefore, he has no citizenship in a community. Even though present in society, a slave cannot call upon any member of it for help. It is “as if he were degraded from the common state of rational creatures” (Polin 278).

Is such a person still a man? Polin concludes, no man can ever fully enter into slavery (Polin 278). An individual would have to lose any knowledge of his innate worth before he could accept slavery. John Dunn’s summary of Locke’s thought indicates that no man can ever trust another to think or judge for him (Dunn 73). If it were possible to do so, then slavery would be justifiable.

Yet, like Saint Paul, Locke places even the slave in community. The Englishman leaves a category for the slave in which the captive is a criminal whose hostility earns him his fate. Locke justifies black chattel slavery by this means, claiming that blacks are really captives in just wars. Nevertheless, Locke still leaves a slave the recourse of death obtained by opposing the will of his captor (Two Treatises 324-325).

Here is evidence of how far Locke goes in defense of the individual's right to follow his will in all things. Locke means that the slave's fatal gesture of self-assertion underscores the pointlessness of speculating on his humanity. Yet, the slave's forfeit of his life never corrects his condition. Instead, the slave acts out the full indecency of it because his life is not his to take (Two Treatises 324-325). Nevertheless, even in error, the slave proves he is a man.

Melville's Billy Budd concerns itself with how the impressment of a Handsome Sailor raises speculation on his manhood's worth. By doing so, Melville examines how the spontaneous expression of brotherhood among men opposes monarchical protocols of mastery that restrict their lives. In this way, Melville takes on Paine's quarrel with Edmund Burke (Melville BB 1358; Paine, Rights 542-543). Eric Foner writes that "the Paine-Burke debate was the classic confrontation between tradition and innovation, hierarchy and equality, order and revolution" (Foner 15).

In Rights of Man, Paine's ideal government is representative of all the people. They combine their individual voices to ascertain what best serves the general good and then act on it (Rights 566). This accumulation of knowledge gathered from freely enacted lives places government in a constant state of maturity (Rights 568), making it suitable to the changing demands of the time (Rights 564).

In representative governments, each generation receives its appropriate attention. Whereas in monarchies, although man can have no property in man, kings inherit the people like flocks of sheep (Rights 438, 559). These monarchies establish themselves on the societies men create naturally to accommodate their needs. They refer only to themselves in the effort to conserve the violent means by which they gained power. Kings leave the people only the two options of slavery or death because they steal the people's labor, which is all the citizens really have (Rights 557).

Locke's claim is that every man has property in himself and that a man's work forms part of his property (Two Treatises 328-329). Paine goes further when he argues that governments owe their citizens the interest on the taxes they pay.

Paine thought that because government should be for the good of all the people, it must set up systems of social welfare. These systems would reward the taxpayer for a lifetime of payment with the legal interest he deserves (Rights 629). Furthermore, war should be abolished because it only profits governments and not the people. Its sole purpose is to interfere in the free commerce of nations by acts of theft (Rights 598-603).

Similarly, just as no nation can flourish alone in commerce, "no man is capable, without the aid of society, of supplying his own wants; and those wants, acting upon every individual, impel the whole of them into society, as naturally as gravitation acts to a center" (Rights 551). Free commerce in all things creates societies in which all laws accord with nature because, when uncorrupted by the purposes of government, man is naturally the friend of man (Rights 595). In a world that functions according to man's true nature, each individual appears to be a new Adam, heralding a new age (Rights 652). There is no shame then in the full exercise of his existence. Agape symbolizes this free exercise of existence.

However, in Melville's and Douglass' narratives, the United States at the middle of the nineteenth-century is a shameful place because men do not fully exercise their lives. Although in 1789, Paine claimed that the Rights of Man guaranteed each citizen the right of security, the state of the nation, evident in the extending of slavery's practice of mastery even to its white citizens, attests to the prevalence of rowdyism. It demonstrates how slavery's dominant social codes cut man off from his deeper and darker feelings in the hegemony of the commercial spirit (Tolchin 104). For instance, Melville noted that discord infected families when fathers and sons fought over the abolition of slavery, especially when it was seen as the struggle between sordid interests and humanity (Redburn 170). In an article, Douglass states that the nation is not yet fully civilized (Contradictions 363-368). He writes that, because the nation is still in its infancy, its citizens cannot yet control the impulse to assert themselves at all costs. America does not accept the rule of law.

So, despite the new nation's technological successes, it is a sham civilization because "everywhere else, civilization was the result of an internal process, slow in its progress, taking deep roots, modifying, shaping and governing life in all its ramifications." In the United States, "the American people have yet attained only the outside, the mere surface of civilization and refinement." The argument is that, as long as chattel slavery exists, any American claims to self-mastery remain merely willful attestations to self-indulgence at the expense of others.

The prevalence of rowdyism implicates its practitioners in the consequences of their self-neglect. Here, mastery reflects back on the person inflicting harm and on that person's victim as one and the same existence. Mastery should mean self-mastery and not

mastery of others. Locke warns, “He that has not a mastery over his inclinations, he that knows not how to resist the importunity of present pleasure or pain, for the sake of what reason tells him is fit to be done, wants the true principle of virtue and industry; and is in danger of never being good for any thing” (Education 32).

In Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Stowe’s concern with life in all its aspects also focuses her attention on the inevitable consequences of slavery. She counsels that America should “read the signs of the times.” Otherwise, “injustice and cruelty shall bring on nations the wrath of almighty God!” However, Stowe does offer some hope to a wayward nation. She informs it that a day of grace is yet held to it; but reform is first necessary. The nation cannot save itself by its citizens “making a common capital of sin.” Its people must repent, by seeking justice and mercy (Stowe 388).

Stowe warns that a sure eternal retribution threatens like the law by which a millstone sinks into the ocean. The writer seems to refer to Matthew 18. In that text, the stone is tied to the sinner who scandalizes a child. In Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address (1865), the President refers to the same text, “Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come, but woe to that man by whom the offences cometh! (Matt.18.7).

Lincoln cites the verse that follows the one Stowe uses. Like Stowe, he preaches against bad example. The text’s following verses teach that it were better for a person to cut off an arm than to let it lead him to sin and damnation. Like Stowe, then, Lincoln urges reform. At the war’s approaching end, the President reminds the nation, as he did at Gettysburg, that a nation is not what it says it is, but, rather, what it enacts and shows to the world. The national shame is, therefore, that the people have not fulfilled their promise to

create a new nation under God (Lincoln 536).

Lincoln understands, though, that in the crucial closing days of the Civil War, the nation must not fall back on its recourse to rowdyism that, in a way, helped cause the conflict. Previously, peculiar and powerful interests had set out to undermine the nation's peace by negotiating in bad faith. They had been willing to destroy the country rather than abide by law or government by "reason and common interest" (Paine, Rights 265). Instead, above all, these peculiar interests favored the theft of labor that is slavery.

It is also important to understand Lincoln's reference to Genesis 3.19 when he says, that it may seem strange to ask God's help in wringing bread from the sweat of other men's faces. The President knows that Adam was punished and made to labor all his days. Lincoln means that, because of Adam, mankind must exist in error and the slave owners' attempt to escape their fate is a sin. They sin by forcing blacks to work for them and in daring to continue to call themselves Christians as they do so.

This scandalous presumption involves even those who are slavery's victims because not only do the slaves have their labor stolen from them, they are also forced into a demonstration of scandalous depravity that corrupts the observer. For Lincoln, the only solution is to accept the degraded condition in which the nation finds itself and to strive all together as brothers-in-error to correct the failing.

Lincoln proposes a new, humble civility in a time of crisis by saying that God "gives to both the North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came." Yet, although the consequences of God's justice are dire, they do not constitute a departure from the attributes the faithful ascribe to him (Lincoln 686-687).

Therefore, in this brotherhood of shame, and by fulfilling communal duties,

citizens “may achieve and cherish a just, and lasting peace.” For Lincoln, agape’s comfort does not neglect even an indecent nation. Instead, he sees in fellowship the opportunity to perpetuate the resolve he sought earlier at Gettysburg. There it was “fitting and proper” to address the state of the nation when faced with the Civil War’s disgraceful cost in human lives because he did so in order to propose national reform (Lincoln 536).

Decades before, Paine had prophesied a different future for the nation. He wrote, “fraud, hypocrisy, and imposition of government, are now beginning to be too well understood to promise them any long career” (Rights 264). In the American Revolution, Paine saw “a renovation of the natural order of things, a system of principles as universal as truth and the existence of man, and combining moral with political happiness and national prosperity” (Rights 537). However, at Gettysburg, Lincoln said that it was fitting and proper to expose the nation’s disgrace in order to call for a national rededication to the principles for which the dead had given the last full measure of devotion.

All whites and blacks took part in the national error. All would have to correct themselves because even the slaves who had had their labor stolen from them were lost to themselves by that theft and put to use to use in opposing God’s mandate (Paine, Rights 642; Locke, Two Treatises 328-329). This is the indecency against which Paine warns when he predicts a glorious future for the United States (Rights 539).

Nevertheless, toward the end of the nineteenth-century, Douglass lamented that Lincoln’s call for reform had not been fully heeded. The black leader pointed to the Supreme Court’s ruling that the Civil Rights Law of 1875 was unconstitutional. He protested, “The strength and activities of the malign elements of the country against equal rights and equality before the law seem to increase in proportion to the increasing distance

between that time and the time of the war.” Douglass concluded that future historians would find that in 1883 the nation took the side of prejudice, proscription, and persecution (Life 966). The nation had once again reinstated its traditional protocols by which the black man’s natural dignity is challenged by conservative forces.

However, as much as these forces could not see a man in a black, they could not see a man in themselves. They settled for law, whereas, man is all about nature. Vere’s protests against mercy for Billy follow that logic (BB 1415). Gore’s justification of the murder of Demby does so (Narrative 30-31). The Fugitive Slave Law’s refusal to see a man in a slave also does so. By these protocols, the slave and the sailor conform to the deceit legally imposed on him to enter even marginally into community with such forces.

Previously, for the slave, a principal humiliation had been the loss of the right to shape his moral life. By his condition, he was indecent. Eric Sundquist indicates the degree to which a slave would employ masquerade to combat the daily pain and indecency of slavery. The slave would enact the lie of his inferiority because society would not grant him a “persona capable of defining its own origins and station in the world” (Sundquist 86).

Nevertheless, the slave’s masquerade kept his private self intact because the show he presented had to be produced on demand and varied according to circumstances. He maintained, therefore, his agency (Blassingame 321-322). In general, by means of the ingenuity of their masquerades, the slaves undermined every protocol required of them.

Douglass’ description of the Christmas revels that the masters allowed the slaves shows him detailing the blacks’ subterfuge in even the most degraded behavior. Of course, the blacks’ antics and excesses at that time contradict the spirit of the season, but they also

direct the whites' attention to the hostile human energy that surrounds them. Consequently, the whites attempt to exhaust every bit of intelligence that generates it. The slaves exhibit their shame, though, to remind the masters who their property really is and what it could become. Ultimately, the blacks humiliate the whites by having them constantly speculate on the humanity slavery denies them and that the whites attempt to ignore (Blassingame 284-322; Bondage 288-292).

Similarly, in the Royal Navy, mutiny is the great fear. Yet, if the service removed the reasons for rebellion, it could count on the sailors' patriotism. Melville tells us that a man's love for his country is incompatible with patriotism only when government considers the people to be a mob, so degraded that it will accept injustice for the sake of mastery (BB 1416). Consequently, Vere can easily discredit the heart because, for him, government is conquest and mastery. Its laws do not derive from the free expression of a language "passing from heart to heart" (BB 1415; Rights 570).

Vere would probably judge this language to be womanly (BB1415). He expresses an anxiety about manhood, although he disguises it because mastery's protocol does not dare consider feeling. Sympathy would destroy mastery. Vere decrees that the feminine in man must be ruled out. This argument about the feminine in man first appears in Melville's description of Billy.

Vere's worry first appears in Melville's consignment of feminine qualities to Billy (BB 1359-1363). The narrative's second chapter debates the Handsome Sailor's cynosure in terms of his good looks, "all but feminine in purity of natural complexion." The author ends his analysis by stating that he does not write a romance. Nevertheless, his hero also has a heroine in him, and a fatal flaw.

Yet, Melville means to narrate what takes place when a mere individual happens into a myth. The author sides with the individual because Melville's intent is to write a narrative about the man, not what is said about him. Nevertheless, the narrative's conflict defines itself by the Handsome Sailor's first unlikely exemplar, the black pagod.

This choice of exemplar serves the purpose of questioning, what is a white man's worth when a black personifies a legend of manhood? Because there is no reasonable argument against a fact, the form must change. Ultimately, the problem inherent in glorifying the masculinity of a man society deprives of manhood manifests itself in the discovery of femininity in all those men who do not match the society's model of the male. Correspondingly, Melville feminizes Anglo-Saxon Billy.

By this feminization, another class of men is created in whom no natural resistance is evident. It removes those men from a community where the right to action designates citizenship. Such men are left with only femininity's attribute of forbearance. It is considered indecent in a man.

In Billy Budd and Douglass' narratives, the American masculine ideal has recourse to the ideal of the Founding Fathers. That is why Douglass goes back to their struggle to justify his ordeal. When he concludes that not to resist slavery would signify a want of manhood, Douglass intends to use the American revolutionaries as models of the masculine impulse to confound resistance with self-assertion (Bondage 286). However, when Melville refers to a black man for the same reason, he reinterprets manhood as forbearance. For instance, the author's remarkable black pagod in Billy Budd and his infuriating black slave in White-Jacket both take no action. Their strength is in their masculine autonomy, which resembles, at the same time, feminine forbearance.

Similarly, in the second narrative, when Douglass battles with Covey, the most bound slaves do not join him. They also do not help Covey. Instead, their “open rebellion” defines the forbearance the adolescent Douglass will have to learn as a strategy in black life (Bondage 285). Their example is instruction in how not to resist evil. This is the feminine attribute that Vere disparages. It appears in Billy’s easy-going nature.

Nevertheless, this feminine attribute permits male/male rape to be a factor in men’s lives. The condition of women underlies Melville and Douglass’ anxiety about submission to mastery. The condition of black slave women serves to define that condition in extremis. Harriet Jacobs’ narrative illustrates that condition.

Douglass’ My Bondage and My Freedom resembles Jacobs’ Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl because both works involve their readers in particularized accounts of the indecency of American black chattel slavery. In both cases, the forbearance the two slaves practice garners the disapproval of the public they undertake to influence. Jacobs’ and Douglass’ accounts of their lives join in the abolitionist practice of exhibiting a black’s body as evidence of slavery’s horrors. Interestingly, for a good deal of her narration, Jacobs’ own body remains more than hidden; indeed, it is in fact buried alive

Nevertheless, by the unseemly confession of her sexual history, Jacobs insists on her readers’ referring to their own lives, complete with their denial of any knowledge of what occurs sexually in slavery. Specifically, Jacobs details the progress of a black woman from her being the victim of sexual manipulation onward to her successful fulfillment of the conviction that her children belong to their mother alone, not from law and custom but by nature.

By exposing the totality of their condition to that public, Douglass and Jacobs

expose their most interior selves. Douglass writes, “it is the sober, thinking slave who is dangerous, and needs the vigilance of his master, to keep him a slave” (*Bondage* 292). The writers’ narratives are open invitations to speculate on the potential of black agency.

Jacobs charges that American chattel slavery’s denial of subjectivity to black women attempts to make rape the defining factor in their lives. Likewise, Douglass’ rebellion is equivalent to the display of the black phallus itself, symbolized in the episode in which Jenkins’ root returns Fred’s African manhood to him. In this way, the display of the reviled, prominent black male exterior is analogous to the hidden, un-appropriated, black female interior.

Jacobs’ refusal to give Dr. Flint access to her body comes to mean the same thing as Douglass’ display of his independence because the woman will not let the devil in her. She announces, “I had resolved that I would be virtuous, though I was a slave” (Jacobs 386-387). However, this resolve obtains an ambivalent cynosure for her. Jacobs regrets that she must choose to become pregnant by another man rather than give her chastity to Dr. Flint. She begs her reader to accept that a black woman’s condition places her outside the conventional protections of common decency and law (Jacobs 384). Yet, Jacobs leaves much unsaid by depending on her “dear reader” to supply the missing details that underpin the action. Cleverly, Jacobs requires us to refer to our own experiences.

Eventually while still in the South, Jacobs retreats to a hiding place. There, she presents a scenario in which, by the black woman’s forbearance, her body is the sole object of our attention (Jacobs 437-440). Her previously menaced and self-betrayed, yet active, existence suffers a total withdrawal from pleasurable sensation. We now witness the consequences of Jacob’s adopting sexual restraint. For the reader, this focus on her

abstinence becomes even more sexually charged although Jacobs enacts codes that the reader would likely claim to support. Yet, at the same time, Jacobs makes us prefer her previous improper condition. In this way, Jacobs creates a heroine that insists on our defending her sin.

The recitation of Jacobs' suffering lets us speculate on her tortured flesh. We see in its torment the extent of her sexual denial in ways no one should imagine. We wonder whether it would be easier for her to surrender to Dr. Flint, and then submit to his perversions. Of course, the subject of a woman's true sexual nature is unmentionable in polite society (McFeely 66).

In the case of young Fred, the conjunction of slavery and adolescence also produces a sexually charged account. In My Bondage and My Freedom, Douglass expands on the implications of his presenting himself as a decorous spokesman for his people before a white audience. Whereas in the first narrative, the boy's struggle with Covey seems a refusal to suffer racist abuse, in the second narrative, the fight reveals a stronger reaction to the slave breaker's attempts at mastery (Bondage 258). Douglass writes that when he was committed without reserve to forbear Covey's control, he was to sound profounder depths of slavery (Bondage 258-259).

Perhaps the harsher political climate of the 1850's needed stronger language? Perhaps a more confident public figure dared to say what the neophyte could not utter? Certainly, the second narrative's depiction of life at the North results from Douglass' direct experience of a public he knew to be deeply racist (Bondage 372-375).

The fact is that whites in the North knew a good deal about what was done to Southern blacks because, in many ways, they enacted similar abuses. Anti-black laws were

common throughout the nation. For example, “within a one roughly twenty-four hour period Massachusetts had both proscribed the slave trade and restricted free blacks.”

Malcomsen concludes that a person could be both antislavery and anti-black (Malcomsen 187-188).

Therefore, Douglass’ leonine, princely presence mocked the public’s hypocrisy. Just as Jacobs’ suppressed history was evident in her fatherless children, Douglass’ triumphant manhood indicated that he had survived slavery’s symbolic castration. Like Jacobs, Douglass rubs the public’s nose in the failure of its anti-black policy of rape-like humiliation, if not of rape itself.

What is significant is how, at the hearing or reading of these accounts of abuse, the public must supply the sexual interpretation of the scenes. If the reader cannot refer to his own experiences, the enormity of the insult escapes him. Like Jacobs, the author Douglass requires his public to accept his interpretation of the events by its knowledgeable participation in the recreation of vice.

McFeely reminds us that in the nineteenth-century the shared emotional lives of men could be freely spoken of without having homosexuality attributed to them, even when today homosexuality would be clearly evident. Nevertheless, to be broken, to be ridden, and especially to mention that the few clothes on your muscled, youthful body were ripped from you so that you could be mercilessly beaten does take on the language of sexual outrage that both Jacobs and Douglass employ when speaking of a slave woman’s condition (Jacobs 360-363; Douglass, Narrative 18-20).

What would be the story if the black man Douglass did not succeed in repulsing Covey’s attack on his manhood? In the chapter, "The Fugitive Slave Law," Jacobs adds a

curious episode to her Incidents about just such a case. She relies on our participation to make clear the meaning of the story of the escaped slave Luke (Jacobs 504-505).

It seems that the poor man had to endure “freaks of despotism” at the hands of his depraved and probably syphilitic master: “Some of these freaks were of a nature too filthy to be repeated.” Jacobs tells us that, in escaping, she left poor Luke “still chained to the bedside of this cruel and disgusting wretch.” An aspect of the master’s abuse was that the slave had to go about without pants, in order to facilitate the white man’s beating him on his back. However, if Jacobs’ readers were to bring their knowledgeable attention to bear on this detail, they would not easily accept Jacobs’ interpretation of this strange demand. Here, Jacobs seems to address her male readers as she compares Luke’s predicament to a black woman’s lot in slavery.

Jacobs’ story depends on this understanding because, unlike Douglass’ successful, manly protests against slavery’s impositions, the woman’s personal history records what she continues to forbear. Whereas, for Douglass, indecency concerns the possible consequences of the refusal to be less than publicly assertive, for Jacobs, the difficulty is the shame she contracts by her forbearance.

However, Jacobs also demands that this accepting of shame protests her condition and that others should realize that she does so. For Jacobs, societal progress begins when others agree that her particular shame is really general. For instance, when Jacobs’ brother undertakes to open an anti-slavery reading room in Rochester, the project fails because “the feeling was not general enough to support such an establishment.” Yet, later when her daughter enters school, the discovery that the child’s mother is a fugitive slave results in the girl’s receiving all the help she needs (Jacobs 502). In these ways, a standard is set by

which the truly good Christians become criminals in aiding a black woman.

Consequently, the law means nothing decent. For example, the fugitive Luke ends his story by telling Jacobs how he tricked the Southerners after his master's death. The man hid money in the corpse's pants pocket. The slave counted on the men's disgust at his near-nakedness. So, when Luke asked for the pants, they gave it to him. Luke's justification for his deceit recalls Douglass' and Jacobs' explanations for putting aside decorum. Jacobs argues, in particular, that Luke deserves the money for the wages due him (Jacobs 505-506).

This assessment refers to just how the nation can no longer regard traditional morality as being valid to its own condition. This is the case when Jacobs must put aside her principles and let herself be purchased out of bondage by her friends. They express, thereby, the power of agape. Jacobs write about how the willingness of her friends fully and reciprocally to enter into the indecency of slavery shows that they are "practical believers in the Christian doctrine of human brotherhood" (Jacobs 511-513).

In this episode and in Douglass' experience at Covey's farm, the authors confront their white readers' ambivalence to black suffering. These narratives succeed because the public is quite able to provide the suppressed information. The black writer and the public are, thereby, reciprocally ambivalent because what is said depends on what is understood.

Yet, these reciprocations function differently in the two narratives when the slave and master speak. Then, the black's words fall on deaf ears. They have to do so because the understanding is that the slave is a cipher. Although his speech may offer or support information, the slave can never speak acceptably for himself (Narrative 27). The slave's alleged lack of interiority serves the master's purpose because he feels that has to instruct

his mindless property in how to exist

However, slavery is only an idea. It depends on a person's accepting it as a fact. In the second narrative, Douglass offers interesting evidence of slavery's invalidity; he points to Covey's desire to elevate himself by placing someone under him. When the slave breaker instructs the slaves in what happened in the fight, he believes himself capable of correcting what they truly saw. He eliminates causes and considers only results: the boy has not hurt him. Therefore, the white man claims victory. However, the black abolitionist explains that his intention was never to harm Covey. He meant only to prevent the slave breaker from injuring him. The battle engaged only the men's wills. A slave's opposition to mastery suffices to prove the case against his condition.

Likewise, Douglass' stated willingness to die before he allowed another man to whip him again declares him to be a fit and worthy American citizen (Bondage 286). His resistance recalls Locke's claim that no Englishman would ever ask to be a slave (Two Treatises 175).

Locke intends to share community with anyone who responds with the same "no" to slavery. He feels that such a response establishes common cause against anyone who attempts to have absolute power over another human being (Two Treatises 320). This is the fellowship Douglass seeks when he rises to tell a white audience about his life.

Douglass' discovery of this impulse in himself and in the other blacks present makes clear that no black is naturally a slave, just as no American would choose to belong to anyone but himself. Douglass' revolutionary gesture is his finding declarable property in himself (Bondage 286).

This logic reappears in the reactionary 1880's in Billy Budd when the sailor strikes

Red Whiskers and the liar Claggart. However, in Melville's last work, Billy's willingness at first to accommodate indecent impositions gives rise to speculations on his worth as a man and as the Handsome Sailor, manhood's exemplar: Billy must make a gesture of some kind that confirms his true status in the world at sea.

When Melville first sings the praises of the phenomenal Handsome Sailor, the writer intends to remind the reader that there are men who embody the principles the new revolutionary nations claim to worship. In this way, Melville equates universal manliness with the unadulterated virtues evident in an uncompromised black man. The writer's purpose is to underscore that the human community excludes no one from excellence. Melville's African wonder appears with all of his savage, black attributes intact and undiminished. This ideal of manly resistance should appear in Billy as a Handsome Sailor.

Yet, Billy does at first comply with his captors just like any other sailor. Melville qualifies the sailor's submission to the Royal Navy's mastery by attributing it to a youthful thirst for adventure (BB 1359-1361). He also attributes it to common sense because in extreme and hopeless situations discretion is wisdom. Similarly, when captured at St. Michaels, Douglass advises that there is not much use in fighting if there is little chance of success (Bondage 318).

In any case, Billy would probably know something about impressment. Furthermore, as another Caspar Hauser, the sailor would know about abuse and neglect. As another Fabian, he would have learned that Cain's city does not follow the more civil ways of rural life. Moreover, Billy would know, above all, that he is fundamentally a man. What he would not know are the protocols of mastery codified in the Royal Navy, and disguised as decorum. That code, by practices like flogging, undertakes to forsake humanity for the

interests of government.

Therefore, Billy's quiet submission signals to the Bellipotent's officers that he might have accepted that his status as a Handsome Sailor does not supersede their protocols. The officers are also aware that such a submission is contrary to nature. So, they all await a proof of the sailor's excellence by some act of protest. Therefore, they survey him and speculate on him.

In Douglass' narratives, Fred must also act to confirm his manhood. In comparing his conversion with Auld's and Covey's own, Douglass finds that no good result follows the slave owners' professions of religion: Fred knows that true faith impels a Christian to edifying action. St. Paul means this reciprocity when he writes that his "speech and preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1Cor.2.4).

In the second narrative, the Word is made vivid by love when Douglass accepts his ministry. At first, the young man's desire for individual freedom intensified because of the favorable circumstances at Freeland's farm, but the "determination to act, as well as to think and speak" opens his heart to his brother slaves. Douglass' affection for them teaches him the duty of sharing his intentions with his community. Because he is thoroughly enlightened, young Douglass now speaks the gospel of the inborn right to freedom (Bondage 304-307).

The men call upon Douglass to show them how personal emancipation is done. Evidently, the conversion to their proper and manly cause reveals "the huge thought" of escape from bondage that will disturb their peace in slavery (Bondage 306-308). Douglass admits that, before his arrival, "perhaps, not one of them, left to himself, would have

dreamed of escape as a possible thing” (Bondage 309).

The conjunction of intellect and heart enables the young men to blossom into their complete selves. Their genial tempers and ardent friendships supply the orphaned Fred with the reciprocal, manly company of his own people for the first time in his life. These good-looking friends become confidants who together emanate a potential that previously slumbered, being too easily satisfied with the deceptive good fortune of a kind master. Douglass accepts the blame for destroying the quiet of the neighborhood. He attests to being in every way “the man” (Bondage 309). Young Fred extends his willingness to die for himself to include his new friends and, thereby, proposes a living community of black manhood by his sacrifice.

Paine promulgated that in 1791, the American reformation established a unique position for itself in the political world that revealed it to be the best place in the natural world (Rights 548). There, “the human faculties act with boldness, and acquire . . . gigantic manliness” (Rights 533-534). However, in the nineteenth-century, daily spectacles designated the nature of the government. In Douglass’ narratives, when Fred and his friends fail in their attempt to escape to freedom, their captors parade them along the road, making them suffer “every possible insult from the crowds of idle, vulgar people, who clustered around” (Bondage 319). The return of the prisoners along a gauntlet of reciprocally exchanged glances expresses the social discord of slavery.

Paine cautions, however, that a mob’s offensive behavior should lead to reflection rather than to reproach because these depraved people form “a vast mass of mankind . . . degradefully thrown into the background of the human picture” (Rights 454-455).

Similarly, in the capture and humiliation of the blacks, the mob fails to perceive the

defeat of the dream all Americans cherish which is to claim a future for oneself by the attempt at progress (Bondage 305). Instead, no one sympathizes with the innocence of the blacks' crime (Bondage 320). Instead, Mrs. Freeland accuses Fred of spoiling her slaves, calling him a "long legged yellow devil" (Bondage 319).

The population of St. Michaels falls below the standard Paine saw raised by the American Revolution. The natural in man receives no spontaneous homage there. When the runaway Fred responds to Mrs. Freeland by looking her squarely in the eye, she shrieks in fright and slams the door. The manhood of the runaway terrifies her (Bondage 319).

Fortunately, the young black men evade the dreaded varieties of punishment for attempting to escape from slavery. A good deal of the credit for the men's salvation belongs to them alone. When they are caught, they pretend not to know why they are arrested ("Where is the evidence against us? We were quietly at work" [Bondage 321]). The word is, "Own nothing!" (Bondage 320).

"Own nothing" may also mean "own nothing but your self" because, ultimately, it is the men's relationships with each other that save them. Ironically, like Mrs. Freeland, the men's owners are not able to act against the blacks because of their direct experience of them (Bondage 319, 321). Certainly, the effect on these witnesses to the integrity of the men's love for each other acts favorably on the victims' behalf.

Douglass makes clear that "there was nothing said by any of our company, which could, in any manner, prejudice our case." He adds, "and there was hope, yet, that we should be able to return to our homes" (Bondage 321). The hope is fulfilled when Messrs. Hamilton and Freeland release their slaves from prison (Bondage 323).

Douglass also deserves credit for the men's salvation. He has taught his scholars to

respect themselves as men. His instruction enables them to realize the profit of their self-investment (BB 1359) by a public demonstration of their “wicked” will (Bondage 308) because “the most private and internal acts of individuals, those of their minds, acknowledge and engage with social standards.” Therefore, the shocking revelation is that the captured youths hide interiority that the whites, who have known them all their lives, would say they never suspected.

Consequently, the blacks’ flight exemplifies “the continuous labor of crediting and discrediting ideas” (Brown 8-9). It announces that the black runaways have founded a republic of lovers who are willing to die for each other. However, the bitter circumstances finally separate them. Douglass finds his isolation from the others to be more profound than before he met his friends. Later, he looks back on the time with them as an instance when he truly shared community with his own people (Bondage 298-301).

Robert Chase’s edition of Melville’s Selected Tales and Poems includes a preface to Billy Budd, Foretopman that is not available in the Library of America edition. The preface sketches a background to the narrative that defines 1797 as involving a crisis in “Christendom” -- which would mean the world that purportedly accepted Christ's teachings on love and universal brotherhood. The opening proposition made by the Spirit of the Age involves the rectification of the Old World’s hereditary wrongs. It is Melville’s opinion that the French Revolution affected some of the needed reform. Apparently, that revolution initiated a series of wars that, to some thinkers, is a political advance along nearly the whole line for Europeans. One of the consequences of the Revolution was probably the Great Mutiny that prompted the British to reform the Royal Navy (Melville, Selected, 289-290). Melville’s placing his narrative “in the time before steamships”

enables him to construct a peculiar episode in British naval history before the reforms began (BB 1353).

When Douglass at the middle of the nineteenth-century and Melville at its end retrieve Paine's words from those of the Founding Fathers, they refer both to Paine's influential Common Sense and Rights of Man. Melville and Douglass mean that the narratives they relate declare the autonomy of men's bodies as a basis of negotiation with societies' governments. That both writers must do so by suppressing information or by apologizing for what they do say declares that the "monstrosity" of revolt Melville writes about still remains to be fulfilled (Melville, Selected 289).

When writing about the same time as Douglass does, in the Life and Times, Melville has Vere state that he eschews the dictates of the heart for those of conservative authority (BB 1415). The Captain is like Auld in this allegiance. For Douglass and Melville, the sense of deprivation of both writers' protagonists arises from such instances of societal neglect of empathy as its means of instruction. It drives the various narratives and denounces a failed world, while holding out hope of a better day.

In such a world, men open up their hearts to each other in covert rites of self-sacrifice, lest authority perceive them to be threats of violence. Paine writes that Nature has implanted in man a system of social affections, which, though not necessary to his existence, are essential to his happiness. There is no period in life when this love for society ceases to act. It begins and ends with our being (Rights 552).

When Douglass published the second narrative, the national tragedy was evident in the plight of blacks and of the whites that struggled with them. Then, mastery was the prevalent protocol of the day and whipping was one of its rituals.

Laurie Robertson-Lorant discovers suppressed sexuality in these abuses (Robertson-Lorant 210). In these displays, the private purposes of humiliation proliferate the indecency of mastery because the “unendurable torture” of flogging presents to view “a human being stripped like a slave” for ordinary acts “not essentially criminal, but only made so by arbitrary laws” (White-Jacket 492). Melville’s recourse to scenes of humiliation resembles Douglass’ strategy of equating the flogging of women with rape and rape with slavery. In this way, the authors join with Jacobs in ascribing a total deprivation of autonomy to the peculiar institution.

The Navy demonstrates its complete mastery of a sailor because, in this way, he cannot repulse the most violent attacks against his manhood: a seaman must remain available to offense. He must accept that he exists for the uses of the state. Therefore, he can never be secure in his person; whereas, “the end of all political associations is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man; and these rights are liberty, property, security, and resistance of oppression (Rights 537).

In White-Jacket, Melville recommends his friend Richard Henry Dana, Junior’s book, Two Years Before the Mast for an accurate account of what men are like at sea (White-Jacket 452; Dana 141, 151-157). In a letter to Dana, Melville writes that his friend “will not wonder, perhaps at anything in [White-Jacket].” He adds, “Would to God, that every man who shall read it, had been before the mast in an armed ship, that he might know something himself of what he shall only read.” One of those things is that both men know “in person the usages to which a sailor is subjected” (Correspondence 140).

White-Jacket proposes the ways in which Billy Budd will refer to Paine’s Rights of Man. Mainly and especially, they refer to the inviolable, essential dignity of man.

Therefore, in Billy Budd, when the Bellipotent impresses the Handsome Sailor from the Rights-of-Man, the protocols and portents are clear and inescapable.

What the public does not know is the exact nature of Billy's ultimate protest to mastery. Melville suppresses the description of the gesture that is all that remains to the condemned youth. The crew's reaction to it, though, indicates that somehow the political Messiah does indeed come in him, at his last moment (White-Jacket 506). They seem to formulate a version of agape from it by reaffirming community, even in extremis.

Although Billy's last words recalls Christ's last prayer (Luke 23. 46), Melville does not provide Billy or the crew with much language. The sailor is really without speech of his own. This lack is most notable at Billy's trial, where, when he is credited with a speech, it seems all Vere's words in an official version of the events (BB 1410). Otherwise, at key moments, the sailor remains silent. For instance, when Ratcliffe appropriates Billy for the Royal Navy, he makes no demur (BB 1355). In general, we are told that whatever sounds Billy does emit are comparable to and as spontaneous as an animal's meaningful noises, which are, nevertheless, "expressive of the harmony within" (BB 1362). Thereby, Melville affirms the value of Billy's ambiguous but apropos ejaculations.

The author afflicts the Handsome Sailor, though, with an imperfection -- "an organic hesitancy, in fact more or less of a stutter or even worse." The defect eliminates the sailor's ever verbally elaborating a thought. Here is evidence of the imperfection of man, arising from the unfortunate legacy of the Fall (BB 1362). Yet, Billy's virtue has little to do with society's ideas of respectability. This is because a sailor's chief expressions, like his vices, proceed from "exuberance of vitality after long constraint" and are "frank manifestations in accordance with natural law" (BB 1361-1362). Hardly any restraint

successfully eliminates this native spontaneity. Indeed, it renders the men available to violent correction because it inspires their officers with the fear of “the act of mutiny” (White-Jacket 500). The inside narrative of Billy Budd’s life in the Royal Navy tracks the history of his insuppressible spontaneity and what it means.

That spontaneity responds to the hospitality onboard the Rights of Man where the ship shelters an orphan. The men see the arrival of the Handsome Sailor as the occasion to be whole, good men because his moral nature is a rare instance of an appearance being in keeping with the inner man (BB 1354). In the safekeeping of a “respectable man” like Captain Graveling, the marvel’s arrival in a “rat-pit” so sugars the other sailors that they all join together to form a happy family. There, the Handsome Sailor becomes Baby Budd (BB 1354-1356).

Yet, Billy does not hesitate manfully to reject Red-Whisker’s assault. Graveling tempers the spontaneity of Billy’s response when he says that Billy at first attempted to reason with Red-Whiskers in order to avoid an ugly row. The method is unspecified. However, later on, Melville tells us that the affable young man exhibits little or no self-consciousness or “as much as we reasonably impute to a dog of Saint Bernard’s breed” (BB 1361) [emphasis added]. Perhaps Billy simply forbore the other man’s misconduct?

Consequently, after peacefully submitting to Ratcliffe, when the sailor erupts with the ejaculation, “And good-bye to you too, old Rights-of-Man,” the Lieutenant’s command, “Down, sir!” takes on a specific meaning: Billy’s spontaneity reflects a healthy, animal nature that needs constant surveillance and control (BB 1358). Similarly, Billy’s self-investment indicates an animal-like contentment with his existence. It is this unusual contentment -- so like “the unaffectedness of natural regality” (BB 1353) -- that inspires

community on the Rights-of-Man and that misleads Red-Whiskers and others to speculate on the sailor's integrity.

Yet, in Billy Budd, the author tells us that these obstinate near-primitives who are also the stepsons of heaven can discern the marvelous.

Nevertheless, Melville bears witness to the divinity of man by his references to Billy's unredeemed primitive nature. He seems to refer to Montaigne's praise for the natives who, like wild grapes, "retain alive and vigorous their genuine, their most useful and natural, virtues and properties" (BB 1362; Montaigne 152). In Billy Budd, the author begins by briefly outlining the history of the worship of the marvelous in man. Melville links the devotion to the divinity in man to pre-historical observation of the stars, to the legend of Alexander, to Assyria, and finally to an early Pope's astonishment at the angelic aspect of British captives (BB 1353-1354, 1423-1424).

The Bellipotent's chaplain repeats the previous history of wonder when he forsakes ministering to the condemned Handsome Sailor. He realizes that the young beauty is already reconciled to death: "he was wholly without irrational fear of it, a fear more prevalent in highly civilized communities than in those so-called barbarous ones which in all respects stand nearer to unadulterated Nature" (BB 1423). In Billy's trance-like thrall, the chaplain perceives fearlessness before impending death to which he can add nothing (Phil.4.7). The sailor's native sense offers him sufficient consolation.

However, Vere does not comprehend this aspect of natural integrity. As a captain who never tolerates an infringement of discipline (BB 1369), he truly believes that demonstrations of mastery are effective means of domineering men. Yet, what he really seeks is to convert them to his cause. So, to Vere, Billy's change of demeanor after being

present at a flogging signifies complete surrender to naval protocol. Yet, crucially, Melville notes that Billy resolves never to be remiss in anything or to be liable to punishment (BB 1377). Like many men who support mastery, Vere misunderstands the sailor's Sambo-like strategy for survival (BB 1400-1401). Vere's inability to affirm the essential divinity of the natural in man expands on the conflict already inherent in the impressment of the Handsome Sailor for the purposes of the nation.

For Melville's readers, who would have known the cost to the nation of resisting the British practice of impressment, the Captain's self-assurance would have seemed monstrous. Yet, Melville sets his interest against mastery with a finer focus. He opts here, like he does in White-Jacket, more for compassion than for patriotism (White-Jacket 466). After all, like his friend Dana, Melville has already shared a sailor's life and knows intimately about what he chooses to write.

The author intends that the public acknowledge what it would rather ignore. That is that the poor, the neglected, and marginalized are worthy people whose excesses result from society's wrongdoings. For these people, virtue, that quality of citizenship, and vice, are not easily separated into decorum and impropriety. Instead, they are only available to their better natures, as distinct qualities, when it is affordable to them to do so.

In White-Jacket Melville boldly states,

When Virtue rules by compulsion, and domineers over Vice as a slave, then Virtue, though her mandates be outwardly observed, bears little interior sway. To be efficacious, Virtue must come down from aloft, even as our blessed Redeemer came down to redeem our whole man-of-war world; to that end, mixing with its sailors and sinners as equals. (White-Jacket 589)

Here, Melville seems to call for agape as praise for the natural in man. This is the same reason for worship that the Bellipotent's chaplain finds in the condemned sailor's thrall. It is also the reason why Vere rejects mercy for law. He sees nature as imperfect and it motivates him to master it. The buttons on the uniform the officer wears are more relevant to civilization than life. Therefore, Vere repudiates all individuality in a misunderstanding of mastery and community (BB 1414-1415).

Consequently, for Vere, at Billy's execution, the sailor rises higher and higher, towards the consecration of his humiliation for the purposes of the state. Here, Melville's language for the execution turns metaphorically sexual. Like Douglass' terms for his torment at Covey's farm, Melville intends to relate mastery to sexual violation. Yet like Fred who accepts the disgrace of disorderly conduct, Melville has Billy accept what Vere imposes on him in order to defeat the Captain. However, just as even Douglass sees the futility of fighting when there is no hope of success (Bondage 318), similarly, Billy avoids resisting when nothing could come of it (BB 1355). He forbears his condition.

In contrast to Billy's native good sense, Vere increasingly exhibits a lack of self-control as he gains power over the life of the Handsome Sailor. The surgeon wonders if his suddenly enthusiastic captain has been affected in his mind (BB 1406). Previously, it has been the seaman who suffered sudden, inexplicable ejaculations. Indeed, it is the incident involving spilled soup that brought the falsity of Billy's new decorous demeanor to Claggart's attention. Unfortunately, this same spontaneity generated the blow that killed the master-at-arms.

When the sailor strikes Claggart, Vere cries out, "Struck dead by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang!" (BB 1406). Therefore, although the captain is aware of Billy's

innocence, he is determined to act against him, in the same way that Claggart, and Billy, enact their true natures (BB 1385). Except for Billy, these men's natures have no hearts. The Captain admits to it (BB 1415).

In writing about Pierre, Robertson-Lorant notes that the novels of Melville's day were supposed to uphold the normative values of civilization in the New World (Robertson-Lorant 318). Melville seems to do this by the emphasis on Vere's allegiance to order. When Melville wrote Dana that in order to compose, "one must needs throw in a little fancy," he concluded, "Yet I mean to give the truth of the thing" (Correspondence 162). In a letter to Evert Duyckinck, the author equates revision with expurgation of a text (Correspondence 60). The point is that Melville that regretted that "an author can never -- under no conceivable circumstances -- be at all frank with his readers" (Correspondence 149). Yet, it was important that men share experiences in common (Correspondence 140).

Melville knew that differences in experience with the public prevented him from being a successful writer. When the author wrote Lemuel Shaw that he could only write books that fail, he apologized for the constancy he knew the judge would only understand to be egotism (Correspondence 139).

The spontaneous truth interested Melville. So, when in White-Jacket, he details the natural but improper behavior of wayward midshipmen, the writer adopts strategies that delay the readers' focusing on him as the messenger of improprieties. In order to illustrate how the Navy resists the natural in man, he tells us that a young midshipman is questioned about unequivocal stains on his hammock. The unabashed reply is that the Captain knows exactly what the stains are. The boy is punished. Here, Melville presents the impropriety to the public as something well within its experience by challenging it, like the midshipman

does the Captain, to deny a fact of its life (White-Jacket 579).

Similarly, at Billy's death, the sexual language of the description of the execution intends that we acknowledge that the author means rape by them. Furthermore, the discussion about the forensic evidence insists that we admit we know all about the singularity. Significantly, when the chaplain approaches Billy, Melville writes that Billy seems to be already in his shroud and that his pants are "more or less soiled" (BB 1422). However, at the hanging, "to the wonder of all no motion was apparent" (BB 1427).

Melville used disguised sexual language elsewhere. In Redburn, Wellingborough must learn the ways of life at sea in order to survive. Melville pays special attention to the boy's learning to climb the mast. The maneuvers gain an increasingly sexual connotation as he goes higher and higher.

The episode seems to describe the boy's first experience of anal sex. Significantly, Wellingborough has eaten a carrot he stole and hid under the skirts of his coat; it refreshes him, adding, "though at the expense of a little pain in my stomach" (Redburn 37-38). Redburn is replete with sexual double entendres. Robertson-Lorant opines that writing the novel brought Melville face to face with the fugitive in the twilight world of non-conforming gender (Robertson-Lorant 208).

Harold Beaver makes an assessment of Melville's dilemma in writing the book. According to Beaver, because Melville could not tell everything he knew, "what he had yet to learn was to drive that organic energy (of 'cock,' 'ass,' and 'prick') underground to form a secret component, a cryptic point counterpoint, unremarked even by those bowdlerizing censors, his publishers' readers" (Beaver 12).

In Billy Budd, which Melville never published, the dilemma lingers on although

the union of youthful beauty, the sea, and homosexuality receives a more thorough treatment. Melville transforms Vere's insistence that Billy must hang into the rape Red Whiskers fails to accomplish (BB 1356-1357). In it, the mast is a metaphor for the penis. As Billy rises higher and higher to take finally the full rose of dawn -- and to repeat the metaphorical sodomy of Redburn's ascending the mast -- Vere stands so rigidly that the conjecture is that the Captain stoically controls himself or that he suffers a momentary paralysis from emotional shock.

Vere's penile erection appears in his body's rigidity. "To take the full rose of dawn" seems to refer to penetration. The vapory fleece shot through with glory suggests ejaculation. Most significantly, Billy's marvelous stillness is disturbed by the movement of the ponderously cannoned battleship.

Melville's metaphorical account of the execution relies on the public's awareness that the author depicts Vere's orgasm and that Billy refuses to respond to his violent penetration. The sailor does not respond to it, despite the implication that the well-endowed member should produce a reaction (BB 1426-1427).

However, despite Vere's demonstration of his unbending authority, which is so much like Auld's vacillations, and which does somewhat succeed at getting the sailor to participate in it, the Captain fails. The Handsome Sailor undermines the rape because he should soil himself as a consequence of hanging and possibly of anal rape, but he does not do so. Melville makes clear that nothing happens.

In a subsequent discourse, the purser and the surgeon seem not to understand what did not happen. Finally, the surgeon utters the word "will power" and hurries away. Neither man seems able to accept Billy's manifestation of interiority (BB 1427-1428).

Yet, the ship's crew can believe what it saw because the Handsome Sailor's "gesture" was in their language. In the same way that seamen worship the mast of Nelson's flagship as if it were the true Cross (White-Jacket 356), they come to cherish Billy's death-spar (BB 1434).

Like Nelson's death, Billy's non-gesture illustrates how a man can rise above circumstance by doing something extraordinarily indecorous but completely poetically justified (BB 1366). In the same way that Nelson vitalized sentiments into acts (BB 1366), Billy's extravagant "no" to the indecency Vere imposed on him impresses on us, Melville's readers, the writer's intention to assert the value of the individual in society. Only in a world that does not function for the general good by not seeing worth in each of its members would the depiction of Billy's gesture be an obscenity in "a story not unwarranted by what sometimes happens in this [. . .] world of ours -- Innocence and infamy, spiritual depravity and fair repute" (BB 1478).

Like Victor of Aveyron's surprising indignation, gestures of revolt which slaves like Fred and sailors like Billy manage announce that there lies within them something so vital that to let it go would mean to forsake their lives. Nevertheless, each of these men is able to surrender to Locke's harsh ruling that "whenever he finds the hardship of his Slavery out-weigh the value of his Life, 'tis in his Power, by resisting the Will of his Master, to draw on himself the Death he desires" (Two Treatises 325).

Yet, this finality can take on other effective forms that become acts of endurance, although deprivation should reduce men to being ciphers available to mastery. For example, in the incident involving Demby, death at the hands of the putative master only removes one of the participants in the debate about the value of human life; it does not end

it. Therefore, Demby's murder does not cancel his rejection of slavery.

When Gore shoots the slave, the thrill that runs through the onlookers attests to their having seen the unthinkable. Because of what they witness, the people judge the perpetrator to be inhuman, and unlike them (Narrative 30-32).

This is the point the slave and the abused sailor conceive from the brutalizing bad example set by their conquerors: the assurance the abuser finds in mastery indicates the degree to which he is no longer available to fully reciprocal human life. Mastery removes the abuser from the empathic spontaneity of community.

However, in acknowledging that he suffers abuse, the deprived victim survives in community. He accepts the indignity of the filthy designation society grants his condition.

Nevertheless, the slave Fred and the sailor Billy enact revolutions. By not in any way removing themselves from causality, they exit the belligerent protocols of mastery, and of abuse and reprisal. They make something new (Rights 657; Matt. 24.32).

Billy's final conventional words and the three endings of Douglass' narratives express an evolutionary love that develops until it returns the gift of community to the sailor and the black man. They accept that they belong with others because they give of themselves without discriminatory protocols. Thereby, they live essentially as men.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- “Agape.” Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary. Gen. Ed. Herbert Lockyear. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.
- Andrews, William L. "The Performance of the Narrative." Frederick Douglass' Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1988. 165-182.
- Aptheker Herbert. Nat Turner’s Slave Rebellion: Including the Full Text of Nat Turner’s 1831 “Confession.” New York: Grove Press, 1966.
- Baldwin, James. “Everybody’s Protest Novel.” Notes of a Native Son. 1955. Boston: Beacon Press, 1983. 13-23.
- Beaver, Harold. Introduction. Redburn, His First Voyage. By Herman Melville. New York: Penguin, 1976. 7-28.
- Bense, James. “Myths and Rhetoric of the Slavery Debate and Stowe’s Comic Vision of Slavery.” The Stowe Debate: Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Ed. Mason I. Lowance, Jr., Ellen Westbrook, and R.C. De Prospro. Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts, 1994. 187-204.
- Berger, James. “Falling Towers and Postmodern Wild Children: Oliver Sacks, Don DeLillo, and Turns against Language.” PMLA 120 (2005): 341-361.
- Blassingame, John W. The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South. Rev.ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1979.
- Brown, Gillian. The Consent of the Governed: The Lockean Legacy in Early American Culture. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2001.

- Cady, Edwin. "As Through a Glass Eye, Darkly: The Bible in the Nineteenth-Century American Novel." The Bible and American Arts and Letters. Ed. Giles Gunn. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983. 33-55.
- Crozier, Alice C. The Novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe. New York: Oxford UP, 1969.
- Dana, Richard Henry, Jr. Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative of Life at Sea. 1840. New York: Penguin Books, 1981.
- Douglass, Frederick. "Contradictions in American Civilization." Frederick Douglass: The Narrative and Selected Writings. Ed. Michael Mayer. New York: Modern Library, 1984. 363-368.
- . Life and Times of Frederick Douglass, Written by Himself: His Early Life as a Slave, His Escape from Bondage and His Complete History to the Present Time. 1892. Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Library of America, 1996. 453-1045.
- . My Bondage and My Freedom. 1855. Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Library of America, 1996. 103-452.
- . Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself. 1845. Frederick Douglass: Autobiographies. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Library of America 1996. 1-102.
- . The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One. Speeches, Debates, and Interviews. Eds. John Blassingame and John R. McGivan. 4 vols. New Haven: Yale UP, 1992.
- Dumond, Dwight Lowell. Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959.
- Dunn, John. Locke. Past Masters. Gen. Ed. Keith Thomas. New York: Oxford UP, 1984.

- Equiano, Olaudah. The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself. 1814. The Classic Slave Narratives. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Mentor-Penguin, 1987. 1-182.
- Foner, Eric. Introduction. Rights of Man. By Thomas Paine. New York: Penguin American Library, 1984. 7-22.
- Gilbertson, Catherine. Harriet Beecher Stowe. 1937. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1968.
- Gossett, Thomas F. Race: The History of an Idea in America. New York: Schocken Books, 1965.
- Hedrick, Joan D. Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life. New York: Oxford UP, 1994.
- Higginson, Thomas Wentworth. Army Life in a Black Regiment and other Writings. 1870. New York: Penguin Books, 1997.
- Itard, Jean-Marc-Gaspard. The Wild Boy of Aveyron. 1894. Trans. George Humphrey and Muriel Humphrey. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts (Meredith), 1962.
- Jacobs, Harriet (Linda Brent). Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. 1861. The Classic Slave Narratives. Ed. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Mentor (New American Library), 1987. 333-515.
- Lincoln, Abraham. Speeches and Writings, 1859-1865. Ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher. New York: The Library of America, 1989.
- Locke, John. John Locke on Education. Ed. Peter Gay. New York: Teacher's College Press, 1964.
- . Two Treatises of Government. Ed. Peter Laslett. 1960. New York: Mentor (New American Library), 1963.

- Logan, Rayford W. Introduction. Life and Times of Frederick Douglass. By Frederick Douglass. New York: Collier (Macmillan), 1962. 15-24.
- Lowance, Mason I. "Biblical Typology and the Allegorical Mode: The Prophetic Strain." The Stowe Debate: Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom's Cabin. Ed. Mason I. Lowance, Ellen W. Westbrook, and R. C. De Prospro. Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994. 159-184.
- Malcomsen, Scott L. One Drop of Blood: the American Misadventure of Race. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000.
- Malson, Lucien. Wolf Children and the Problem of Human Nature. Trans. Edmund Fawcett et al. 1964. New York: Monthly Review Press (New Left Books), 1972.
- Mayer, Henry. All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.
- McFeely, William S. Frederick Douglass. New York: W.W. Norton, 1991.
- Melville, Herman. Billy Budd, Foretopman. 1948. Selected Tales and Poems. Ed. Richard Chase. New York: Rhinehart and Co, Inc., 1957. 289-376.
- . Billy Budd, Sailor (An Inside Narrative). 1962. Pierre, Isreal Potter, The Piazza Tales, The Confidence Man, Uncollected Prose, Billy Budd, Sailor. Ed. Harrison Hayford. New York: Library of America, 1984. 1351-1436
- . Correspondence. Ed. Lynn Horth. Vol.14. The Writings of Herman Melville. 15 vols. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern UP and The Newberry Library, 1993.
- . "Hawthorne and his Mosses." Pierre, Isreal Potter, The Piazza Tales, The Confidence Man, Uncollected Prose, Billy Budd, Sailor. Ed. Harrison Hayford. New York: Library of America, 1984. 1154-1171.

- . Moby-Dick, or The Whale. 1851. Redburn, His First Voyage; White-Jacket or The World in a Man-of-War; Moby Dick, or The Whale. Ed. G. Thomas Tanselle. New York: Library of America, 1983. 771-1436.
- . Redburn, His First Voyage. 1849. Redburn, His First Voyage; White-Jacket or The World in a Man-of-War; Moby Dick, or The Whale. Ed. G. Thomas Tanselle. New York: Library of America, 1983.1-340.
- . White-Jacket or The World in a Man-of-War. 1850. Redburn, His First Voyage; White-Jacket or The World in a Man-of-War; Moby-Dick or, The Whale. Ed. G. Thomas Tanselle. New York: Library of America, 1983. 341-771.
- Miller, Kelly. "Frederick Douglass." Radicals and Conservatives and Other Essays on the Negro in America. New York: Schocken Books, 1968. 225-234.
- Montaigne, Michel de. The Complete Essays of Montaigne. Trans. Donald M. Frame. Stanford, California: Stanford UP, 1965.
- Orr, William F., and James Arthur Walther. Introduction, Notes, and Commentary. 1 Corinthians. The Anchor Bible. Vol.32. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1976.
- Paine, Thomas. Common Sense. 1776. Collected Works. Ed. Eric Foner. New York: Library of America, 1995. 5-59.
- . Rights of Man. 1791-1792 Collected Works. Ed. Eric Foner. New York: Library of America, 1995.431-661.
- Polin, Raymond. La Politique Morale de John Locke. New York: Garland Publishing, 1984.
- Preston, Dickson J. Young Frederick Douglass. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1980.

- Quarles, Benjamin. Black Abolitionists. New York: Oxford UP, 1969.
- Reising, Russell. The Unusable Past: Theory and Study of American Literature. New York: Methuen, 1986.
- Reynolds, David S. Beneath the American Renaissance: the Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville. New York: Knopf, 1988.
- Robertson-Lorants, Laurie. Melville: A Biography. New York: Clarkson Potter, 1996.
- Schama, Simon. Landscape and Memory. London: Harper Collins, 1995.
- Singh, J. A. L. and Robert M. Zingg. Wolf-Children and Feral Man. New York: Archon Books (Harper and Row), 1966.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. Uncle Tom's Cabin. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994.
- Sundquist, Eric J. To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap (Harvard UP), 1993.
- Tolchin, Neal. L. Mourning, Gender, and Creativity in the Art of Herman Melville. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale UP, 1988.
- Tompkins, Jane. Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860. New York: Oxford UP, 1985.
- Tyler, Moses Coit. Patrick Henry. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1890.
- Westra, Helen Peter. "Confronting Antichrist: The Influence of Jonathan Edward's Millennial Vision." The Stowe Debate: Rhetorical Strategies in Uncle Tom's Cabin. Ed. Mason I. Lowance, Ellen W. Westbrook, and R. C. De Prosopo. Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994. 141-158.
- Wimberly, Edward P. and Anne Streaty Wimberly. Liberation and Human Wholeness: The

- Conversion Experiences of Black People in Slavery and Freedom. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1986.
- Winks, Robin W. "The Making of a Fugitive Slave Narrative: Josiah Henson and Uncle Tom -- A Case Study." The Slave's Narrative. Ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Oxford UP, 1985. 112-146.
- Yarborough, Richard. "Race, Violence, and Manhood, the Masculine Ideal in Frederick Douglass' Heroic Slave." Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. New York: Cambridge UP, 1990. 166-188.
- Zafar, Rafia. "Franklinian Douglass, The Afro-American as Self-Made Man." Frederick Douglass: New Literary and Historical Essays. Ed. Eric J. Sundquist. New York: Cambridge UP, 1990. 99- 117.
- Zuckert, Michael P. Natural Rights and the New Republicanism. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1994.