

A Piece of Earth: Political Theologies of Finitude and Futurity in African American and
Indigenous Literature, 1770-1840

By

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To the women in my life –

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Introduction

“It is very clear, that God, as king David says, Psal. cvx. 16, ‘has given the earth to the children of men,’ given it to mankind in common. But this being supposed, it seems to some a very great difficulty how any one should ever come to have a property in any thing.”
John Locke

“Never give up your lands you now possess, for it is your right by God and nature, for the ‘earth was given to the children of men.’”
Robert Wedderburn

In the *Second Treatise on Government* (1689), John Locke begins the critical fifth chapter, “On Property,” by invoking a sacred narrative. He returns to Psalms 115:16, “The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s: but the earth hath he given to the children of men,” a hymn which throughout elevates the sovereignty of Yahweh above “all nations,” while proclaiming that the earth has been gifted to its human inhabitants.¹ For Locke, the earth as a divine gift defines the originary condition for human life and livelihood, but also summons a central problematic for any treatise on property: if the earth has “been given to the children of men,” then it is “a very great difficulty how any one should ever come to have property in any thing” (111). Property, in this schema, remains embroiled in questions of theology.² Locke adds a crucial modifying clause to the verse, “given it to mankind in common,” which summons communal possession – or the commons – as the exemplary expression of the theological order the verse conjures. It is telling that Locke invokes the commons at the very moment when he repeats the verse in his own

words. His recapitulation emphasizes the verse's category as fiction of property's origins that, in spite (or perhaps because of) its theological burden, can be reiteratively accountable to his historical moment, a period that saw the varied exercises of a primitive accumulation that devastated the English commons through enclosure movements, and formed a colonial economy that trafficked in slavery and territorial expansion in the New World.³ Locke's recourse to such a particular language of sacredness suggests he imagined the commons as a historical manifestation of the verse's scene of divine gifting. As the *Second Treatise* unfolds, Locke represents property as a myth of the origins of the socio-political order, where myth functions, as Talal Asad (drawing on the work of political scientist Margaret Canovan) has argued, to organize and mediate sacred and secular epistemologies.⁴ Locke's reformulation of the verse engages in a critical evasion that attempts to alter the verse's theological claim. And, as the *Second Treatise* continues, this tension persists: what began as an originary myth of sacred inheritance becomes a fiction of ownership – where labor imposed on the common produces private property – and of the transformation of subjectivity – where he who inherits the earth becomes he who possesses the earth.⁵

The Jamaican radical activist Robert Wedderburn, however, refused the racist scaffolding that undergirded both sacred and secular versions of imperialism, occupying (sometimes simultaneously) divergent spiritual fidelities throughout his career, including Jamaican Obeah, Methodism, and Unitarianism.⁶ Imagining the messianic potential latent in practices of radical millenarianism, Wedderburn frequently recurs to “the earth was given to the children of men” to announce a political order divested of individual forms of ownership. In Wedderburn's formulation, a “right” to land ultimately derives from God as a divine gift shared equally by all, re-imagining what it might mean to linger with the origins of a political order as a scene of gift-

giving: “[I]t is your right by God and nature, for the ‘earth was given to the children of men’” (82). Wedderburn urges his readers in his short-lived radical periodical *The Axe Laid to the Root or A Fatal Blow to Oppressors; Being an Address to the Planters and Negroes of the Island of Jamaica* (1817): “[T]he earth was given to the children of men, making no difference for colour or character, just or unjust; and ... any person calling a piece of land his own private property, was a criminal; and though they may sell it, or will it to their children, it is only transferring of that which was first obtained by force or fraud” (82). In some ways, Wedderburn here sounds very much like an Enlightenment political philosopher.⁷ For one, his assertion that originary claims of ownership, or calling “a piece of land ... private property,” are the outcomes of “force or fraud” bear similarity to Thomas Hobbes’s descriptions of the state of nature in the *Leviathan* (1651), where men “use violence to make themselves masters of other men’s persons, wives, children, and cattle” (76). Or, perhaps more paradigmatically, Wedderburn echoes Jean Jacques Rousseau in the *Second Discourse on Inequality* (1755), who challenged: “You are lost, if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong equally to us all, and the earth itself to nobody” (113).⁸ By claiming the earth as an inheritance held by all regardless of “colour or character,” Wedderburn offers anticolonial and antiracist praxis of collectivity responsive to settler colonial procedures of dispossession.⁹ He conjures a communitarian alternative to the killing fields of slavery in freely living and laboring on the common landscapes of the earth.¹⁰

That both a singular religious expression and histories of land enclosure intrude on Locke and Wedderburn’s mythic account of the origins of property represents on a small scale the defining imaginary explored by this dissertation project. Throughout “A Piece of Earth: Political Theologies of Finitude and Futurity in African American and Indigenous Literature, 1770-1840,” I consider how eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Anglophone speakers and writers of

color remain centrally concerned with colonial exercises of territorial expansion and slavery as large-scale expressions of the enclosure of the commons.¹¹ Rather than repudiating the spiritual witness of “the earth was given to the children of men,” as with Locke’s “very great difficulty,” they repeatedly draw from this scriptural tenet, and from a broader spiritually inflected imaginary of a finite earth, to express alternative fictions of political belonging and collectivity.¹² These fictions, moreover, inspired speakers and writers of color to inhabit what I am calling “earthly repertoires,” or performance practices rendered in fictional archives that re-embodiment – and, in an important sense, *ground* – attachments to the earth extemporized under the shadow of precarious racial displacements. Against the seemingly never-ending pressures of settler colonial expansion and economic consumption, these repertoires habituate questions of the earth’s limits – both materially, in the exhaustibility of their own labor and the earth’s resources, and temporally, as a measure of human mortality. Defined by contingency and adjustment, earthly repertoires were assembled to contest interrelated systems of labor, legal arrangements of ownership and possession, and institutions of spiritual authority that managed and surveilled non-white bodies and territorial regimes throughout the colonial Atlantic world.¹³ In addressing the sometimes conflicted and often heterodox earthly repertoires of collectivity and freedom voiced by speakers and writers of color, I draw my archive from an array of texts written or published between Samson Occom’s early journals and letters in the 1760s and William Apess’s life writing and political pamphlets in the 1830s. Composed in a period bookended by the extraordinary political upheavals and social dislocations of the American Revolution and Indian Removal, these narratives entrench the brutal histories of settler colonial violence within performance registers recalling the earth as a divine gift.

By improvising performance and narratological practices that frequently bore the imprimatur of evangelical Christianity, speakers and writers of color interceded with spiritual resources already marked by an emergent theology of race that by the end of the eighteenth century informed the infrastructures of white supremacy and settler colonial expansion.¹⁴ Although his reiterations of the “earth was given to the children of men” may have drawn some of its force from popular evangelicalism, Wedderburn more often spoke out of a radical politics that affirmed revolution as an impending possibility in post-Waterloo London, and ultimately announced an immanent and heterodox millenarianism that struck at the heart of the British colonial rule.¹⁵ Wedderburn’s version of earthly inheritance expresses a spiritual myth of origins relegated to the distant past, but through his radical activism, he also remained attuned to verse’s orientation to the future: its second half assumes that the event of divine gift-giving will endure through genealogical continuity, or through the “children of men.” Its invocation of genealogy accounts for the death of the elders and imagines earthly sovereignty as an inheritance passed on to posterity in perpetuity. Writers and speakers of color who invoke variations of the verse therefore point Janus-faced towards both past and future, to the long-ago gift of common possession in the earth and to its continuing generational inheritance and redistribution.

In the narratives and performance practices I explore, however, it is the verse’s very emphasis on patrilineal continuity that often fractures its ostensible pronouncement of collectivity. Writers and speakers of color who invoke variations of this verse frequently contest its overt reproductive politics, a model of inheritance Wedderburn reads as one part of a colonial system that alienates people of color from common possession of the earth: “[T]hough they may sell it, or *will it to their children*, it is only transferring of that which was first obtained by force or fraud” (82; emphasis added). When the earth is framed as a patrimony passed from father to

son, to “the children of *men*,” it participates in the legal devastations of territorial expansion. Many speakers and writers of color experienced these devastations, according Orlando Patterson, through colonial regimes of “social death,” which often commenced in an initial, shattering instance of “natal alienation.”¹⁶ Indeed, Wedderburn and others specifically render structures of social death and natal alienation through the idiom of racial disinheritance, as a framework for testifying to experiences of forced removal from their homelands, the violations of sexual abuse, the devastating separations from kin and shipmates, and the failures of slaveowners – like Wedderburn’s father – to recognize their children by enslaved women.¹⁷

Disinherited from a past, or what Saidiya Hartman calls “the isolation of being severed from . . . kin and denied ancestors,” writers and speakers of color also repeatedly dwell with the specter of lineal futures ruined through the deaths of their own children (*Mother* 87).¹⁸ Of the figures I consider, Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Samson Occom, and Phillis Wheatley all lost children, and while we know Wedderburn had children, we do not know their histories.¹⁹ Although the death of children endured as a grim everyday occurrence throughout the eighteenth century, writers and speakers of color recursively summon something more than grief over an experience that often transcended racial boundaries.²⁰ Instead, African American, Caribbean, and indigenous communities responded by improvising fugitive forms of belonging, what Hortense Spillers has called “shadow” and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon “lateral” familial arrangements moored in alternative kinship patterns, often through reconfiguring matrilineal or sibling attachments.²¹ Because such lateral kinships were extemporized against the patriarchal and sexual hierarchies, and high fetal and infant mortality rates, dominant in the colonial Atlantic world, we might read them as queer bonds.²² Many of the narratives I consider depict non-patrilineal kinship relations forged out of experiences of settler colonial sexual violences and alienation from family –

including Wedderburn's depictions of a prophetic, matrilineal inheritance passed from his grandmother, Talkee Amy, to his mother, Rosanna, to his half-sister, Miss Campbell; Mary Prince's rehearsals of maternal and sororal mourning; and Wheatley's deeply conflicted rendering of reproductive politics in "Niobe in Distress for her Children, Slain by Apollo."²³ Such relations offer queer configurations of lateral and generational kinship in texts that contest settler colonial sexual and familial hierarchies. For writers and speakers of color, alternative kinship attachments, when rendered against the specter of genealogical collapse, summon non-linear improvisations of time.²⁴ In this sense, the narratives of Oocom, Wheatley, William Apess, and others remain haunted by the death of children, their own or others', as instances of stalled or superseded futures.²⁵ As I will explore in individual chapters, temporal imperatives, such as Prince's psychic tarrying with what she calls the "times that are gone" or Wedderburn's prophetic announcement that "a time is fast approaching" when the political systems of slavery and imperialism will end, offer lateral temporalities that demand an impossible messianic redemption of futures always already lost to violence (Prince 64; Wedderburn 96).

On a pragmatic level, repertoires drawn from reiterations of "the earth was given to the children of men" often remain preoccupied by everyday dilemmas posed by interment for persons alienated from earthly kin, histories, and territories. As depicted in many of narratives by speakers and writers of color, racial migrants were forcibly displaced from the graveyards of their kin, refused interment at local cemeteries, or remained haunted by the deaths of those lost during the Middle Passage. Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, for instance, an African religious dissenter, refused to have his biracial daughter baptized, and his grief over her death was compounded when no local clergy would allow the unbaptized child to be buried in their Norwich churchyard. In the face of such liturgical refusals, Gronniosaw responded, "At length I resolved to dig a grave

in the garden behind the house, and bury her there (52-3). Although the parson of the local Anglican church (in his office as a spiritual father) eventually relented, he refused to read the burial service over Gronniosaw's daughter, prompting Gronniosaw to call this "one of the greatest trials I ever met with" (53).²⁶ Gronniosaw's plight lingers with the parson's paternal (and paternalistic) refusal and with the theological challenge of the unspoken burial litany, a spiritual performance that should express familial and communal mourning and mark belonging to the earth, as retained in many liturgies in the refrain "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." The passage suggests that in narratives by speakers and writers of color conflicts regarding the treatment of the dead just as often concern the local sites marking their burial as it does the performance of certain litanies. In this and other instances, the ruin of kinship lines and disruptions in practices of interment by the pressures of racial theologies ultimately constitute a rupture in bonds of earthly attachment, and prompt speakers and writers of color to voice a range of political expressions at these losses. As often, then, as "the earth was given to the children of men" was invoked on behalf of a politics of collectivity, it was also summoned to encompass a work of mourning responsive to quotidian realities where African and indigenous children, and their extended kinship lines, were already lost. These narratives express something more than sorrow. Instead they ask: *what* relations between kin, or between local grounds and histories, count? And *how* do they count?

These tensions are felt throughout the texts I engage with, many of which are autobiographical (i.e., letters, journals, and life narratives), and remain preoccupied by epistemological debates about the historical verisimilitude and accuracy of non-white claims to testimonial authenticity and authority.²⁷ They circulated, furthermore, within evangelical and (by the end of the eighteenth century) abolitionist public cultures of print and rhetoric that

extensively regulated structures of witnessing and shared affect.²⁸ As such, these narratives have often been mined as sources for their historical or anthropological interventions.²⁹ The narratological frameworks offered by these speakers and writers' generic exercises in autobiographical and journalistic accounts, correspondence, religious writing, poetry, and political essays and pamphlets, however, persistently expose the legal fictions of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theories of property and ownership, colonial claims to territorial expansion, and commitments to patrilineal forms of belonging. They include an unflinching attention to the ways political myths of origin exonerate sovereign violences sanctioned in colonial states of exception, where natal alienation, bondage, and genocide become the normative condition for non-white peoples. Indeed, they unearth the very frameworks of fictionality that sustain the socio-economic infrastructures of settler colonialism and slavery.³⁰ This is not to say that critics are precluded from making anthropological or historical claims about indigeneity or enslaved experience based on these texts, but that my aim in this project is to attend to the ways earthly repertoires mobilized by writers and speakers of color covertly recur to fictions of finitude and futurity at the very moment territorial expansionist policies, and the political theories supporting them, engaged in extended exercises of historical erasure, where Locke's "very great difficulty" represents a larger impulse to evade the mythic origins of settler colonial rule in favor of ostensibly secular accounts of liberal subject-formation.³¹ This is another way of saying that in these narratives, there is no ground *but* ground.³²

Given the competing imbrication of settler colonial formations of history, testimony, and fiction, narratives by speakers and writers of color center their attention on fictions of possession and inheritance of the earth. At the level of local and everyday experience, texts as different in genre and orientation as Phillis Wheatley's "Niobe in Distress for her Children, Slain by Apollo"

(1773), Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince* (1831), or William Apess's *Eulogy on King Philip* (1836), summon testimonial forms of address that bear witness to the particular challenges posed by maintaining attachments to burial grounds and spiritual liturgies for those either interred in the ground or lost to the oceans. More particularly, by rooting earthly repertoires around local sites of internment, narratives by speakers and writers of color frequently habituate queer temporalities that challenge the historical and ongoing devastation of African and indigenous peoples, kinships, cultures, and ecologies engendered by the territorial spread of global capitalism.³³ These recursive temporalities may take shape through ways of mediating the past in embodied performance archives and narratological practices, through forms of living and laboring in the present, or through frameworks for reclaiming lost futures. These queer temporalities are then modeled in their mourning practices, and orchestrate who speaks *for* and *to* the dead – for and to those interred in sanctified ground, or refused burial or a spoken litany, or lost in the open waters of the Middle Passage. In doing so, their earthly repertoires envision forms of fugitive belonging that contest the territorial displacements, sexual violations and kinship alienations, and spiritual disruptions enacted by colonial regimes of social death. They announce, after all, that subjects formed by a precarious itinerancy still require a piece of the earth.

Political Theologies of a Finite Earth

By so deeply grounding their narrative and performance rehearsals of “the earth was given to the children of men” within such fugitive, heterodox, and queer spatio-temporal attachments, African American, Caribbean, and indigenous speakers and writers of color offer strategies for rereading politico-theological frameworks of sovereignty explored in the eighteenth century by

Hobbes, Locke and Kant, and in the twentieth century in, among others, the work of Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, and Jacques Derrida.³⁴ More particularly, in returning to political histories of a finite and divinely gifted earth, speakers and writers of color challenge a legal order of a decisionism that validated land appropriation, theft, and genocide in the Americas.³⁵ Indeed, Schmitt famously opened his *Political Theology* (1922) by offering a concise critique of modern political and juridical theories that equate the state with the legal order: “Sovereign is he who decides on the exception” (5). Schmitt believed that no legal system could adequately anticipate or account for all potential futures, and returned sovereignty to the person who makes exceptional decisions in moments of crisis. When understood from the perspective of history, Schmitt’s sovereign suspends the smooth unfolding of time by envisioning the decision as a secular avatar of the theological *katechon*, whose utterance forecloses ruptures in the quotidian arrangements of governance within a state of emergency.³⁶ Schmitt’s account of sovereignty depends on a transcendent and originary institution of the state that precedes the legal order.³⁷ In *The Nomos of the Earth in the International Law of the Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950), furthermore, Schmitt examines particular expressions of Western sovereignty within colonial history. He argues that European international law developed as a response to New World discovery and colonialism, which began with “land-appropriation as the *primeval* act in founding law” (45; emphasis added). By turning to the era of discovery and conquest in the New World, where a “primeval act” of appropriation founds the settler colonial order and the modern institutions of sovereignty, he elides the very history Wedderburn’s recourse to a scene of divine gift-giving attempts to unearth.³⁸ To that end, Schmitt’s account of sovereignty in *The Nomos of the Earth* implies that the “primeval” institution of sovereignty is more than a historical fiction confined to the distant past: the state of

exception constitutes a continual present, an everyday and enduring advent of sovereignly managed and surveilled bodies across the terrain of imperial geographies.³⁹ Through this gesture, Schmitt calls for something more than an alternative myth of earthly inheritance to challenge the politically, legally, and theologically sanctioned thefts of territory at the heart of settler colonial rule.

Because much of Schmitt's work claims to account for both the fictional core and the historical realities of institutions of sovereignty and the nation, as well as international law, some who have taken up Schmitt in the wake of the crises of our late neoliberal moment have often read his delineation of the state of exception as a totalizing one: the sovereign decision remains the last word on the law, and no voice speaks from beyond the boundary of the this utterance. Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, for instance, building on Michel Foucault's work on biopolitics, argued that sovereign power in Western political theory has implicitly rested on an understanding of sovereignty as power over life – "sovereign is he who decides on the value or nonvalue of life as such" (143).⁴⁰ For Agamben, this decision on the value of life, what he calls bare life, constitutes the originary but concealed nucleus of Western biopolitics, in so far as certain bodies – *homo sacer* or those who can be killed but not sacrificed – are excluded from the political realm.⁴¹ According to Agamben's survey, sovereignty shifts into biopower, thus politicizing bare life, in modernity. To be modern is to live under the shadow of bare life. The spaces of modern political action are defined by a singular double bind – certain bodies are included in the political realm only by their very exclusion, and are thus always vulnerable to exposure, violence, and death. By inhabiting the liminal zones along or outside the borders of authorized political spaces, bare life becomes modernity's inescapable earthly norm. Agamben notably takes the concentration camp as the modern exemplar of bare life, rather than the slave

factories in West Africa or the plantations of the New World, both prior historical instances of biopower, as multiple scholars have noted.⁴² In doing so, *Homo Sacer* implicitly evades the evidentiary witness of those speaking from such zones of exclusion.

What remains invisible (and perhaps unthinkable) in both *Political Theology* and *Homo Sacer* are the inassimilable remnants of bodies and communities always already subject to exclusions and erasures of sovereignty that still struggle to testify *to* that violence.⁴³ What many African American, Caribbean, and indigenous narratives from the eighteenth- and nineteenth centuries frequently indicate is that not only do writers and speakers of color return to an alternative fiction of state origins (its foundation as a gift from God) as a way to protest sovereign violence, but they also bear witness to potential future arrangements of freedom and collectivity out of what I am calling political theologies of earthly finitude. Recently, environmental scholars as diverse in disciplinary and methodological commitments as, among others, Elizabeth Povinelli, Rob Nixon, and Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, have explored various political and social projects that conceive ways of enduring the ruins of late capitalist collapse.⁴⁴ Turning to the eighteenth century, literary critics like Anahid Nersessian, Sara Guyer, and Monique Allewaert have attended to how aesthetic practices grounded in imperatives of adjustment and restraint, or in dispersed and fragmented models of personhood, offered formal frameworks for imagining ecological contingency and political resistance.⁴⁵ Drawing on these thinkers, I consider how an ethic of earthly limits grounds alternative economic, political, affective, and kinship relations, and prompts ecologically-driven performance and narrative practices by speakers and writers of color. In *Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1787), for instance, Ottobah Cugoano offers a detailed critique of the legal orders of Western expansionist policies. He

specifically invokes a language of rights to contest the “robbery” of men and women under the auspice of settler colonialism. As with Wedderburn, Cugoano’s recourse to “theft” as a descriptor of settler colonial political and legal practices carries within it a recognition of the earth as limited in its terrain and resources:

[T]he Colonians [are] the great depredators, pirates, kidnappers, robbers, oppressors and enslavers of men. The laws as reaching from Great-Britain to the West-Indies, do not detect them, but protect the opulent slave-holders; though their opulence and protection by any law, or any government whatsoever, cannot make them less criminal than violators of the common rights and liberties of men. They do not take away a man’s property, like other robbers; but they take a man himself, and subject him to their service and bondage, which is a greater robbery, and a greater crime, than taking away any property from men whatsoever. And, therefore, with respect to them, there is very much wanted for regulating the natural rights of mankind, and very much wrong in the present forms of government, as well as much abuse of that which is right. (165)

Cugoano here severs the connection between possession and selfhood, so central to Locke’s formulation of property in the *Second Treatise*, and thereby disentangles the theoretical underpinnings of colonialism from its unspoken authority in scenes of theft – of bodies as much as of territories and resources. What Cugoano describes is an imperialist legal realm where possessing ownership in “a man himself” is not only a matter of political expediency, but a “protected” right, contravening what he names the “common rights and liberties of men.”⁴⁶ In returning to the language of the “common,” Cugoano recalls Locke’s recapitulation that God “has given the earth to the children of men, given it to mankind in common,” and contests the issue of “very great difficulty” that his theory of property elides. He imagines the development of

an international law based on “natural rights,” with enough authority to regulate “the great depredators, pirates, kidnappers, robbers, oppressors and enslavers of men” (165).

As a critique of colonial expansion, Cugoano’s invocation of human rights discourse and theft of bodies and resources connects a political theology of earthly finitude to an explicitly anticolonial and antiracist ethic of international law.⁴⁷ In this way, he deftly frames the stakes of a politico-theological account for a limited earth in ways that more canonical works of philosophy in the same period only partly express or evade. Within a larger discussion of international law, state federations, and treatise-making, a passage from Immanuel Kant’s essay *On Perpetual Peace* (1795), for instance, engages with the question of a finite earth through the figure of the stranger, and reads strangerhood as a constitutive part for any conceptual formulation of cosmopolitan right:

“Hospitality means the right of a stranger not to be treated with hostility when he arrives in someone else’s territory ... The stranger cannot claim the *right of a guest* to be entertained ... He may only claim a *right of resort*, for all men are entitled to present themselves in the society of others by virtue of their right to communal possession of the earth’s surface” (105-6, italics original).

On a first reading, the passage appears to understand cosmopolitan right as a negative right: the host is required only to treat the stranger without hostility. Yet such a reading also traces a powerful ethical imperative – that the stranger is not absorbed into the host community – that the stranger be allowed to remain a stranger.⁴⁸ Kant grounds this mandate for plural human existence on the material limits of the earth. He summons the finite terrain of the earth’s surface to intervene in eighteenth-century political theory on the mythic origins of property that so haunted philosophers of social contract theory from Hobbes to Locke to Rousseau. “Since the earth is a

globe, they cannot disperse over an infinite area,” he writes, “but must necessarily tolerate one another’s company. And no one originally has any greater right than anyone else to occupy any particular portion of the earth” (106). By framing “communal possession” of a finite earth as an “original” organization of right, Kant at first echoes preoccupations with the mythical pasts of arrangements of socio-political order. In this passage, he nevertheless sidesteps the theological thicket that Locke had to maneuver in his invocation of “the earth was given to the children of men” in the *Second Treatise*. More importantly, because Kant invokes the very limits of the earth’s surface, rather than the prehistorical origins of divine inheritance or social contract, as a mandate for its communal possession by a plurality of strangers, he renders a relationship to the earth that necessarily intrudes into the present – the physical limits of the earth remain, even if fictions for imagining the genesis of political sovereignties retain only heuristic value. Within Kant’s account of earthly finitude, therefore, lurks an accountability to settler colonial histories, and to the legal displacements of colonized peoples evaded by European and American claims to territory.

If Cugoano’s account of a finite earth bears witness to settler colonial thefts of persons and resources, while Kant’s evades eighteenth-century fictions of origins in favor of a muted historical accountability, then Hannah Arendt’s attentiveness to the spatial limits of the earth overtly diagnoses it as the central problem of a socio-political order grounded in unlimited consumption and the unremitting pursuit of wealth. Arendt provides, in many ways, a key formulation of the earth’s limits as political action in *The Human Condition* (1958). She describes being confronted by the emergence of space travel, atomic power, and industrial automation, processes she sees as organizations of labor and movement shifting humankind away from an existence grounded in the earth. She counters: “The earth is the very quintessence

of the human condition, and earthly nature, for all we know, may be unique in the universe in providing human beings with a habitat in which they can move and breathe without effort and without artifice” (2).⁴⁹ Her theory of political action, constitutive of the public realm, is imagined as a space for individuals to achieve freedom through the construction of a common world out of plural human existence.⁵⁰ In “Imperialism,” part II of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), moreover, Arendt offers an account of property and possession as a death drive. She reads colonialist and imperialist fictions, and their materialist formations in Western history, as always already falling into ruin in a way that resonates for reading narratives by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers and speakers of color:

Property by itself, however, is subject to use and consumption and therefore diminishes constantly. The most radical and the only secure form of possession is destruction, for only what we have destroyed is safely and forever ours. Property owners who not only consume but strive to enlarge their holdings continually find one very inconvenient limitation, the unfortunate fact that men must die. Death is the real reason why property and acquisition can never become a true political principle. A social system based essentially on property cannot possibly proceed toward anything but the final destruction of all property. The finiteness of personal life is as serious a challenge to property as the limitations of society, as the limits of the globe are a challenge to expansion as the foundation of the body politic (145)

In imagining the most exemplary form of possession to be destruction, Arendt works through the self-immolations of the totalitarian regimes of World War II by implicitly returning to Locke’s *Second Treatise*. Locke turns to the “wild Indian” as an emblematic figure for the beginning of self-possession and property rights: “The fruit, or venison, which nourishes the wild Indian, who

knows no enclosure, and is still a tenant in common, must be his, or so his, *i.e.* a part of him, that another can no longer have any right to it, before it can do him any good for the support of his life” (111).⁵¹ For Locke, the fruit of the earth and the beasts of the field become possessions through consumption, by becoming so much a part of the Indian’s body that no one else can own them – or to paraphrase Arendt: only what we use, ingest, or incorporate into our bodies can become safely and forever ours. Locke names this incorporation of the commons into the Indian’s body “property rights”: “Through the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person: this nobody has any right to but himself” (111). Because Locke’s Indian represents a tropological instead of a historical position, Locke can banish the destructive consumption of environments, peoples, and cultures authorized by imperial territorial expansion to the margins, thus allowing the passage to disavow any invocation of the ruin of indigenous bodies in the New World. By grounding property rights within corporeal life, furthermore, Locke’s modern subject is curiously alienated from a prior relation to the earth – the commons. That Arendt revises Lockean possession into self-destructive consumption within her reading of European imperialism returns the “wild Indian” to our notice, nevertheless, as the figure consumed, rather than the originary emblem of self-possessed right. Arendt enables a conceptual re-orientation towards eighteenth-century political theory by returning political theologies of earthly finitude to their antiracist and anticolonial roots in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century African American, Caribbean, and indigenous narratives.⁵²

Once we pivot to texts by writers and speakers of color, such as Ottobah Cugoano and Robert Wedderburn, we understand that they ensure that appeals to collective inheritance of a finite earth remain attuned to the limited terrain and resources of the globe. They repeatedly practice forms of accountability to precarity, or arrangements of living that counter settler colonial

movements in land appropriation, resource exhaustion, and forced labor. I have read eighteenth- and twentieth-century philosophical considerations of political theology alongside an archive that includes narratives by African American, Afro-British, Caribbean, and indigenous speakers and writers because they summon versions of this accountability in their confrontations with both American and British experiments in settler colonialism, slavery, and imperialism. By placing these narratives side-by-side with abstract exercises in political theory and ethics, I show that speakers and writers of color improvise earthly repertoires in practices that often materially traverse or imaginatively transcend the boundaries of the nation-state or the empire.⁵³ Kant's determination to conceptually anchor an ethic of hospitality to the finite terrain of the earth's surface, or Arendt's efforts to root a critique of imperialism within the exhaustibility of earth's resources, echo much that was already voiced in narratives by speakers and writers of color, and, indeed, offer a critical and conceptual methodology for reading transatlantically. To read transatlantically, in other words, is to engage with texts whose geographical points of contact might very well be indigenous settlements in colonial America, Loyalist refugee camps in Nova Scotia or Sierra Leone, the plantation industries of the British West Indies, or the urban spaces of Boston, Philadelphia, Kingston, or London.⁵⁴ Political theologies of earthly finitude announced by speakers and writers of color demand a critical attentiveness to local sites of encounter *and*, as Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd argues in *The Transit of Empire* (2011), to the roads, pathways, and ocean routes of colonial transit. Although Byrd specifically addresses the movements of indigenous peoples, who remain, as she observes, "in motion" across the "ungrievable spaces of suspicion and unintelligibility" within settler colonial states of exception, I believe we could also widen the framework to include the movements of African American and Caribbean migrants (xv). In doing so, we can remain attentive to the local and everyday repetitions of sovereign

procedures of consumption and waste on both sides of the Atlantic, and of efforts by speakers and writers of color to testify to them through political theologies of a finite earth.⁵⁵

On Sanctified Ground

While Cugoano appealed to natural law and human rights discourses to protest the destructive force of settler colonialism, other speakers and writers of color entrench their affirmations of collectivity in evangelical spiritual practices and performances.⁵⁶ More particularly, they resist the totalizing momentum of sovereign states of terror by expressing and performing alternative forms of theological affiliation and spiritual belonging that frequently intersect in often conflicted and ambivalent ways with transatlantic evangelicalism.⁵⁷ Evangelical Christianity, especially in its largest and most prevalent eighteenth-century movement, Methodism, remains the pervasive religious affiliation or heavily figures in nearly every narrative by Anglophone writers of color of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Phillis Wheatley, Ignatius Sancho, John Marrant, Olaudah Equiano, Jarena Lee, William Apess, and others all portray encounters or expressed some kind of affiliation with evangelical Methodism.⁵⁸ Although Ukawsaw Gronniosaw and David George were Baptist, and Samson Occom an ordained Presbyterian minister, they nevertheless shared close ties with either the Methodist preachers George Whitefield and John Wesley, or with Selena Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon, an active religious patron and organizer of the Methodist Connexion.⁵⁹ Mary Prince, furthermore, encountered Moravianism, Methodism's German evangelical counterpart, in Antigua, to which she converted around 1822. As Joanna Brooks, Kristina Bross, Cedric May, Caleb Smith, Jared Hickman, and others have explored, evangelicalism offered many of the frameworks for narrating a spiritual life used by speakers and writers of color throughout the

Atlantic world.⁶⁰ These narrative practices also frequently mediated oppositional discourses on race, contributing to the clandestine, and yet frequently heterodox, reconfigurations of evangelicalism found in these texts.⁶¹

Eighteenth-century evangelical movements exemplified by the Methodists and the Moravians often remain marked by fluid institutional or doctrinal commitments, making it a difficult task to clarify the relationships between its leaders and institutional organization, and its fringe expressions, especially across the geographical distances of the Atlantic world.⁶² Most iterations of eighteenth-century evangelicalism, nevertheless, emphasize what Mark Noll has called the “common conviction that God could actually, actively, and almost tangibly transform repentant sinners” (65).⁶³ Methodism, in particular, according to Misty G. Anderson, remained preoccupied by the “event of salvation,” what John Wesley called “a warming of the heart,” or what was imagined to be a singular and somatically “felt experience of contact with God” (3). The appeal of evangelical conversion for writers and speakers of color may have rested in the extraordinary flexibility of a soteriological imaginary that emphasized freedom from the bondage of sin, as well as what many African American, Caribbean, or indigenous communicants described in their life writing as an egalitarian framework that theoretically recognized individuals exclusively through a spiritual affiliation, as “sinner” or “saved,” rather than through ostensibly secular markers of race, nation, gender, or class.⁶⁴ Across variations in evangelical theology or ecclesiastical organization, the conversion experience, frequently framed in profoundly ecstatic terms as a transformative spiritual “rebirth,” persisted as its central and defining event.⁶⁵

Such depictions of spiritual renewal, however, uneasily co-exist with social death and rebirth in writings by speakers and writers of color. Although I sometimes consider their portrayals of

the event of conversion, in doing so, I am less invested in the phenomenon of conversion itself, but in what their deployments of salvific registers reveal about a shared set of *practices* that habituate a counter political imaginary. While theologies of evangelical conversion at the time often emphasized its condition as an unmediated encounter with the divine, much of the force of evangelicalism lies precisely in the intensity of its forms of mediation, especially through networks of performance and print, as scholars such as Michael Warner, David Paul Nord, Candy Gunther Brown, Misty G. Anderson, and others have all examined.⁶⁶ Part of what made Methodism in particular so capable of elasticity was that it retained some of the liturgical practices of Anglicanism (itself a theological compromise during the Reformation, rather than a creed), but incorporated a worship style marked by zealous and highly emotive (and often outdoors) preaching, an intensely somatic emphasis on Christ's crucifixion within Eucharistic liturgies that affirmed his real presence, and intimate congregational practices, such as hymn-singing, small penitential gatherings and prayer meetings, and the provocatively named "love feasts" (an evening meal modeled after the "agape" feast described in I Cor. 11: 17-34). Despite differences in doctrinal commitments or ecclesiastical affiliation, evangelicalism more broadly offered a shared set of rituals for enthusiastic worship practices that were exceptionally portable for the itinerant preachers, prophets, and writers of color throughout the Atlantic world (Hempton 4-5). Indeed, the narratives I consider all share one performative connection – that spiritual practices *migrate*.⁶⁷

We can see this portability in David George's *An Account of the Life of Mr. David George, from Sierra Leone in Africa* (1793). Displaced by the American Revolution, George recounts his efforts to find a place free from the specter of re-enslavement, fleeing first to Nova Scotia and then to the British-sponsored re-settlement project in Sierra Leone. As with many slave

narratives of the period, he subsumes these efforts within an evangelical imaginary, often reframing his flight from slavery as a pursuit of spiritual freedom. George relates, for instance, that on his arrival in Birchtown, Nova Scotia, he calls a congregation into being by singing in the woods, drawing listeners from the camp into communion with him. Composed primarily of other African American refugees displaced by the Revolution, the congregation is constituted not within a church building, but (in an image resonant for evangelical migrants) within the wilderness:

Here were numbers of my own colour; and I began to sing the first night at a camp, in the woods, for there were no houses then built; but they were just clearing and preparing to erect a town. The Black people came far and near, it being a new thing for them: I kept on every night in the week, and appointed a meeting for the first Lord's day, in a valley between two hills, close by the river; which was attended by great numbers of Whites and Blacks. I was so overjoyed at having once more an opportunity of preaching the word of God, that after I had given out the hymn, I could not speak for tears. In the afternoon we met again, in the same place, and I had great liberty. (656)

Here, it is the preacher's voice that becomes a form of dwelling: in a camp without houses and few standing structures, and with winter approaching, George's nightly singing draws "numbers of my own colour" into bonds of evangelical belonging. George's account rests on the twin pillars of evangelical performance practices – preaching and hymn-singing – within an improvised space for spiritual expression formed far from its institutional centers. At the end of the passage, furthermore, George quietly marks the political stakes of portable, migrant spiritual performances for speakers and writers of color: as a black preacher in the Nova Scotian settlements, he announces that he "had great liberty" (656). Although George could merely be

commenting on his ability to freely practice faith as he sees fit, his status as a fugitive fleeing slavery in Virginia and South Carolina renders the choice an expression of his own self-manumission. As I will explore in other narratives, when church buildings are rare or non-existent (or, more often than not, dominated by the white inhabitants, as Wedderburn, Apess, and others frequently deride), spiritual habits expressed by believers of color emerge within sites of dispossession. These include settlements whose spiritual and political resources remain responsive to the plantations and killing fields of slavery, the displacements of Indian removal, the retreats of fugitivity and marronage, or the temporary camps for refugees of war and revolutionary upheaval.⁶⁸

George's account of a refugee congregation's origins in the speech acts of hymn-singing and outdoor preaching remains only one way speakers and writers of color announced forms of belonging out of experiences of forced migrancy. These repertoires frequently recur to a particular set of spiritual practices – mourning. Mourning repertoires coalesce around sites of interment, through burial litanies or within genres of the eulogy, especially Methodist obituaries and Moravian *lebensläufe*, biographical “life courses” often composed by ministers and either read at funeral services or circulated in religious publications to commemorate the dead. Mourning repertoires recorded by writers of color also covertly mediate indigenous and African practices for marking relationships to the dead. In doing so, these performances model forms of spiritual belonging peculiarly responsive to racial experiences of displacement and dispossession. As both configurations of rituals and ways of marking belonging to particular grounds, mourning repertoires maintain material connections to the earth, becoming a shared liturgical and embodied “possession” for racial migrants unsettled by colonial territorial expansion. Such embattled performance practices, as scholars such as April Langley, Frederick

Moten, Dana Luciano, Vincent Brown, and David Kazanjian and David L. Eng have all considered, accrue profound political significance for writers and speakers of color when the territorial expansions of settler colonialism persistently disregarded African and indigenous mourning practices, and dehumanized their bodily remains.⁶⁹

Mourning repertoires work to illustrate how African American and indigenous literatures remain profoundly preoccupied with grief as both an issue of spiritual practice and of attachment to local sites of interment. In this way, I take Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's work on an Atlantic "performative commons" to contested rites of burial represented in narratives by writers and speakers of color. Dillon argues that a performative commons formed particularly in transatlantic theatrical spaces and staged the central paradox of colonialism: an economic system grounded in the bare labor of slaves that simultaneously imagined new political arrangements of freedom.⁷⁰ The performative commons was enacted through what she calls "commoning practices," or theatrical exercises that "generate a performative commons by articulating relations of mutual belonging in a collective whole" (3). Dillon thus reads the performative commons as a set of *relations* rhetorically and performatively accessible to the Atlantic dispossessed, and whose emergence replaced collective possession of land: "[T]he property that was held in common use for time immemorial created and sustained a set of social relations – an 'assemblage' to use Bruno Latour's term – in which both land and persons were actors in a shared network of relations" (4). She continues by arguing that the theater became an embodied assemblage that gathered representational force when previous forms of collectivity grounded in common land possession were disappearing: "In the space of the theater ... audience and actors together form an assemblage that both embodies and represents the collectivity of the people" (4). By attending to the relationships forged between audience and actors as the exemplar of an emergent theatrical

commons, Dillon grapples with the conflicted conceptual legacy of performance theories marked by absence and loss. Joseph Roach in *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (1996), for instance, argues that performances along the Atlantic littoral substitute, through a process he calls “surrogation,” for crucial absences in colonial memory and history in repertoires that re-animate “actual or perceived vacancies” in cultural repertoires (3). “Performance,” according to Roach, “stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace” (2). Dillon contends, furthermore, that Atlantic print cultures were structurally dependent on such erasures, as frameworks of literacy, education, and circulation summoned a “rational” citizen-subject constituted on the exclusion of black and brown readers and writers.⁷¹ For Dillon then, a performative commons emerged within the theater as an embodied public through unruly assemblages organized to replace the losses of enclosure and the constricted subject formations of print-world public spheres.

African American, Caribbean, and indigenous narratives represent performances that reiteratively embody the devastations of transatlantic slavery encoded in the material losses of kinship lines, burial grounds, and performance erasures through earthly repertoires of mourning. Although the insurgent energy of the commons moved indoors to the theater, as Dillon suggests, I wish to consider how earthly repertoires improvised *outside* the theater – namely, in the graveyards and litanies that sustain connections to deceased kin – also form an alternative commons even when enclosure movements remained intent on privatizing shared land. Earthly repertoires imagined and enacted by speakers and writers of color, then, habituated versions of collective inheritance in the earth. As we already saw with Gronniosaw, a refusal to allow his family access to local churchyard prompted his poignant decision to bury his daughter in the garden behind his house (52-3). In this way, throughout this project I remain attentive to

how an earthly commons of the graveyard emerged in representations of burial sites and spiritual performances of mourning within the printed worlds of narratives by speakers and writers of color. Their life writings, while not playtexts, nevertheless offer instances of performance repetition that represent both their experiences of loss and their attempts to position commoning practices that speak to mourning repertoires created *in extremis*.⁷² Such repertoires remain powerful sites of protest *within* the narratives, even when extensively mediated by the affective cultures of evangelical and abolitionist public spheres.

The confluence of all of these tensions – evangelical prescriptions for interment, settler colonial apathy at African American losses, and the performance improvisation of burial and mourning rituals by black migrants as assemblages of earthly collectivity – appears in a passage from Olaudah Equiano’s *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, An African* (1789). Equiano describes an unnamed African American woman pleading with him to officiate the burial of her child. Unable to secure the services of a white priest, the woman turns to Equiano, whose response offers insight into mourning repertoires extemporized by African and African-descended peoples in colonial Georgia, while also emphasizing Equiano’s chameleon-like ability to performatively slip into a ministerial persona:

Before I left Georgia a black woman, who had a child lying dead, being very tenacious of the church burial service, and not able to get any white person to perform it, applied to me for that purpose. I told her I was no parson; and besides, that the service over the dead did not affect the soul. This however did not satisfy her; she still urged me very hard; I therefore complied with her earnest entreaties, and at last consented to act the parson for the first time in my life. As she was much respected, there was a great company of both

white and black people at the grave. I then accordingly assumed my new vocation, and performed the funeral ceremony to the satisfaction of all present. (121)

The scene opens by repeating a refusal narrated by Gronniosaw: that no local priest would consent to read the burial litany over this woman's child. What Equiano's narrative must negotiate are two competing theories of the work of performance (or, in another register, of theology). On the one hand, he emphasizes his own theatrical flexibility, or his ability to enter into the persona – "to act the part" – of the parson. Once he "assumes [his] new vocation" he performs the ceremony to the "satisfaction of all present," which suggests that this performance "works" irrespective of either an external credentializing agency or the inner sincerity of the actor at the moment of performance. It is, in other words, a deft example of prominent eighteenth-century theories of acting, which, as Peter Holland observes, acknowledged the separation between actor and role: "The style of acting was not one in which the identification with the part was total; the actor never stopped being the actor" (60). On the other hand, Equiano warns the grieving mother that "that the service over the dead did not affect the soul." Although baptized in 1759, Equiano would not fully convert until 1770, and this may be a coded admission that the spiritual actor, or parson, does *not* mediate spiritual meaning through the performance of the burial litany – a variation of the early Christian Donatist heresy, which contended that a priest's own purity was a necessary element in the efficacy of a sacrament.⁷³ It may also be a recognition that earthly performances do not – and cannot – affect the dead. That Equiano ends the passage by describing the "satisfaction" of the grieving congregation, however, suggests that commoning practices formed out of the displacements of Atlantic slavery may have remained peculiarly removed from matters of evangelical belief, at least once mediated as texts within print networks that emphasized otherwise.⁷⁴ Equiano's stress on the separation between actor and

the efficacy of a performance perhaps permitted the fugitive circulation of African and indigenous spiritualities *within* the public performance of Christian litanies.

Evangelical print and performance frameworks approach certain real limits, then, as a hermeneutic for reading a spiritual commons localized in burial sites and mourning repertoires throughout the colonial Atlantic world. Indeed, the speakers and writers of color I consider often express and maintain fidelity to syncretic or heterodox evangelicalisms or non-Christian spiritualities. Between Gronniosaw's probable attachment to Islam, Wedderburn's frequent defense of Jamaican Obeah, or Samson Occom's fidelity to traditional Mohegan and Montauk medicinal traditions, many speakers and writers of color voice iterations of evangelicalism permeable to other spiritual practices. In an incident included in Wedderburn's autobiographical narrative, *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824), directed at evangelical and abolitionist British readers, for instance, Wedderburn recounts how a dispute between his grandmother, Talkee Amy, a practitioner of Jamaican Obeah, and another slave woman concentrated around the question of burial.⁷⁵ The dispute was caused when the unnamed slave woman told Talkee Amy's master that Talkee Amy had "bewitched" his merchant vessel, and he reacted by whipping Wedderburn's grandmother. The two women, however, were compelled to set aside their differences when the woman's child died:

But my grandmother had full satisfaction soon afterwards. The words of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ were fulfilled in this instance: 'Do good to them that despitefully use you, and in so doing you shall heap coals of fire upon their heads.' This woman had an only child, which died soon after this affair took place (plainly a judgment of God); and the mother was forced to come and beg pardon of my grandmother for the injury she had done her, and solicit my grandmother to assist her in the burial of her child. My grandmother

replied, ‘I can forgive you, but I can never forget the flogging;’ and the good old woman instantly set about assisting her in her child’s funeral, it being as great an object to have a decent burial with the blacks in Jamaica. (49-50)

Wedderburn frames his grandmother’s satisfaction as the prophetic outcome of scripture. In his reference to the Bible, however, he conflates a number of verses, including Proverbs 25:21-22 (“If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink: For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head, and the LORD shall reward thee”), Romans 12:19-20 (“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head”), and Matthew 5:44 (“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”).

Wedderburn’s unruly juxtapositions of scripture coalesce to offer a single hermeneutic: he reads the death of the slave woman’s child as “plainly a judgment of God,” or of God announcing a verdict in the sites of slavery’s regimes of social and physical death, in response to the competing emergencies of Talkee Amy’s alleged “witchcraft” and of her subsequent punishment (49). While such a comparatively callous response implies that God will answer for what Wedderburn understands as his elderly grandmother’s unjust abuse, it nevertheless sits uneasily with the theological work summoned by his scriptural confluences.

Such a proliferating archive of sacred language offers a surplus of spiritual meaning, masking what might be a more clandestine hermeneutical maneuver: rather than revealing aspects of the spiritual practices of Obeah and its significance within Jamaican mourning and burial rituals, Wedderburn chooses to substitute Obeah with what seems like a straightforward evangelical

political theology. It signals, in other words, a strategy for concealing and protecting Jamaican burial practices, practices that Vincent Brown has argued were “most authoritative when engaging with the problems presented by the presence of the dead” (147). “Such practices,” Brown continues, “offered people power over the most fraught and perilous feature of life in slave society: the permeable frontier between life and death” (147).⁷⁶ Although Wedderburn’s grandmother refuses to “forget the flogging,” she nevertheless “instantly” assists the other woman in her time of need, in the “great object” of the burial of her child.⁷⁷ Performance practices embedded in autobiographical writings or political non-fiction, genres Wedderburn frequently recurs to, encode ways of marking belonging to sanctified ground in burial, and suggest the limitations of any evangelical hermeneutic to fully account for non-Christian renditions of mourning enacted in the singular colonial sites of everyday death or genocide. Indeed, writing of performances in a slightly later period, Daphne Brooks reminds us that African American performances remain “generically diverse and dissident,” and draw their tactics “from heterogeneous performance strategies,” including conflicting spiritualities (5). Reading figures like Equiano or Wedderburn, then, demands an attentiveness to the precarious polyvocality of performance practices that are syncretic, fugitive, and heterodox. Such earthly repertoires, as I explore more thoroughly in individual chapters, persistently alter or evade transatlantic circulations of evangelical forms of belonging.

A Queer Horizon of Futurity

As this project considers throughout, when read alongside and against their more canonical European contemporaries, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers of color vividly summon anticolonial and antiracist political theologies of a finite earth, ultimately offering important

spiritual and political resources for contesting the everyday and untimely devastations of settler colonial states of exception. While the life writing, sermons and hymns, and poetry by speakers and writers of color offer counter-political theories accountable to settler colonial consumption and waste, they also model a narratological ethic marked by a recognition of the limits of the earth's surface, its resources, and their own labor. It is a narratological orientation analogous, in many ways, to what Anahid Nersessian has recently identified in *Utopia, Limited* (2015) as central to Romanticism. She argues that Romantic aesthetics redefined utopian longing as an orientation towards earthly finitude, limitation of resources, and a restricted future. Romantic poetic practices remain preoccupied with an environmental imperative Nersessian calls an "attentiveness to precarity" (3). This attentiveness, she suggests, becomes a "necessary precondition to elaborating the possibilities of adjustment," or a "formal as well as an ethical operation that allows human beings to accommodate themselves to the world by minimizing the demands they place upon it" (3). When we turn to speakers and writers of color (many of whom were contemporaries to the Romantic writers Nersessian considers), we encounter claims that, while committed to political theologies of earthly finitude, refuse to accommodate themselves to a finite world when that globe remains imbricated within the consuming infrastructures of settler colonial regimes of social death and natal alienation.

In narratives by speakers and writers of color, we are confronted with instances of narratological *surplus* – with linguistic repetitions, performance rehearsals, affective and somatic excesses, or images of bodily dispersals. These narratological surpluses expose the waste at the heart of colonialist fictions of sovereignty, as a harrowing account in Mary Prince's *The History of Mary Prince* (1831), taken down by Susanna Strickland and edited by Thomas Pringle,

conveys. Prince's descriptions of her toil in the salt ponds on Turk's Island, renders a single-commodity island economy that consumes and then disperses the bodies of slaves:

We ... worked through the heat of the day; the sun flaming upon our heads like fire, and raising salt blisters on those parts which were not completely covered. Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone. (71)

This passage exemplifies the brutal equation of Locke's theory of property: slaves' bodies and labor, commodified in service to saltwater capital, is that which is "incorporated," or subsumed, into the corrosive body politic of colonial and imperial economies. Here, Prince's account offers the specter of the living body removed of flesh, wounded until only bone remains. Perhaps more evocatively than any other narrative by a writer or speaker of color in this period, the passage marks how appeals to collective inheritance of the earth must nevertheless confront a surplus of waste, enduring as enfleshed remnants that flow in the saltwaters around Turk's Island, a waste relationally echoed later in the passage when Prince describes her mother's arrival on Turk's Island to toil in the salt marshes. Prince's mother's journey to Turk's Island, and her dislocation from familiar and familial attachments in Bermuda, occasioned her mother to "lose herself" (76). Prince recalls that her mother's loss of psychic stability prompted a harrowing failure of recognition: "She did not know me" (76). While I will return later in chapter three to the ways Prince's mother's journey to Turk's Island rehearses the saltwater deaths of the Middle Passage, for now I want to suggest that her mother's inability to recall her daughter lingers with the ruin of kinship lines under regimes of slavery. Indeed, the psychic and bodily ruin wrought by the salt marshes on both mother and daughter marshals an imaginary that is a grim counterpoint to Ariel's patrilineal ecology of his father's "bones" of "coral made" (*Tempest* 1.2.398).⁷⁸ In many

of the narratives I consider (especially in chapter two on William Apess's writings), enslaved and indigenous bodily remains become constitutive parts of the landscapes and waters of the Caribbean and the Americas, in circulations that Christina Sharpe has called "residence time": "[T]hey, like us, are alive in hydrogen, in oxygen; in carbon, in phosphorous, and iron; in sodium and chlorine. This is what we know about those Africans thrown, jumped, dumped overboard in the Middle Passage; they are with us still" (19). If we can identify an environmental imperative recalled by such political theologies of finitude at all, it is one that must remain accountable to both the *precarity* of flesh under the devastating labor conditions of slavery, and its *persistence* as bodily remainders submerged within the soils and seawaters of the New World.⁷⁹

More than an environmental imperative of flesh, the salt marshes in Prince's narrative underscore, moreover, an important methodological commitment of this project – which is a shift in emphasis from sea to land *and* sea. The Atlantic Ocean has served as the fundamental point of departure for examining African American and Caribbean literatures, from Paul Gilroy's seminal *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) to Christina Sharpe's stunning *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (2016), with oceanic methodological and theoretical frameworks understandably taking precedence over the chthonic, or earthly sites of existence and experience, in considerations of transatlantic slavery.⁸⁰ Even early American indigenous studies, which have more often drawn from territorial spatial categories for their conceptual methodologies, have recently pivoted towards the Atlantic Ocean, such as in critical histories like Jace Weaver's *The Red Atlantic: American Indigenes and the Making of the Modern World* (2014).⁸¹ In Prince's *History*, however, the salt marshes function as both a material and a metonymic littoral between earth and sea, one that blurs the boundary between the open waters of the ocean, and the plantation factories to which slave labor was bound, or the lands on which

Caribbean indigenous peoples were massacred and territorially displaced. By dwelling with the ways the “earth” in “the earth was given to the children of men” anchors the methodological and critical stakes of this project, I do not wish to suggest that writers and speakers of color replace or substitute the experiential and psychic remainders of the Middle Passage with an orientation towards the landscapes of the New World.⁸² Like Prince’s salt marshes, invocations of the earth recursively appeal to an imaginary that included attention to both land *and* sea as measures of the “intimate distance,” to borrow a phrase from Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, between enslaved or indigenous relations of kinship and colonial regimes of sexual violence and familial alienation, or, more broadly, between oceanic trade-routes and territorial arrangements of settlement and land appropriation, and of labor and resource production in plantation economies.⁸³

A fugitive imaginary assembled in narratives by speakers and writers of color returns to the earth in order to voice a range of heterodox spatial, temporal, and familial relations – relations that queer the patrilineal and reproductive politics of colonial regimes of personhood, sexuality, and nationality. To that end, they have inspired critical methodologies developed by queer theorists of early American, African American, Caribbean, and indigenous literatures.⁸⁴ Omise’eke Natasha Tinsley in “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage” (2008), in particular, has highlighted what seems to me to be the critical stakes in reading the earthly repertoires imagined by speakers and writers of color as queer challenges to eighteenth-century myths of the origins of the socio-political regimes, especially in their colonialist grounding in patriarchal and patrilineal orders of relation. She considers how “shipmates,” or “those who survived the middle passage with me,” articulate forms of same-sex attachment and belonging against the alienating experiences of the slave hold (192). In this way,

Tinsley argues that shipmates “resisted the commodification of their bought and sold bodies by feeling and feeling for their co-occupants on these ships” (192). Tinsley recurs to the queer attachments formed in the slave hold “not to claim the slave ship as the origin of the black queer Atlantic. The ocean obscures all origins, and neither ship nor Atlantic can be a place of origin” (192). Tinsley writes that “in relationship to blackness, queerness, and black queerness, the Atlantic is the site of what the anthropologist Kale Fajardo calls ‘crosscurrents,’” or those violent encounters and conflicts maintained by transatlantic political, economic, and cultural exchange (192). While we might, in other words, be inclined to read the “origins” of earthly repertoires imagined by writers and speakers of color in the enclosure movements, territorial displacements, landed thefts, and plantation industries of transatlantic saltwater economies, narratives of enflashed and environmental precarity, such as Prince’s account of the salt marshes on Turk’s Island, remind us that the fictions that contest sovereign violences remain always already entangled in colonial forms of relation.⁸⁵

In pressing a critical methodology that reads the “intimate distances” of colonial relations as expressions of an environmental imperative of flesh, I wish to address how speakers and writers of color perform earthly repertoires that enact heterodox affiliative belongings, both relationally as queer models of inheritance (framed through maternal, sibling, or same-sex bonds that contest patriarchal, patrilineal, and heteronormative forms of attachment), and temporally as lateral temporalities (imagined through prophetic or messianic orientations to the past and future).⁸⁶ William Apess’s *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts* (1835) offers one example of the queer potential of recapitulations of “God has given the earth to the children of men,” when he rewrites it as, “God has given to all men an equal right to possess and occupy the earth, and enjoy the fruits thereof, without any distinction” (168). On the one hand,

Apess claims that the earth was “given to all men,” a version of possession that initially maintains a strong patriarchal alignment. In announcing such a version of collectivity, furthermore, he remains anchored to citizen subject formation and a discourse of human rights. On the other hand, Apess removes the genealogical qualifier of the “children” in “the children of men,” a rhetorical decision potentially at cross-purposes with the patriarchal logic of other changes to the verse. He follows this up by closing with the crucial modifier “without any distinction,” which seems to frame the earth as a lateral, rather than a patrilineal, inheritance. By potentially turning his attention to relationships not bound by genealogical belonging, Apess may voice a version of collective earthly inheritance that summons a queer temporality, an ethic of queer futurity in some ways parallel to that offered by Lee Edelman in *No Future* (2004). A charged polemic, *No Future* outlines a new direction for queer ethics that refuses to orient itself to the future possibility of the child. Edelman urges that queer embodiment represents a future-negating drive that opens up new possibilities for imagining affiliative attachments in a heteronormative world: “De-idealizing the metaphors of meaning on which heteroproduction takes its stand, queerness exposes sexuality’s inevitable coloration by the drive: its insistence on repetition, its stubborn denial of teleology, its resistance to of meaning ... and, above all, its rejection of spiritualization through marriage to reproductive futurism” (27).

While Edelman celebrates the potentiality of such a queer negation of reproductive futurity, for many of the speakers and writers of color I consider, the child – and the futurities the child represents – accrues a more conflicted meaning. While many are forced by colonial displacements to evade the patriarchal or patrilineal attachments of the nuclear family, they nevertheless remain haunted by the painful ruin of future arrangements of collectivity constrained by the losses of their own children. Apess’s substitution of the “children of men”

with “without any distinction,” for instance, ostensibly announces an alternative delineation of a collective right not tied to the nation-state, or to the rigid regimes of race, ethnicity, gender, language, or religious personhood maintained in settler colonial states of exception. His unsettled right “without any distinction” moves across the boundaries of settler colonial subject-formation. It contests, as Mark Rifkin suggests, everyday idioms of national identity and citizenship habituated within an imaginary of the bourgeois nuclear family that is reproduced generationally: “Through the figure of inheritance, Apess suggests that the legacy of displacing Natives and effacing their survival remains ongoing, connected as it is to the sensation of intimate filiation to the nation” (*Settler Common Sense* 2). Apess seems to be invested, at least here, in the heuristic value of a divinely-given right grounded in migrancy as an alternative to liberal formations of right rooted in static relationships to place (through possession, property, and ownership), and grounded in familial and genealogical figurations of belonging.⁸⁷ He therefore summons an early, and perhaps still somewhat inchoate, version of what a queer indigenous collectivity unmoored from teleologies of reproduction and patrilineal descent, or relations “without any distinction,” might look like. The speakers and writers of color I consider often tarry between patrilineal and queer affiliations, at one moment voicing paternal generational connections to ancestors or descendants, and at other moments substituting these attachments through improvised queer familial and affective configurations. Queer kinship affiliations sometimes remain tremulous and evanescent, voiced in forms of relation not always fully distinguishable from the patrilineal and patriarchal attachments of settler colonialism.

By foregrounding such fleeting queer attachments mediated through recursive or lateral futurities, mourning repertoires by speakers and writers of color sought to stall what Dana Luciano has called the “linear, ordered, progressive, and teleological” temporal frameworks that

emerged in nineteenth-century America.⁸⁸ Although philosophers as far apart in history, methodology, and critical commitments as Locke, Kant, and Arendt trace the connections between forms of possession, the sociopolitical arrangements of capitalist consumption, and their tropological and mythic origins in the past, speakers and writers of color who similarly recur to the earth as a critical anchor remain more attentive, in various ways, to the *temporal* dimensions of bodily and earthly finitude. Samson Occom, for instance, in a telling grammatical formation rendered in one of his letters, seems to move the spatial force of divine inheritance of the earth from the past to a deferred future, a lateral temporal arrangement that enacts a quiet messianism (and, in doing so, anticipates the messianic prophetics of Wedderburn, as I will argue in chapter four). In a 1791 letter arguing that indigenous communities “must have Teach[ers] of their own Coular [sic] or Nation,” Occom explicitly links his spiritual leadership to a form of political expression centered on collective inheritance of the earth: “But I think the Time must come, when they shall beg Jesus Christ for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the Earth his Position [sic]” (133). Occom’s own reformulation of “the earth was given to the children of men,” this letter frames indigenous led teaching and preaching as performance roles necessary to any political project to reclaim sovereign inheritance of the earth. Written within a year of his death in 1792, Occom’s “the Time must come” ultimately tarries with a temporal indeterminacy – it is not “the time *has* come” or “the time *is* come” but “the time *must* come” – that remains subordinated to the ethical imperative offered by spiritually enabled models for organizing and practicing indigenous sovereignty.

Occom’s “the time must come” remains, after all, a future deferred, a “not yet” that nevertheless exists in the present as an imperative. Giorgio Agamben, in *The Time that Remains*, considers how Paul’s Letter to the Romans enables an immanent, non-teleological *practice* of

salvation – of messianism – as a future deferred.⁸⁹ In volume II of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, furthermore, Jacques Derrida, drawing on theologians and philosophers of messianism, has named this future deferred living in the time of the “as if.” Derrida mediates on what it may look like to performatively communicate across the impossible distances of a world fractured by mortality and finitude. He recurs to a performative “as if” – we live “as if” such a world has existed and will continue to exist into the future. As Derrida frames it: “Under the sign of this ‘as if’ ... we allow ourselves really to be affected by a possibility of the impossible ... by the impossible possibility that the dead one be still affected or that we should still be affected by the dead one him or herself” (149). According to Derrida, the *as if* is not a naïve performance that calls this common world (what, for Occom, would be an indigenous present transformed by reclaiming a divine inheritance in the earth) into being. Instead, according to Michael Nass, the *as if* becomes a negative act of *poesis*, a creative performance of world-building that “would be a making *as if* that leaves within the world a trace of the end or loss of the world” (60). This sense of an eschatological remnant, a trace of loss or absence, that constitutes a common world emerges most powerfully where the *as if* summons a particular orientation toward a finite present:

[T]hat where there is no world, where the world is not here or there, but *fort*, infinitely distant over there, that what I must do, with you and carrying you, is make it that there be precisely a world, just a world, if not a just world, or to do things so as to make *as if* there were just a world, and to make the world come to the world ... during the finite time of such an impossible voyage between two non-shores where nothing happens – the only thing that can make it possible that I can live and have or let you live, enjoy or have or let

you enjoy, [is] to carry you for a few moments without anything happening and leaving a trace in the world. (268)

With Derrida's *as if*, we confront a conflicted messianism, for it approaches a performative (even liturgical) rendering of expectation out of a loss of the world. Derrida imagines a spiritual relationship to the present as a kind of tenancy, a waiting in expectation for the divine restoration of earthly inheritance invoked in Occom's future imperative. Occom's "the time must come" then, when read as a performative *as if* written near the end of his life as a prophetic anticipation of full indigenous sovereignty, quietly approaches a political sensibility that transforms the singular repetitions and narratological excesses of loss rendered in mourning repertoires by racial strangers into a collective practice for living in expectation of an anticipated future always already deferred. Mark Rifkin, surveying indigenous prophetic traditions in nineteenth- and twentieth-century indigenous literatures, observes that such prophetic instances "[indicate] less a rupture in time than the ways other-than-chronological forms of experience remain immanent in everyday life" (*Settler Time* xii). In doing so, indigenous prophetic practices "challenge ... settler narratives of the historical inevitability of Indian subordination and disappearance" (xii). As a form of prophetic performance archived in his correspondence, Occom's letter anticipates a form of world-making that strives to evade the temporal procedures of colonial consumption and waste, ever mindful of the earth's material limits. Residence time, prophetic time, messianic time, queer time – for speakers and writers of color who appear throughout this work time persists as an entrenched part of colonial historicity and is rendered through everyday configurations of non-linear temporal experience, one deeply connected to contingent familial bonds.

Performing a Politics of Finitude and Futurity

In chapter one, “Mourning’s Small Plots,” I attend to what I am calling “small plots” – or brief, often tersely or economically narrated moments from Ukawsaw Gronniosaw’s *The Remarkable Particulars of the Life of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince* (1770?), Samson Occom’s 1786 journals, and Phillis Wheatley’s epyllion “Niobe in Distress for her Children, Slain by Apollo” (1773) – that voice sorrow over losing a child and efforts to arrange for their burial. I specifically linger with accounts of the deaths of Gronniosaw and Occom’s daughters, of Occom’s dream of the long-dead evangelical preacher, George Whitefield, and of the slaughter of Niobe’s children translated and re-imagined in Wheatley’s poem. Dispossessed of a common inheritance in the earth through the economic infrastructures of slavery and colonialism, Anglophone writers of color were enjoined by evangelical affirmations of estrangement in both spiritual liturgies and models of spiritual autobiography to portray themselves as wanderers not fully at home, or to imagine themselves treading lightly on the earth – “I am ... a stranger in the world, and a pilgrim here,” as Gronniosaw declared (48). In recurring to these moments, I wish to consider how each encapsulates a central dilemma for indigenous, African, and African-descended writers in the late 1770s and 1780s: how to use evangelical models of spiritual conversion to reclaim a connection to the earth, while challenging the territorial displacements and reproductive patrilineal order of settler colonialism. In particular, I argue that such dilemmas localize in these moments around small plots – around linguistic and performative repetitions or surpluses that intrude even in small, tersely narrated moments, as well as particular sites of burial. The narratological practices employed by Gronniosaw, Occom, and Wheatley suggest that this transatlantic work of mourning, reiteratively rehearsed through expressive repertoires

collected and repeated in narratives by writers and speakers of color, recursively linger with racial experiences inassimilable to evangelical exemplars of spiritual strangerhood

Chapter two, “Witnessing History Made Flesh in William Apess’s Writings,” examines a range of William Apess’s writings as juridical narratives that summon witnesses to testify to the spectralizing arrangements of the settler state. I engage, in particular, in recursively reading practices developed out of an engagement with political theology in order to consider his witnesses against the pronouncements of the 1977-79 Mashpee trials, which refused to recognize the Mashpee community as an indigenous tribe. Throughout, I argue that Apess’s witnesses matter *and* have matter because they often take form as bodily fragments – skin, dismembered limbs, corpses – that resist configuring indigenous bodies as a spectral “vanishing Indian.” By attending to flesh, Apess’s juridical theologies remain attuned to the material remainders of racial pasts in quotidian affective arrangements and communal interactions that continually threaten to disrupt the temporal orders of the settler colonial state. In bearing witness to colonial atrocity, Apess refuses to allow his witnesses, even those who testify to it through their death and dismemberment, to vanish from history. To that end, the devastated bodies appearing in Apess’s writings – including broken kinship lines in *A Son of the Forest* (1831), King Philip’s dismemberment and an indigenous child’s disinterred corpse in *The Eulogy on King Philip* (1836), and testimonial skin-books in *An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man* (1832) – become figurations of the past inscribed on American bodies (both indigenous and white), but which remain the very texts left unread in contemporary judgements of indigenous land and recognition claims.

In Chapter three, “Mary Prince and the Matter of Salt,” I explore the persistent resonance of salt – as a commodity, a form of punishment, a metaphor for spiritual enrichment, and a mediator

within affective circuits – within Mary Prince’s *The History of Mary Prince*. I consider how the *History* representations of salt and saltwater upend its spiritual and affective associations within the evangelical and abolitionist public cultures of print and performance the narrative circulated within. More specifically, I argue that the two major cultural discourses mediating Prince’s *History*, evangelical Moravianism and antislavery activism (grounded in what we might call its own secular theology emphasizing the spectacle of enslaved injury), shared an interconnected impetus to collapse enfolded boundaries between subjects by sharing feeling – or, in the idiom of eighteenth-century ethical theory, by sharing sympathy. By refusing the powerful associations between enslaved bodies and broader politico-theological cultures of feeling, the *History* grafts these relations to an affective circuit where salt materializes what Prince calls the “great torment” of slavery: “Oh, the trials! the trials! they make the salt water come into my eyes when I think of the days in which I was afflicted – the times that are gone; when I mourned and grieved with a young heart for those whom I loved!” (64). The “times that are gone” summons a fraught, recursive temporality, an experience of lost time that has everything to do with imagining an earthly work of mourning that refuses to speak. It is a work of mourning, I want to suggest, that exercises in its reserved portrayal of maternal and sororal grief what Édouard Glissant has called in *The Poetics of Relation* (1990/1997) “the right” to practice “opacity,” where its contours evade the colonialist reading practices mediating (or suppressing) the physical and sexual violences of Caribbean slave-holding regimes (189).

In chapter four, “Robert Wedderburn’s Remaining Futurity,” I explore Jamaican radical and heterodox preacher Robert Wedderburn, who turns to a post-Haitian Revolution futurity as a horizon for envisioning a global anticolonial political order, an order that attempts to reanimate suspended black historicities. As with Occom in his measured declaration that the “time must

come” for an opened horizon of indigenous sovereignty, Wedderburn announces that a “time is fast approaching” for global revolution, and continually renders black futurity not only as an anticipated revolution but as an outcome of peculiarly *prophetic* announcement. Wedderburn reinscribes Caribbean radical practices within a recursive temporal order, dynamically linked through his spiritual heterodoxy and revolutionary radicalism. Wedderburn’s political activism and writings question the conflicted relationship between earthly finitude and a longing for total revolution in order to render it a politically and spiritually enabled possibility, but a possibility nevertheless only enacted by a remnant. By reading Wedderburn’s prophetic persona alongside critics of finitude, recursive futurity, and messianism, including Walter Benjamin, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, and Maurice Blanchot, I consider how Wedderburn’s autobiographical and political writings read the work of the Haitian Revolution as unfinished. Drawing on the work of David Scott’s *Conscripts of Modernity* and *Omens of Adversity*, we may read Wedderburn’s writings, as well as surveillance records of his public speaking, as informed an understanding of the Haitian Revolution as a tragic suspension of radical history. Even in moments where the Haitian Revolution is not overtly invoked, Wedderburn uses varied embodied practices – essentially spiritual liturgies – of resistance to conceive of a messianic present, or a temporal opening for a reclaimed future. He primarily reads these spiritual liturgies as a matrilineal prophetic inheritance, one that links Wedderburn to his grandmother, Talkee Amy, his mother, Rosanna, and his half-sister, Miss Campbell. More particularly, I argue that by turning to three arenas of spiritual contact and cross-fertilization – his participation in London urban radicalism and Thomas Spence’s agrarian communalist project, his anticolonial redefinitions of Methodist liturgy and theology in London and the Caribbean, and his crucial juxtaposition of Jamaican Obeah with Maroon fugitive practices – we see how Wedderburn

creates versions of historical rupture that anticipate the future fulfillment of the global work of the Haitian Revolution.

Chapter One:
Mourning's Small Plots

“For I am a stranger with thee: and a
sojourner, as all my fathers were.”
Book of Common Prayer

“I am willing, and even desirous, to be
counted as nothing, a stranger in the
world, and a pilgrim here.”
Ukawsaw Gronniosaw

“My world must be that of strangers.”
Michael Warner

In the order for burial of the dead in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1765, Oxford), the priest rehearses Psalm 39:12: “Hear my prayer, Oh Lord, and give ear to my cry; do not be silent to my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” One of two psalms (the other is Psalm 90) that could be recited during the funeral litany in the *Book of Common Prayer*, the verse summons spiritual repertoires, or mourning scripts, for expressing temporal and spatial relationships with the dead. In this case, the verse evokes an important evangelical hermeneutic that undertook to read the believer's life as a pilgrimage, perhaps most famously rendered in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678).¹ Within this framework, the believer-as-wanderer is understood to be not at home on earth, perpetually alienated from earthly political orders. The burial litany performatively enacts this alienation with the affirmation “I am a stranger,” but because the rite mediates congregational grief, it speaks within a spiritual

hermeneutic that nevertheless retains a sense of collectivity. The priest's recitation of the psalm, furthermore, enjoins the congregation to imagine their ancestors as the first strangers, and that the speaker's ancestors express fidelity to God through an inherited alienation. The litany evokes a vision of genealogical linearity – “as all my *fathers were*” – that frames this condition of spiritual estrangement as a familial disinheritance extending into the past, similar to the reiterative ancestral imperative imagined in “the earth was given to the children of men” (as well as the material organization found in cemeteries, where burial plots are grouped by family line). That this verse appears in the litany for the burial of the dead offers a spatial arrangement strangely counter to its temporalities of linear belonging: at the moment the believer is spiritually proclaimed to have arrived at home in heaven, the corpse is also laid to rest in the earth. Once the bodily remains of the stranger are interred, through decomposition they become ontologically co-extensive with the earth, as liturgically encoded later in the litany in the refrain “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” The burial litany thus marks a dual settlement – soul in heaven, body in the earth – that transforms the believer's condition from wanderer to *arrivant*.

While an evangelical theologian might contest this reading of the dual resting places of both soul and flesh as too Manichean, the litany for the burial of the dead encapsulates a central dilemma for indigenous, African, and African-descended writers in the late 1770s and 1780s: how to use evangelical models of conversion and mourning to reclaim connections to earth and community, when those models marked them as strangers because of sin and guilt, rather than through the territorial displacements and the reproductive and patrilineal alienations of slavery and settler colonialism.² Dispossessed of a common inheritance in the earth through transatlantic economic infrastructures, Anglophone writers of color were enjoined by evangelical affirmations of estrangement – “I am a stranger with thee and a pilgrim here” – to portray themselves as

wanderers not fully at home on the globe. They are to render themselves treading lightly on the earth.³ One itinerant African preacher, John Marrant opened his autobiography with, “Here we have no continuing city,” framing evangelical estrangement for racial strangers as a crucial question of community (111). Less well-known than Bunyan’s spiritual autobiography *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Marrant’s *A Narrative of the Lord’s Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, A Black* (1785) transplants the imagery of spiritual pilgrimage to the New World, where he depicts one such temporary “city” in the black refugee camps in Nova Scotia, a narrative emphasis shared by other writers of color in the eighteenth century. These tensions between collective and singular forms of strangerhood, moreover, operated as a constitutive part of the ecclesiastical, print, and performance circuits mediating African and indigenous life writings. Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, for instance, remarked, “I am willing, and even desirous, to be counted as nothing, a stranger in the world, and a pilgrim here,” but this crisp affirmation occurs during an intense religious examination, where every Thursday for seven weeks forty-eight Dutch Reformed ministers tested whether or not Gronniosaw “was what [he] pretended to be” – an evangelical Christian (48). His *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, As Related by Himself* (1770?), furthermore, was “taken down” by an anonymous “young LADY of the town of LEOMINSTER” and edited by Walter Shirley, a Methodist minister in Selena Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon’s Connexion (32).⁴ Already an ethnic, linguistic, and religious stranger, and violently unsettled from his native land in Bornu (modern-day Nigeria), Gronniosaw contended with testimonial frameworks that insistently channeled his lived experiences as a slave into a “spiritual odyssey” from bondage in sin to freedom in Christ (Sensbach, *Separate Canaan* 111).⁵ Gronniosaw’s *Remarkable Particulars*, as with many narratives by persons of color, was extensively mediated through evangelical idioms,

practices, and institutional structures precluding a model of spiritual authority that controlled the entrance of Christians of color into an evangelical company of strangers.⁶

Tracing the conflicted representations of spiritual and political strangerhood in African and indigenous life writings of the 1770s and 1780s requires a critical practice attentive to both the evangelical print networks these works circulated within *and* to the spiritual performance repertoires narrated within the texts, which repeatedly strive to evade or undercut the public cultures of evangelical print.⁷ Although evangelical print networks often served as crucial (and carefully regulated) outlets for eighteenth-century authorship, focusing on figurations of alienation by speakers and writers of color offers one way to reimagine the conceptual scaffolding of what Michael Warner in *Publics and Counterpublics* (2002) calls the “world ... of strangers” enacted by print models of address (122). Warner argues that the modern public is constitutive of relations among strangers and, through its mediating capacities in “print, theater, diffuse networks of talk, commerce, and the like,” forms the social imaginary out of which communication occurs between strangers across space and time (56-7).⁸ Warner, furthermore, elaborates that a counterpublic, while utilizing similar communication mediums as a public, “enables a horizon of opinions and exchange” that “remain distinct from authority and can have a critical relation to power” (56). In what I think is his most suggestive elaboration, Warner maintains that counterpublics disentangle public communication mediums from their spoken and unspoken ground of authority, derived in part because counterpublics address dominant audiences from positions of alienation in order to engage in the acts of transformative world-making: “Counterpublics are ‘counter’ to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining of stranger sociability and its reflexivity; as publics, they remain oriented to stranger circulation in a way that is not just strategy but constitutive of membership and its affects” (121-

22). He concludes that counterpublics incorporate “the expansive estrangement of public speech as conditions of their common world,” revealing the ways public forms of speech and print create strangers in the very act of professing to bridge difference (122). Turning to eighteenth-century speakers and writers of color puts pressure on the conceptual armature of Warner’s counterpublics: to what extent can racial strangers – materially alienated through slavery and territorial displacement, communicatively alienated through linguistic differences and print models of literacy, and spiritually alienated through adopted religious practices that paradoxically offered communal bonds of belonging at the very moment they articulated their own inherited strangerhood – performatively enact a counterpublic, much less a common world? What transformative acts of world-making are possible under these precarious and urgent conditions?⁹

Rather than addressing these questions within the large-scale formations of transatlantic common worlds of print, I want to suggest that Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, Samson Occom, and Phillis Wheatley engage with the tensions inherent to evangelical strangerhood by rendering what I am calling “small plots,” or short, tersely rendered moments in their narratives that voice sorrow over a singular loss. A stutter of grammar, an unruly flare of unspeakable emotion, a briefly disorienting temporal distortion – small plots emerge in the fleeting narratological excesses and evasions constitutive of African American and indigenous works of mourning. They leverage the weight of political and theological forms of world-making around eminently practical matters of burial, of the everyday locations and litanies of interment. These small plots often center on the death of children – of the deaths of Occom and Gronniosaw’s young daughters by fever, for instance, or the massacre of Niobe’s sons and daughters in Wheatley’s epyllion “Niobe in Distress for her Children, Slain by Apollo” (1773). In Gronniosaw’s

Remarkable Particulars, Occom's letters and journals, and Wheatley's poetry, small plots press the conceptual or philosophical ground for spiritual personhood and affiliation within evangelical circuits of belonging centered on claims of strangerhood. Small plots articulated by writers of color as diverse in their styles and genres as Gronniosaw, Occom, and Wheatley, more particularly, reimagine the spiritual witness of burial liturgies that attempt to draw spiritual pilgrims into new spatial and temporal forms of belonging – a performative becoming that evangelically names both bodily remains and its surviving kin “a stranger with thee.” Narratives by speakers and writers of color instead summon a work of mourning where they use their experiences of spiritual, political, and territorial alienations to express alternative scripts for liturgically consecrating the dead. These small plots consider how the communal intentions of burial litanies enact spiritual fidelity, and how the work of mourning voiced within these practices remains accountable (or not) to the displacements of racial estrangement, what Lloyd Pratt, addressing a slightly later confluence of African American print and rhetorical positioning in *The Strangers Book* (2016), has called “stranger humanism” (1-2). Reading, in particular, Frederick Douglass's oeuvre alongside the coterie publications of the *hommes de couleur libres* responsible for the anthology *Les Cénelles: Choix de poésies indigènes* (1845) in New Orleans, Pratt argues that these two bodies of writing enacted an African American formation of strangerhood that “cultivat[ed] an apostolic openness to others” through rhetorical positionings and print cultures grounded in recognizing pluralities of experience (3). In a conceptual move particularly resonant for reading Occom, Wheatley, and Gronniosaw, Pratt continues by maintaining that this version of stranger humanism remains fleeting: “[T]he successful collation of form and institutional conditions is a short-lived thing ... The rules and results of stranger humanism are always occasional. This is also because the forms of being-with-strangers that this

writing pursues do not permit the creation of some greater whole – whether a public or a romantically conceived nation – that is subordinate over its members” (8). While perhaps less developed than the rhetorical positioning of Douglass or the coterie writing of the *hommes de couleur libres* in the 1840s, in the 1770s Wheatley, Occom, and Gronniosaw knew each other’s work or corresponded with each other, and their shared emphases on the meaning of evangelical strangerhood fleetingly coalesce within a narratological praxes of small plots.¹⁰ Within these contexts, I am reading passages that represent the singular challenges of surviving (or not surviving) the consuming ruins of settler colonialism as ephemeral performative and rhetorical positionings shared by these three writers and speakers of color as an emergent form of stranger evangelism.¹¹

By attending to small matters of plot and narrative, I am also influenced by Michael Naas and Pascale-Anne Brault’s editorial practices in Jacques Derrida’s *The Work of Mourning* (2001), a collection of eulogies and memorials Derrida wrote for colleagues and friends (2001). In the critical introduction, Naas and Brault discuss their decision to collect and print these eulogies as a *work* (rather than *works*) of mourning: “By bringing these various tributes together under a single cover, by drawing up a sort of account of those whom Derrida has mourned, we have in effect asked each of these texts to reckon not only with the singular death that each addresses but with one another, and with the inevitable repetition ... that each represents in relation to the others” (2). The “work,” in this sense, is at once a text and a psychological exercise in grief, a form of narrative *address* and an effort at *redress*. The work of mourning conceived by writers of color in the 1770s and 1780s remains preoccupied with both the narrative and psychological tensions inherent in efforts to account for “a singular death,” but that nevertheless makes particular claims for repetitions of racial experience across time and space.

Such repetitions with difference are often revealed at the level of narrative through linguistic echoes that gesture towards the lived experiences of their engagements with eighteenth-century transatlantic performance practices, which are themselves always constituted, as Joseph Roach reminds us in *Cities of the Dead* (1996), out of such reiterative enactments: “The paradox” of performance “resides in the phenomenon of repetition itself: no action or sequence of actions may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance” (30). This transatlantic work of mourning, reiteratively rehearsed through expressive repertoires collected and repeated in narratives by writers and speakers of color, recursively linger with racial experiences inassimilable to evangelical exemplars of spiritual strangerhood. As with Gronniosaw’s probable devotion to Islam or Occom’s commitment to indigenous medicinal practices, a polyvocal fidelity to non-Christian spiritual arrangements migrates with these displaced racial strangers.¹² In mediating these often precarious and heterodox forms of belonging, their small plots strive to construct a *performative* ground for the itinerant rootlessness enforced by the territorial spread of settler colonialism and slavery. Once narrated by writers of color, these repertoires rehearse the alienating pressures of genealogical finitude into a shared project for imagining collective possession of the earth.

“the garden behind the house...”

Ukawsaw Gronniosaw (1705-1775) in his *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars of the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, An African Prince, Written by Himself* (1770?) relates his efforts to construct a work of mourning responsive to his forced alienation from his home in Africa and experience of slavery in the Caribbean and colonial America. Probably born in 1705 in Bornu (“Bournou” in the text) in modern northeastern Nigeria,

Gronniosaw claimed that his grandfather was “the reigning king” of the area, suggesting that his family would have held a high degree of responsibility in the governance and trade of Bornu, a significant market center in sub-Saharan economies (Hanley 363). At age fifteen, Gronniosaw was kidnapped by a Gold Coast ivory merchant, purchased by a Dutch captain, and transported to Barbados (37-9). He toiled in Barbados for two years before he was sold in 1722 to a Dutch Calvinist minister, Theodorus Frelinghuysen (the “Mr. Freelandhouse” of the narrative), who took Gronniosaw to New York and taught him to read (probably Dutch, rather than English). Just before Frelinghuysen’s death in 1747, Gronniosaw belatedly converted to Christianity and was manumitted, although he was not baptized until at least 1765/6 (Hanley 370-1). While Gronniosaw chose to stay with Frelinghuysen’s widow and children for a while, he eventually enlisted as a cook on a British privateer and later as a soldier in the British Army (44-7). He served in Martinique and Cuba, before being discharged and moving to London, where his contacts with evangelicalism brought him to George Whitefield, who assisted him in finding housing and work.¹³ Once in Britain, Gronniosaw met and married a young English widow, Betty, who already had a child and had at least four more children (Mary, Edward, Samuel, and James Albert, Jr.) with Gronniosaw (47-8; Hanley 372).

Despite Whitefield’s initial aid, Gronniosaw experienced successive periods of poverty as he moved through the country. He lived and worked in London, Colchester, and Norwich, before eventually settling in Kidderminster in 1771. Gronniosaw forged an array of evangelical connections with Quakers, Calvinists, and Methodists, who often assisted him with finding housing and work for his growing family. On Christmas day in 1771, his children were baptized at the Old Independent Meeting House by Benjamin Fawcett, a Calvinist minister and friend of Selena Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon (Hanley 371). It is probably through Fawcett that

Gronniosaw became familiar with Hastings's Calvinist Methodist Connexion, an association critical to the publication of the *Remarkable Particulars*.¹⁴ The *Remarkable Particulars* is dedicated to Hastings, and her cousin, Walter Shirley, a minister in the Connexion, provided the preface to the narrative. According to a recently discovered letter from Gronniosaw to Hastings, furthermore, he received a charitable donation from her that provided his family with sustenance and enabled him to travel to nearby Leominster (Hanley 372). The letter refers to a "Mrs Marlowe," who may be "the young LADY of the town of LEOMINSTER" referred to in the narrative's preface who took down Gronniosaw's life history (32). Probably published in London in 1770, its earliest surviving edition is from Bath in 1772, making the *Remarkable Particulars* was one of the earliest slave narratives to appear in English.¹⁵ Until recently, nothing was known of Gronniosaw's later life, but a new archival discovery by historian Terry Cavanaugh has identified his short obituary, published in the *Chester Chronicle*:

On Thursday died, in this city, aged 70, James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African prince, of Zoara. He left the country in the early part of his life, with a view to acquire proper notions of the Divine Being, and of the worship due to Him. He met with many trials and embarrassments, was much afflicted and persecuted. His last moments exhibited that cheerful serenity which, at such a time, is the certain effect of a thorough conviction of the great truths of Christianity. He published a narrative of his life. Chester St Oswald's Burial 28th Sept. 1775: James Albert (a blackm) [sic], aged 70. (October 2, 1775)

Providing a biographical summary of Gronniosaw's life without ever mentioning slavery, the obituary focuses instead on his fidelity to Christianity, a spiritual commitment a closer reading of the *Remarkable Particulars* quietly seems to trouble or even evade.¹⁶

Almost the last event narrated in Gronniosaw's *Remarkable Particulars* directly engages with the question of his spiritual devotion through the difficult politics of mourning and burial.¹⁷ Vincent Brown in *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (2010) argues that sites of struggle over mortuary practices (and he looks specifically at Jamaica during the centuries of slavery) are not merely the purview of theology, but resonate with social and political meaning: "Relations with the dead, by virtue of their powerful symbolism and association with things sacred, have the ability to connect private and public concerns, by aligning individual experiences of loss and memory with the interests of community, church, or state" (6). Gronniosaw concludes his narrative by describing the death of his young daughter from fever, and the challenge of locating an accommodating burial site for her in Norwich. A religious dissenter and not a member of the local parish, Gronniosaw was at first not permitted to bury his daughter in the Anglican cemetery, and his request for her burial at dissenting cemeteries was also rejected:

Nor did this misfortune come alone, for just at this time we lost one of our little girls, who died of a fever; this circumstance occasioned us new troubles, for the Baptist minister refused to bury her because we were not members. The [Anglican] parson of the parish denied us because she had never been baptized. I applied to the Quakers, but met with no success; this was one of the greatest trials I ever met with, as we did not know what to do with our poor baby – At length I resolved to dig a grave in the garden behind the house, and bury her there; when the parson of the parish sent for me to tell me he would bury the child, but did not chuse to read the burial service over her. I told him I did not mind whether he would or not, as the child could not hear it. (52-3)

Gronniosaw's dilemma is one which many dissenters faced: most burial grounds were Anglican and refused to allow non-conforming Christians space for internment. But his problem is compounded by the refusal of even dissenting congregations to allow the burial of his daughter on their grounds as well because of her parents' status as non-member of any church, and her own status as an unbaptized child.¹⁸ What Gronniosaw narrates therefore is a harrowing series of refusals by the Anglicans, the Baptists, and the Quakers, a series of refusals that foreclose Gronniosaw and his wife's expression of mourning within sanctioned liturgical spaces. This foreclosure appears at first to constrict the family's agency – "we did not know what to do with our poor baby" – and compound their experience and expression of grief – "this was one of the greatest trials I ever met with" (53).

Gronniosaw, however, uses this series of refusals to authorize a small plot – or, an alternative burial space and rite that evades institutional arrangements of spiritual power. In doing so, Gronniosaw's narrative itself becomes an alternative litany for mediating expressions of grief. As the speaker in this text, Gronniosaw performs a heterodox repertoire of mourning, the script for which is, "At length I resolved to dig a grave in the garden behind the house and bury her there" (53). Confronted with this singular emergency, all Gronniosaw has is a bit of earth. Present in the script of Gronniosaw's grief is a resolve to consecrate a new space, a small plot in the garden behind the house, from which to mourn and remember his daughter. The conclusion of the passage renders this imagined instantiation of a new cemetery in the garden behind the house unnecessary though when the Anglican parson ultimately relents to the child's burial. In one final refusal in the series of refusals, the parson nevertheless declines to read the burial service over the child. His repudiation prompts Gronniosaw's provocative response that "the child could not hear it" anyway. While earlier Gronniosaw imagined an alternative site from

which to bury and mourn his daughter, his response that “the child could not hear” the burial rite seems to renounce the liturgical efficacy of the burial litany. The parson’s performance of the liturgy will not apparently enact any spiritual effect on the child. It remains, after all, an empty ritual.

Gronniosaw’s repudiation of the burial litany accrues a particular performative resonance given the way the *Remarkable Particulars* narrates – or elides – his encounters with numerous spiritualities. In particular, the *Remarkable Particulars* lingers on his fraught relationship with evangelical Christian spaces and discourses in colonial America and Britain, especially those of the Dutch Calvinists, Methodists, and Quakers. As critical examinations of Gronniosaw’s narrative by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Helena Woodard, Eve Tavor Bannet, Jennifer Harris, and Ryan Hanley have shown, Gronniosaw’s self-portrayal as an earnest seeker of spiritual truth in the mode of *Pilgrim’s Progress* often works to undergird a claim for personal spiritual authority.¹⁹ Jennifer Harris identifies what she calls “willful elisions” in the narrative and argues that Gronniosaw shrewdly utilized the expectations of white evangelical readers to highlight aspects of his narrative at the expense of other erasures, most specifically his contact with and probable knowledge of Islam (45).²⁰ Although Gronniosaw never explicitly claims Islam as his spiritual heritage, Harris argues that residents in his birthplace of Bornu were primarily Muslim, and she carefully reads the *Remarkable Particulars* for persistent traces of Islamic belief and practice.²¹ Because Gronniosaw elides this history, Harris concludes that Gronniosaw cannily manipulated the presentation of his life history and suited his descriptions of his spiritual experiences according to the expectations of evangelical readers (44-45). Reading Gronniosaw’s narrative of his daughter’s death and burial in light of his probable Islamic heritage, Gronniosaw’s contention that the child could not or did hear the liturgy could be a coded

expression of the Islamic belief that *all* children who die go to Paradise, and Gronniosaw may not have been concerned over her spiritual state.²² On the other hand, because he described her death as “one of the greatest trials I ever met with,” Gronniosaw may have also been troubled that he was expressing “immoderate grief” (forbidden in Islam), prompted by the comparatively callous attitude toward the dead he was encountering from both conforming and non-conforming British Christians, as Muslims are commanded to respect all the dead.²³ Islamic burial rites, finally, did not require consecrated ground or the mediation of an Imam to occur, which illuminates Gronniosaw’s contention that he and his wife could provide a sufficient burial site in the garden behind their house.²⁴ What emerges in the passage then is a work of mourning deeply attuned to fissures in evangelical forms of knowledge and practice, where differences in denominational commitment potentially disguise alternative modes of spiritual fidelity. This attentiveness centers on a claim of unresponsiveness – “the child could not hear it” – and suggests crucial limits to the efficacy of any evangelical or Anglican burial litany that names forms of spiritual belonging between the living and the dead. That Gronniosaw chooses to end his narrative with this small plot becomes a peculiarly telling choice given his recognition that evangelical Christians remain his primary readers.

Reading the passage’s work of mourning as an implicit claim for the limitations of liturgical efficacy permits a re-reading of the *Remarkable Particulars* for other moments in which Gronniosaw reimagines his own relationship to spiritual power. Because the narrative’s racial consciousness is filtered through an evangelical public sphere not yet impacted by the counterpublic antislavery activism that emerged in the late 1780s in Britain, the *Remarkable Particulars* has often been read by critics to lack the nuanced political awareness of later slave narratives (Gates 133-40). Yet, attending to moments where Gronniosaw renders such

performative repertoires for mourning disclose how the narrative's small plots voice equivocal repudiations of evangelicalism. Gronniosaw, for instance, subtly contests Christianity's claims to universality while listening to a sermon on Revelation preached by Frelinghuysen. The sermon takes as its text Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. 1:7). In what appears to be an image of global mourning provoked by the coming of Christ, Gronniosaw rereads the verse in the context of his own experience of forced migration and enslavement:

These words affected me excessively; I was in great agonies because I thought my master directed them to me only; and, I fancied, that he observed me with unusual earnestness – I was further confirm'd in this belief as I looked round the church, and could see no one person beside myself in such grief and distress as I was; I began to think that my master hated me, and was very desirous to go home, to my own country; for I thought that if God did come (as he said) He would be sure to be most angry with me, as I did not know what He was, nor had ever heard of him before. (40)

Gronniosaw here takes a spiritual repetition – a second coming, or the return of Christ in judgement – as a point of departure for considering evangelicalism's global expansion. More particularly, he restricts the universal reach of the verse by imagining himself as the primary – even sole – intended recipient of the minister's message, and his own fear and sorrow in response sharply contrast to the lack of "grief and distress" evidenced by the congregation. By rereading the sermon as a singular dialogue between master and slave, the passage allows Gronniosaw to allude to his homesickness and to his origins in another country.²⁵ Gronniosaw imagines his natal land as a refuge from the wrath of the angry God invoked by Frelinghuysen,

testing the spatial limits of God's providence and power as represented by both sacred text and the sermon. The only such reference in the *Remarkable Particulars*, this longing "to go home, to my own country" offers an oblique condemnation of slavery rendered through an evangelical language of spiritual alienation. That it occurs while Gronniosaw listens to a sermon on the apocalypse also suggests that his singular experience of the Middle Passage and slavery in the New World felt like an end of the world.

The *Remarkable Particulars*' work of mourning pivots from the apocalyptic consciousness of his early encounter with Christianity to a more ambivalent account of his spiritual and civil rebirths. Although the narrative portrays Gronniosaw's conversion occurring fairly early in his life under the influence of Frelinghuysen, it actually took almost twenty years for Gronniosaw to publically convert. Jennifer Harris has read the approximately eighteen-year time lag between Gronniosaw's arrival in colonial New York and his conversion as an indication of his conflicted reactions to evangelical Christianity: "Gronniosaw's failure to convert over this period" may not only indicate his possible fidelity to Islam, but also "a genuine inability to experience this radical rebirth introduced to him as essential to Christianity" (52). When Gronniosaw recalls the event of his conversion, he emphasizes his complete isolation – a kind of alienation paradoxically rooted in feeling chosen. Outside, alone, and far from the evangelical gatherings (church services, outdoor preaching, or small group confessional meetings) that we see depicted in subsequent narratives by other speakers and writers of color, Gronniosaw encounters God in an ecstatic spiritual experience that blurs the boundaries of his subjective autonomy, and emphasizes both its unspeakability and its incommunicability:

I was one day in a most delightful frame of mind; my heart so overflowed with love and gratitude to the author of all my comforts: -- I was so drawn out of myself, and so fill'd

and awed by the presence of God, that I saw (or thought I saw) light inexpressible dart down from heaven upon me, and shone around me for the space of a minute. – I continued on my knees, and joy unspeakable took possession of my soul. – The peace and serenity which filled my mind after this was wonderful, and cannot be told. – I would not have changed situations, or been any one but myself for the whole world. (39)

Rather than using his conversion to narrate his entrance into spiritual communion with other evangelical believers, Gronniosaw's account of his rebirth hinges on an experience of subjective estrangement and return. He describes being "so drawn out of myself" into the presence of God that he experiences an alternative visual reality – "light inexpressible" – separate from the world he inhabits. The "joy unspeakable," or the affective surplus of the event of conversion, somehow works to return him to a fuller sense of himself: "I would not have changed situations, or been any one but myself for the whole world." The passage's rhythm of alienation and restoration seems to contest evangelical arrangements of belonging that often coded him as a passive receiver of "global" or universal spiritual truth from evangelical books and sermons. His conversion removes him from those circuits of spiritual knowledge, and is framed as a fully unmediated encounter with God. The descriptions incorporation of a parenthetical aside – "(or thought I saw)" – introduces, moreover, an added layer of subjective skepticism. While Gronniosaw's parenthetical aside may function merely to double down on the experiential incommensurability of the event of conversion, it might also subtly indicate that the narrative's overall temporal distortions were calculated narrative decisions directed at satisfying the text's evangelical readers. Gronniosaw's parenthetical evasion, as well as the narrative elision of the eighteen-year time lag before his conversion, press on what a "return to self" looks like when the

event of conversion can occur either in the “space of a minute” or eighteen years, and civil rebirths may never happen at all.

Gronniosaw’s spiritual rebirth uneasily coexists in the narrative with his account of his manumission, a legal rebirth that should afford him a civil status within the British imperial order. Gronniosaw’s conversion is bracketed in the text by Frelinghuysen’s death and his subsequent freeing of Gronniosaw in his will, underscoring the way Gronniosaw reads his spiritual and civil rebirths as constitutively interrelated, indeed, as narratological repetitions of each other. In this context, the timing of Gronniosaw’s conversion itself is curious. Occurring shortly before Frelinghuysen’s death (over eighteen years after Gronniosaw’s arrival in New York), it suggests that it may have functioned as an incentive for manumission, given that in early colonial expansion, slaves often believed that conversion and baptism equaled manumission:

Mr. Freelandhouse ... was taken from this world rather suddenly: he had but a short illness, and died of a fever. I held his hand in mine, when he departed; he told me had given me my freedom, I was at liberty to go where I would. – He added, that he had always pray’d for me and hop’d I should be kept unto the end. My master left me by his will ten pounds, and my freedom. (43)

Gronniosaw’s belated conversion and its fortuitous timing remain narratively (and temporally) linked, suggesting the close imbrication of evangelical and colonial frameworks for conjuring freedom. The language between the two passages shifts between the highly emotive “joy unspeakable” and “light inexpressible” of the conversion and the stark pragmatism of the manumission: “My master left me by his will ten pounds, and my freedom” (43). Gronniosaw’s narrative has recourse to “joy unspeakable” when describing his conversion, but refrains from

using *any* analogous affective idiom when recalling his manumission, while still narratologically linking the two rebirths.²⁶ This suggests that while evangelical language remained the primary medium for imagining political freedom, the text's covert narratological choices complicate its mediation. Given what seem to be Gronniosaw's ambivalent reactions to colonial evangelical practice, as well as his probable prior fidelity to Islam, those moments in the *Remarkable Particulars* where Gronniosaw repudiates the efficacy of evangelical liturgies, most notably at the death of his daughter when he claimed that she "could not hear" the burial litany, open space for counter repertoires of grief. Gronniosaw's work of mourning remains rooted within the small plots of autobiographical practice – in temporal evasions, terse parenthetical asides, brief flashes of incommunicable feeling – and within local sites of potential burial – in the small garden behind the house. This work of mourning questions to what extent evangelical spiritual and political forms of belonging fully account for enslaved connections to the dead.

"... a great mystery of darkness"

As with Gronniosaw's restrained, yet polyvocal, religious sensibilities, Samson Occom (1723-1792), a Mohegan leader and Presbyterian clergyman, moved fluidly between indigenous and evangelical spiritualities, often performing, in Eve Tavor Bannet's words, as both "a spiritual guide and a medicine man or healer ... in the manner of a traditional shaman or powwow than of a Western clergyman" (175).²⁷ Because of his diverse religious commitments, Occom's personal history offers many examples of conflicts over spiritual authority. Born 1723 to Joshua and Sarah Tomacham, Occom in his early life lived and worked near New London, Connecticut with the Mohegan nation. In 1743, when he was twenty-years-old, Occom encountered New Light evangelical preachers and teachers during the Great Awakening. He sought out the Puritan

Calvinist minister Eleazer Wheelock, who educated Occom in theology, English, and Hebrew.²⁸ Between 1750 and 1770, Wheelock took on more students, and the resulting Moor's Indian Charity School (founded in 1754 in Lebanon, Connecticut) educated forty-nine indigenous boys and eighteen girls from the surrounding area (Silverman 59). When Occom completed his education, he was asked by Wheelock to set out on a preaching tour in England to raise funds for a Native College. From February 16, 1766 to July 22, 1767, Occom traveled Britain, preaching first at George Whitefield's London Tabernacle, and ultimately raising £12,000 in donations (Bannet 171; Silverman 71). Once Occom returned to Connecticut, however, he discovered that Wheelock had abandoned his commitment to indigenous education and reconstituted what had been Moor's Indian Charity School as Dartmouth College in 1770. In 1771, Occom wrote to Wheelock: "I am very Jealous that Instead of your Semenary (sic) Becoming alma Mater, she will be too alba mater" (98). For Occom here, the networks of colonial education, and the evangelical preaching circuit that supported it, have become "too alba mater," as represented by Wheelock. By emphasizing the racial consciousness that undergirds Wheelock's betrayal, Occom's words prophetically name one procedure by which settler colonial policies work to transform indigenous bodies into racial strangers.

Forms of belonging that connected Occom to extensive networks of kin and friends profoundly disrupted those procedures of estrangement. According to Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks in *The Common Pot* (2008), most of the pupils at Wheelock's school were friends, family, or connections of Occom, and when Occom renounced his support of Wheelock, many of their parents withdraw them from the school (L. Brooks 87; Bannet 169). Writing of Occom's experiences with Wheelock, his travels around Britain, and his resettlement in Brotherton, Joanna Brooks, Hilary Wyss, Eve Tavor Bannet, Lisa Brooks, and others have shown how

spiritual conflicts often centralized for Occom around questions of chosen or compulsory indigenous mobility, including movement to and from kin and friends, missionary itineracy, economic lifeways grounded in hunting, as well as migrancy forced by the westward spread of settler colonialism across New England and the Mid-Atlantic regions of colonial America.²⁹ Bannet, for one, argues in *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading* (2011) that Occom “consistently represent[ed] what he thought through a key image: his changing and shifting image of Indian itineracy. As his writings show, itineracy was . . . a site of contestation between masters and servants, governments and subjects, and the white and Indian worlds, as well as a point of division within missionary culture itself” (163). In one sense, Occom’s extensive writings created counterpublic literary circuits that connected him to indigenous and colonial evangelical worlds. Through sermons, journals, civil petitions, hymns, and personal narrative, Occom’s writings (although rarely published), record cross-tribal political consciousness and engagement.³⁰ After his return from his preaching tour in Britain, Occom settled with his wife, Mary Fowler, and his children with the Mohegan people in western Connecticut. The tribe came under immense pressure, however, from westward moving settlers during the American Revolution, and by 1785, Occom (along with his son-in-law, Joseph Johnson and his brother-in-law, David Fowler) led Mohegan Christian emigrants to a new settlement in upstate New York at the invitation of Oneida Christians. The Mohegan settled in the area with other indigenous emigrants, including Mohicans from western Massachusetts and Lenape from southern New Jersey. Together, the Mohegans, Mohicans, and Lenape formed two indigenous townships, Brotherton and Stockbridge.³¹ Occom worked to ensure that both townships received charters in 1787, and also assisted in evicting white settlers from Brotherton in 1792 (J. Brooks 26-7). Occom recorded one such incident in Mohegan governance where the

community formally declared on April 28, 1778 that they were “One Family,” resolved that “[w]e shall look upon one another as One Family, and Will Call or look upon no one as a Stranger, but Will take one another as pure and True Mohegans” (147). By retreating from arrangements of settler colonial exclusion that code indigenous bodies as strangers, this vow of familial unity affirms symbolic kinship and tribal ties.

Networks of belonging – formed through kinship, tribal settlement, or spiritual attachment – become that much more significant when distance fractures those bonds of communal well-being. Occom’s journals record how his extensive travels and duties as an itinerant clergyman kept him from his family, sometimes for long periods of time. On June 26, 1785, for instance, Occom describes one journey spent preaching and ministering to the ill in New Concord, New York. As he relates, he “Preachd in Mr Troops meeting House” where “a large number of people ... attended with great Solemnity” (294). Occom’s journal entry emphasizes his visits to the sick, such as Mr Troop, who was “in a low State of Health,” and “Mr Jabaz Crokers,” who was “in hard Sickness, full of Pain and distress” (294-5). The journal entry ends, however, with a devastating small plot, with a terse description of an experience with illness Occom was absent for – the death of his daughter, Tabitha, at home: “[N]ext Morning after Breakfast went on and got home about 9 found my Well three Days ago I heard a heard [sic] heavy News, my poor Tabitha is Dead & Buried, the Lord the Sovereign of the Universe Sanctify this Dispensation to me and to all my Family –“ (295). Overall restrained in its account of this “Dispensation,” the entry’s narrative of Tabitha’s death nevertheless retains moments of linguistic excess. For one, the description of Occom’s three-day journey past “my Well” works to narratively delay his arrival home, particularly by adding multiple temporalities that denote either a time of day or a measurement of time – “next morning,” “breakfast,” “about 9,” “three days ago” – relative to the

present written record. Appearing one right after the other, these layered and confusing temporal markers disrupt the sentence's movement towards its conclusion, which is Occom hearing the "heavy News" of his daughter's death. The final punctuation of the dash, furthermore, remains a grammatical choice that emphasizes the continuity of Occom's grief. While Occom uses a dash in place of a period often in his journals, its appearance here nevertheless suggests that his prayer to the "Sovereign of the Universe" to "Sanctify this Dispensation to me and to all my Family" is ongoing and extends past the time of writing.

As with the temporal and grammatical hesitations, the syncopated cadence of "I heard a heard," finally, offers a syntactic surplus that further hinders recording the "heavy News." I wish to linger with the "I heard a heard," in particular, because it linguistically rehearses the moment Occom first understood the "heavy News." Because Occom's belated arrival kept him from attending to Tabitha in her death and funeral, the "I heard a heard," and the prayer that follows, figure as performative stand-ins for the burial litany he was unable to say over his daughter. As Occom paused to record the recent events of his itinerant preaching circuit in New Concord only to arrive home to learn that his daughter has died and already been buried, "I heard a heard" retroactively renders a grief that can only be spoken through what Joseph Roach has called surrogation, or through a syntactic excess that repeats (with a difference) the moment Occom was confronted by the "heavy News" of her untimely death. All of these syntactic and grammatical repetitions emphasize particular kinds of strangerhood and alienation, mediated through the descriptions of Occom's journey and his geographical distance from his family, of the temporal chaos that constitute such a significant part of his experience of grief, and of the linguistic hesitations that prolong the moment he alone hears of her death and burial. The journal's small plot of Tabitha's death offers a haunted work of mourning that emphasizes

Occom's belated and repeated "hearing" of the news, rather than his own attempts to speak his sorrow. The "I heard a heard" works as a reiterative echo that emphasizes Occom's absence from Tabitha's death, and his inability to speak her burial litany as a father and pastor.

The linguistic repetitions suggest that Tabitha's death haunted Occom in the immediate aftermath, and it would be unsurprising if her untimely death did not linger with him. Less than a year after Tabitha's burial, Occom records an extraordinary dream where he is visited by the evangelical Methodist preacher, George Whitefield, who had long been dead by the time of Occom's dream. A close associate of John and Charles Wesley, Whitefield was an enthusiastic preacher whose style centered on highly visual and somatic language, energetic bodily gestures, and often included shouting, crying, and sweating.³² Given Whitefield's performative power and his extensive travels as an itinerant preacher, he was one of the most important preachers in the transatlantic development of eighteenth-century Methodism, and appears as a figure in almost every Anglophone text by African-descended writers in the 1770s and 1780s.³³ While many of the narratives depicting Whitefield by speakers and writers of color understandably focus on his preaching, Occom's journal entry offers a more enigmatic portrait.³⁴ That Whitefield, who died sixteen years before in 1770, appears so long after his death in a dream suggests something of Occom's imbrication within evangelical preaching circuits and his commitment to indigenous forms of spiritual expression, which often take seriously the interpretation of dreams.³⁵ After he moved New York to labor as a teacher to the Montauk tribe in New York in 1749, for instance, he noted that indigenous shamans "consult images to know the minds of their gods" and "say they get their art from dreams" (49). Rather than belittling such practices, as colonial Calvinists like Eleazer Wheelock might, Occom adds, "I don't see for my part, why it is not as true, as the English or other nation's witchcraft, but is a great mystery of darkness" (49).

In a passage recorded on April 2, 1786, Occom describes the dream, whose “great mystery of darkness” appears to work as both a testament to Whitefield’s conflicted spiritual legacy for Christians of color, as well as an endorsement of Occom’s authority as an indigenous preacher:

Last Night I had a remarkable Dream about Mr Whitefield, I thought he was preaching as he use to, when he was alive, I thought he was at a certain place where there was a great Number of Indians and Some White People – and I had been Preaching, and he came to me, and took hold of my wright hand and he put his face to my face, and rub’d his face to mine and Said, -- I am glad that you preach the Excellency of Jesus Christ yet, and Said, go on and the Lord be with thee, we shall now Soon done. and then he Stretched himself upon the ground flat on his face and reach’d his hands forward, and made a mark with his Hand, and Said I will out doe and over reach all Sinners, and I thought he Barked like a Dog, with a Thundering Voice – and I thought Some People Laugh’d Some were pleased, and some fright’d, and after that he got up, Said to me I am going to Mr Potter’s to preach and Said will you go, and I Said yes Sir – and as we were about to Sit out I awoke, and behold it was a dream – and this Dream has put me much upon thinking of the End of my Journey (334).

Occom initially frames Whitefield’s entrance in this “remarkable” dream as itself a kind of interruption. Occom narrates that he “had been preaching” when Whitefield first appears and warmly greets him: “[H]e came to me, and took hold of my wright hand and he put his face to my face, and rub’d his face to mine” (334). What follows this greeting is an interesting representation of speech directed specifically to Occom and to the collected audience, a heterogeneous crowd comprising “a great Number of Indians and Some White People” (334). Whitefield moves from personally encouraging Occom in his work to “preach the Excellency of

Jesus Christ” to proclaiming before the gathered congregation that he will “out doe and over reach all Sinners” (334). Misty G. Anderson argues that part of Whitefield’s appeal as a speaker coalesced around an “improvisational preaching style [that] made for an extraordinary level of intimacy, even in large crowds,” explaining that such a style “raised the stakes for his audiences,” who were being addressed not as passive listeners “but as participants in an event” (62).³⁶ Because Occom’s dream represents Whitefield pivoting between personal communication with Occom and public confession of sin before the gathered crowd, it is difficult to see how the audience is supposed to respond to or participate in the event of conversion. Whitefield’s speaking, furthermore, is followed by him barking “like a Dog” with “a Thundering Voice,” aural disruptions that destabilize his linguistic intelligibility and drive the crowd to express conflicting reactions: “And I thought Some People Laugh’d Some were pleased, and some fright’d” (334).

While Whitefield’s barking like a dog may offer a kind of anti-Methodist satire by showcasing its potential for both pastoral and congregational unruliness, these aural disruptions also invite other associations that situate the dream as a peculiarly subtle work of mourning.³⁷ Colin Dayan, for instance, in *The Law is a White Dog* (2011) evocatively traces the persistent and strange associations between dogs, ghosts, and social death in Western legal rituals. Dayan opens *The Law is a White Dog* with the tale of Hecuba from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a classical story that perhaps indirectly speaks to Whitefield’s canine aural transformation in Occom’s dream. Brutally stoned after seeking vengeance against Polymnestor for killing her son Polydoros, Hecuba haunts the countryside of Thrace, howling like a dog: “Her jaws could only bark, though set for speech / ... / And then, for long, through all the fields of Thrace, / remembering her many griefs, she howled” (13:569, 74-5; qtd. Dayan 17). Dayan argues that

Hecuba's spectral transformation "defies the consolation of transcendence" by materializing Hecuba's maternal grief through a creaturely transformation that in its roaming becomes an indelible part of the landscape (17). Although Occom's education focused on Calvinist theology, he would undoubtedly have been familiar with Hecuba's story, given that Wheelock's curriculum included an education in Greek and Latin literatures (Wyss, *English Letters*, 11 and 33-34). Through both his aural and creaturely embodiments, Whitefield's mournful howling also literalizes folk tales that claim dogs bark in anticipation of their masters' deaths, and indigenous beliefs about the symbolic significance of wolves or dogs.³⁸ Whether as a way to speak grief or as a prophetic expectation of death, Whitefield's barking "like a Dog" plays in classical and indigenous assemblages that link death to spectrality and dogs, especially since he is himself long dead at the time of the dream's occurrence. To that end, we might read Whitefield's bodily gestures – "he Stretched himself upon the ground flat on his face and reach'd his hands forward, and made a mark with his Hand – as movements that performatively recall burial. By laying "upon the ground flat on his face," Whitefield's prostration associatively links his public confession of sin to the internment of his bodily remains in the earth. Despite the dream's close attention to the aural and gestural movements of Whitefield's body, which emphasize his seeming corporeality, it bears remembering that this Whitefield is also a ghost, a spectral figure who is by definition, as Diana Taylor in *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003) reminds us, "a repetition" and "a *revenant*," whose reappearance transforms the ontology of performance into a hauntology (142; emphasis original).³⁹ Because Whitefield arrives as a spectral revenant, it is perhaps no surprise then that once Occom awakes, the dream prompts him to meditate on "the End of my Journey," suggesting that he may interpret the dream's "great mystery of darkness" as a prophetic anticipation of his own death.

When he is not barking or stretching flat on the earth, Whitefield's specter focuses intensely on pastoral matters, specifically authorizing Occom's office as an itinerant clergyman and an indigenous civic leader. The dream depicts Whitefield blessing Occom's preaching, telling him to "go on and the Lord be with thee," and inviting Occom to join him on his own preaching circuit: "[A]fter that he got up, Said to me I am going to Mr Potter's to preach and Said will you go, and I Said yes Sir" (334). Whitefield's promise, more importantly, that "we shall now Soon done" acquires a strong prophetic resonance when we recall that during these difficult years between 1785 and 1786, Occom was leading a migration of Mohegan, Mohican, and Lenape tribes from New England and Long Island to form Stockton and Brotherton, New York. Whitefield's words of affirmation implicitly authorize Occom not only as an evangelical preacher, but as a Mohegan leader organizing new indigenous settlements. Alongside the aural disruptions of its work of mourning, Occom's dream of Whitefield prophetically imagines a future fulfillment to the political project Occom is laboring to establish. The dream's "great mystery of darkness" wavers then between depicting a transgressive preaching style that potentially disrupts congregational participation in the event of salvation, and circulates mourning repertoires that blur the boundary between human and animal, while encouraging fidelity to arrangements of indigenous pastoral care and political sovereignty. When read alongside the syntactic repetitions of Occom's account of Tabitha's death, the dream's layers of association summon a work of mourning peculiarly attuned to the spiritual conflicts and contradictions of early American itinerant circuits, where indigenous strangers are encouraged to "preach the Excellency of Jesus Christ" and yet constrained to migrate further west, away from the encroachments of settler colonial expansion. Against these displacements, the journal's small plots root Occom's itinerancy in Tabitha's burial, in Whitefield's performative prostration that

mimics interment, in brief civil decrees naming the migrants to Brotherton and Stockton “One Family” and “pure and True Mohegans” (147).

“The vocal hills reply’d”

If Gronniosaw and Occom’s small plots localize paternal grief, then Phillis Wheatley’s poetry, especially “Niobe in Distress for her Children, Slain by Apollo,” turns to the classical myth of Niobe and her maternal mourning to reconsider (and queer) the claims of kin against the patrilineal and reproductive violences of slavery. Wheatley (c. 1753-1784) was born in West Africa, probably Gambia or Senegal, and transported to colonial America at the age of seven or eight. She arrived in Boston on July 11, 1761 aboard the slave ship *Phillis*, and was purchased by John Wheatley, a prominent merchant and tailor, and his wife Susanna. The Wheatley’s children, Mary and Nathaniel, tutored Wheatley in reading, writing, and classics. By the time Wheatley was twelve, she was reading the Bible, as well as Greek and Latin literature. Two years later, Wheatley composed her first poem, “To the University of Cambridge, in New England,” and much of her subsequent poetry was heavily influenced by British poets, such as John Milton and Alexander Pope, as well as Greek and Latin writers, such as Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Terence.⁴⁰ After composing poetry for several years, a few of her poems appeared in colonial newspapers, including her elegy, “On the Death of George Whitefield” in 1770. In 1773, Wheatley accompanied Nathaniel Wheatley to England, where Susanna Wheatley believed she would find a better market for publishing a collection of poetry (Carretta 109). While in London, Wheatley met important members of British political and evangelical society, including Selena Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon. According to their letters, we know that Hastings alerted Wheatley to the publication of Gronniosaw’s *Remarkable Particulars*, and also encouraged

Wheatley in the publication of her poetry.⁴¹ When *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* appeared in 1773, Wheatley dedicated the volume to her.⁴²

After Wheatley returned from England, she continued writing poetry and corresponding with Hastings and other figures in transatlantic evangelicalism, including, notably, Samson Occom. In 1778, John Wheatley died. As with Frelinghuysen and Gronniosaw, according to the provisions of his will, Wheatley was freed. Three months later, Wheatley married John Peters, a free Black grocer (Carretta 172-3). In dire economic straits during and after the Revolutionary War, Wheatley and her husband lost two young children and struggled with poverty into the 1780s (Carretta 176-7, 184). Although a few of Wheatley's poems were extensively excerpted or found their way into print in newspapers and pamphlets (perhaps most notably her poem in honor of George Washington, "To His Excellency, George Washington" in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* in April of 1776), she was unable to reestablish a network of patrons to support her writing after the death of John Wheatley (Carretta 189). Despite advertising a second volume of poetry in hopes of garnering subscribers in 1779, Wheatley contended with a colonial publication marketplace ill equipped for the counterpublic mediation and circulation of her work.⁴³ According to Vincent Carretta, two contributing factors (one widespread and one personal) assured the second volume's publication failure. For one, the Revolutionary "[W]ar had effectively closed the British market to colonial authors," preventing Wheatley from accessing the more hospitable London marketplace that had published her first volume of poetry (189). For another, in the advertisement for the second volume "her would-be publishers had failed to exploit her continuing celebrity by not referring to her premarital identity as Phillis Wheatley in advertising her proposed book," an "imprudent" decision possibly recommended by Peters (189). In any case, Wheatley was unsuccessful in publishing much poetry after 1778. Wheatley and Peters

disappear from archival records between 1779 and 1784. According to Vincent Carretta's archival research into John Peters, in 1784 he was imprisoned for debt, and Wheatley sought work as a maid at a Boston boarding house, while also caring for their infant son. In already frail health (no doubt stemming in part from a lingering asthmatic condition), Wheatley's body was not able to support the heavy labor, and she died on December 5, 1784, at around age 31 (Carretta 145, 161). Her son died three and half hours later (Kelapure 611; Mallory 32).

The poetry collected in *Poems on Various Subject, Religious and Moral* draw on a variety of classical styles and genres, often embedding them within evangelical cosmologies.⁴⁴ Within her oeuvre, perhaps no genre was more extensively deployed and adapted by Wheatley than the elegy, an important aesthetic decision since, as Eric Ashley Hairston reminds us, the elegy “functioned as more than a funeral poem for classical writers,” as a vehicle for articulating something more than suffering. The genre was used to “routinely [express] political positions” (87). Wheatley's elegies in *Poems on Various Subjects* frequently take as their subject the untimely deaths of the young, including “On the Death of a young Lady of five Years of Age,” “Of the Death of a young Gentleman,” “A Funeral Poem on the Death of an Infant aged twelve Months,” and “On the Death of J.C. an Infant.” Many of these were the children of friends and family to John and Susanna Wheatley, suggesting that the premature death of the young that fracture such close interconnected colonial networks provide her elegies' immediate exigence.⁴⁵ Devona Mallory suggests, however, that Wheatley's elegies may have a more veiled purpose as a covert work of mourning: they express Wheatley's grief at her own separation from her mother when she was a child, while implicitly insisting that women and mothers be “in charge of mourning the dead” (32). Even poems that do not take as their subject the sorrow of parents within Wheatley's close colonial network remain concerned with forms of maternal and familial

mourning, including her poems that retell events from Greek and Roman literatures. In particular, as a work of mourning that weighs both politico-theological mandates and aesthetic frameworks that would restrict the voicing of maternal grief, Wheatley's elegiac epyllion "Niobe in Distress for her Children, slain by Apollo, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book VI. and from a view of the painting of Mr. *Richard Wilson*," one of her longer poems, translates and significantly alters Ovid's story of Niobe.⁴⁶ Wheatley transforms the Greek, Latin, and British source material on Niobe she had access to, and reimagines her in a way that emphasizes her reproductive fertility and maternal anger, most significantly by evading the end of Niobe's story – her transformation to silent stone.⁴⁷ Through her alterations of Ovid's narrative, Wheatley, like Gronniosaw, offers an elusive work of mourning attuned to the liturgical demands of voiced grief.⁴⁸

Before turning to the final stanzas of Wheatley's poem in more detail, I would like to examine some of the source material she drew on because they often depict politico-theological conflicts centered on forms of belonging to the earth, as characters are either estranged or overwhelmed by the natural world following the sovereign demands of a divine juridical order. Wheatley's most immediate source for "Niobe in Distress for her Children" remained Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, whose Niobe tests the mercy and patience of the gods when she refuses to heed the prophetess Manto, who urged her to revere the goddess Latona (Leto) and her son and daughter, Apollo and Diana (Artemis). Niobe declares that because she is the mother of fourteen children (rather than Latona's two), she too deserves reverence and mocks the kingdom for venerating Latona and her divine children. Enraged by Niobe's maternal hubris, Latona (through the mediation of Apollo and Diana's arrows) strikes down each of Niobe's sons and daughters. Much of the terror of the event seems entrenched in how Niobe becomes a spectator to the

children of the gods massacring her own children. Overcome with grief, Niobe's husband, Amphion, kills himself. Niobe herself transforms into a stone, who, while no longer able to speak, nevertheless unceasingly weeps for her lost children. Niobe's petrification by sorrow literalizes her barrenness: as a stone, she can neither bear more children, nor continue express her anguish and anger at their loss. By becoming co-extensive with the earth, Niobe's chthonic ossification offers a harrowing inversion of death and burial, where both her body *and* her spirit (materially mediated through her tears) remain above ground, a constitutive – and yet silent – part of the landscape.

Ovid's version of Niobe is itself a translation and alteration of various Greek sources. Earlier versions of Niobe's story sometimes emphasized that the trouble between Niobe and Leto began with another instance of divine cruelty against motherhood: Zeus has impregnated Leto, and Hera, in her seemingly infinite capacity for jealousy, has prohibited Leto from giving birth to her children on solid ground. The Greek mainland and all islands in the sea were thus forbidden to her, until Leto finally found the obscure and barren floating island of Delos. Although critical readings of Wheatley's "Niobe in Distress for her Children" have focused on the poem's weighing of various ethical dilemmas (such as the relative value of stoicism in voicing grief, the conflicts of maternal pride and humility, and standards of divine punishment and mercy), as an elegy of politico-theological depth, it is worth exploring how Wheatley's version of Niobe remains attentive to Ovid and other source materials' colonialist imaginary of reproductive politics and earthly belonging. As classicist Karl Kerényi notes, Niobe was likely a goddess who originated in Asia Minor, and imported into the pantheon through Greek colonial expansion (61-2). Kerényi, furthermore, points out that "the throne of the Olympian Zeus, the Zeus of Phidias, was decorated" with images of Niobe and her dead children, suggesting that Niobe's punishment

and sacrifice as an outsider to Olympian sovereignty was central “to the construction of a divine order in classical antiquity” (Kerenyi 67; Dovell 44). In Wheatley’s poem, Niobe specifically contests the rule of the Olympians out of her maternal authority, insisting that because she holds both terrestrial and familial power as a queen and mother of fourteen children, she is entitled to just as much, if not more, honor as Latona:

Lo! here an empress with a goddess join’d.
What, shall a *Titaness* be deify’d
To whom the spacious earth a couch deny’d?
Nor heav’n, nor earth, nor sea receiv’d your queen,
‘Till pitying *Delos* took the wand’rer in. (74-8)

As Wheatley’s stanza continues, Niobe taunts Latona for having no kingdom on the “spacious earth,” and no place to bear and raise Apollo and Diana, displaying a profound lack of compassion for Latona’s plight. Wheatley also remains deeply attuned to Latona’s position as a pregnant stranger in need of shelter, and personifies the island of Delos welcoming Latona as an other-mother: “Till pitying *Delos* took the wand’rer in” (78). As the rest of the poem unfolds Wheatley’s alterations to Ovid’s story question both the appropriateness of the gods’ punishment of Niobe’s maternal hubris, and sympathetically alter the form her sorrow and rage would take in response.

As the title of Wheatley’s epyllion makes clear, alongside Ovid, the other immediate source for “Niobe in Distress for her Children” was Richard Wilson’s painting *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe*, which Wheatley either encountered through circulated engravings or saw on exhibition while in England (Carretta 105). The composition and chiaroscuro of Wilson’s painting offers an interesting interpretation on Niobe’s story, emphasizing the conflicts of

inhabitation and earthly belonging that also engaged Wheatley. According to Karen Lerner Dovell's reading of the painting, "in contrast to other depictions of the Niobe myth," Wilson centrally positions Niobe and her children as a way to "[call] attention to Niobe's loss, rather than to her alleged sin" (44). A closer look at the painting reveals, however, that Wilson renders Niobe as a figure standing near the lowest edge of the painting, surrounded by several of her dead and dying sons and daughters. Apollo appears drawing his bow along left-hand border of the painting, and like Niobe, is almost out of frame.

He nevertheless remains elevated, suggesting his role as an instrument of divine punishment. By contrast, Niobe and her children are overwhelmed by the natural world that dominates the center of the painting: the chiaroscuro of the scene renders several of the bodies in deep shadow, leaving only Apollo, one son, and Niobe grasping her final child clearly visible. Through the figures' position and lighting, Wilson (a Welsh artist best known for his landscapes) decenters Niobe and Apollo in favor of the scenery, including the rocky elevation on which Apollo stands, the lake and shoreline abutting the horizon, and the large tree dominating the foreground. The painting's emphasis on the scale of the figures' earthly surroundings – what Wheatley would call "the spacious earth" in her poem – seems to attempt a kind of aesthetic overreaching. While the painting necessarily fixes the action at a singular moment (Apollo's imminent destruction of Niobe's youngest daughter), its insistent foregrounding of nature nevertheless gestures towards the famous conclusion of Niobe's story: her chthonic conversion, where she will become part of the rocky elevation from which Apollo's punishment threatens in Wilson's composition. The painting's composition and scale depict Niobe as *alive* and interceding for her daughter. The painting participates in the work of protecting Niobe's last daughter, suspending the moment of her death. *The Destruction of the Children of Niobe* thus strives to evade the story's impending

conclusion within the painting's static composition, what Wheatley would describe as the "tuneful goddess" teaching "the painter in his works to *live*" (3-4; emphasis added).⁴⁹ That Wheatley praises Wilson (and the muse who inspired his work) for his attention to Niobe's maternal vitality anticipates the revisions she will make to Niobe's story in later stanzas of her own poem, where, as Nicole A. Spigner observes, "[Like] the Niobe in Wilson's painting, she emerges reconstituted in flesh and blood, her grief warm, breathing, palpable" (76-7).

Despite being framed as both a translation of Ovid and response to Wilson's painting, Wheatley's "Niobe in Distress for her Children" pointedly alters the story found in the *Metamorphoses*, especially in her depictions of Niobe's grief and anger. As Eric Ashley Hairston explains, Wheatley's "Niobe in Distress for her Children" is probably one of the "first translations of any kind by an African" in colonial America, and adds that the significance of her translation lies in the revisions she made to Ovid's story: "She alters the Ovidian narrative to add her own signature" (85). Wheatley, for instance, as John Shields notes, interpolates four lines near the end of the poem where Niobe calls for Jove's vengeance to be visited on those who murdered her children ("Uses of Classicism," 110):

"Why is such privilege to them allow'd?
Why thus insulted by the *Delian* god?
Dwells there such mischief in the pow'rs above?
Why sleeps the vengeance of immortal *Jove*?" (165-8)

By calling on Jove, Wheatley's Niobe emphasizes the innocence of her children, themselves blameless of Niobe's act of overreaching, while also contesting Latona's authority to render judgment and punishment. This stanza, according to Jennifer Thorn, intertwines Niobe's sorrow with expressions of anger against what she feels is the unjust punishment of the gods: "In

Wheatley's 'Niobe,' what women are, first and foremost, is reproductive and angry" (249). Thorn continues:

Impossible as it may be to ascribe definitively any biographically-inflected intentionality to the reading of Wheatley's poems, the intensity of her rendition of "Niobe" as a tale of wrongly valued reproduction resonates suggestively against her situation as a slave, barred both from association with other slaves and free blacks and from the establishment of her own family until after her masters' deaths and her own emancipation. (249)

Niobe's complaint registers her anger at the genealogical devastations enacted by Latona, Apollo, and Diana, a harrowing lineal wreckage sanctioned by Jove's own passivity and silence – his accountability to justice, or "vengeance," as Niobe scornfully calls it, "sleeps." This mythos of sovereignty and justice recurs throughout Greek and Latin mythology, where, as Nicole A. Spigner suggests, "one's claim to anything is, at best, precarious" (77). Wheatley forcefully recasts Niobe as a mother who claims her children. To that end, it is certainly possible to read Wheatley's revisionist account of Niobe's anger and grief as an echo of African American enslaved experience. Separated from kin, the poem registers a protest against the very politico-theological models of spiritual performance and exchange that similarly "sleep" while the ruinous momentum of slavery and colonialism awaken and spread.

Perhaps Wheatley's most telling alteration in the poem is her evasion of Niobe's final transformation into stone. In the original 1773 publication of *Poems on Various Subjects*, the poem ends with the following stanza:

One only daughter lives, and she the least;
The queen close clasp'd the daughter to her breast:
"Ye heav'nly pow'rs, ah spare me one," she cry'd,

“Ah! spare me one,” the vocal hills reply’d:

In vain she begs, the Fates her suit deny,

In her embrace she sees her daughter die. (207-12)

Sometime later, however, a final stanza was added to the poem, which more conventionally ends with Niobe’s familiar fate: “A marble statue now the queen appears / But from the marble steal the silent tears.”⁵⁰ The additional stanza included a footnote that read, “This Verse to the End is the Work of another Hand,” although we do not know who may have composed the added stanza (59). If we take lines 207-12 of the poem as Wheatley’s preferred ending, then she makes an evocative aesthetic decision, one that highlights something Ovid’s rendering of Niobe does not address – what happens to the children’s corpses. As the *Metamorphoses* frames events, enough time passes after the deaths of her sons that Niobe and her daughters can in their grief attire themselves in black, loosen their hair, and congregate around their brothers’ funeral biers as a prelude to burial (Melville 83). At this moment, Diana strikes down the girls, disregarding Niobe’s pleas for the youngest to be spared. Niobe’s sons and daughters are last described by Ovid as unburied, their bodily remains surrounding Niobe:

She sat bereft

Amid her sons, her daughters and her husband

All lifeless corpses, rigid in ruin. (Melville 83-4)

Ovid’s stanza concludes with Niobe repeating the “rigid ruin” of her family’s bodily remains by turning to stone.

Wheatley’s translation, however, alters the repetition of Niobe’s living *rigor mortis*, choosing to render such a performative reiteration through the echo the “vocal hills reply’d” to her sorrow. On the one hand, John Shields has argued that Wheatley’s depiction of nature echoing Niobe’s

cry “increases the intensity of her punishment,” as the landscape repeats her “vain” plea, instead of responding to it (“Uses of Classicism” 110). Lucy K. Hayden, on the other hand, contends that nature’s echo “intensifies the pathos” of Niobe’s loss by reiterating her expression of sorrow (438). By representing Niobe’s spoken grief echoed by “the vocal hills,” Wheatley goes beyond accentuating the affective intensity of Niobe’s punishment or her loss. She strategically reverses the work of mourning offered by Ovid’s story. By evading Niobe’s transformation to stone, Wheatley refuses to strip Niobe of her capacity to voice sorrow. The echo of the “vocal hills” amplifies Niobe’s plea for mercy, performing a repetition that includes the earthly order in Niobe’s contestation of Olympus’s sovereignty. In the end, what Wheatley offers is a small plot assembled from her refusal to depict Niobe’s ossification, allowing her to express her tormented grief and fury. The call and response between Niobe and her earthly surroundings become a performative echo that relinquishes patriarchal and colonialist imaginary of displaced and estranged reproduction for forms of belonging to the earth accountable to matrilineal claims of kin.

“...the things that belonged to the dead”

Gronniosaw, Wheatley, and Occom render the singular deaths that haunted their writing, and inspired reiterative performances of mourning attentive to the contingencies of their polyvocal spiritualities. In different ways, they imagine an earthly work of mourning attentive to the liturgical precarity of racial estrangements at the moment of death do not, finally, remain an echo chamber that only reiteratively speak sorrow. Unlike the static repetitions of Niobe’s “vocal hills,” each of their weary portrayals of untimely death, bear the weight of a political sensibility of contingency. It returns our gaze to the earth as a figure for organizing appeals for racial

collectivity and sovereignty, without evading the real and enduring significance of particular, local plots of sanctified ground to those whose lives are so deeply marked by the everyday displacements of forced migrancy. Having addressed grief as crucially a question of the local and the everyday, through narratives of singular deaths in Gronniosaw, Occom, and Wheatley, I want to now briefly pivot outward to consider how the itinerancy of polyvocal spiritualities, when rooted in small plots, might become a point of departure for reading ethnographic accounts of mourning in texts by speakers and writers of color.⁵¹ Communicated by non-white observers and participants through Western frameworks of cross-cultural encounter and interpretation, such accounts attempt to identify (and, more importantly, generalize from) local and discrete practices inhabited by a community at a particular point in time, often interceding within ongoing settler colonial discourses in ways that acquire considerable political stakes. We might, for instance, recall Gronniosaw and Olaudah Equiano, who both spend much of the opening portions of their narratives describing the political, economic, and spiritual frameworks that organize social and cultural expressions in, respectively, “Bournou” and “Essaka” in Igboland (both in modern Nigeria). Equiano, especially, uses his descriptions of his homeland to draw parallels between traditional Igbo culture and the Old Testament Israelites, an ethnographic choice aimed at countering portrayals of Africans as entirely “pagan” or “savage” (Equiano 19-30). For now thought, I would like to consider Samson Occom’s ethnographic descriptions of the Montauks in *An Account of the Montauk Indians, on Long Island* (1761) because they establish how a critical practice rooted in small plots can be taken to broader accounts of colonial history and ethnography reveals the interstitial connections between the “earth” as both a philosophical category for organizing sovereignty and collectivity and as a physical repository for individual bodily remains. Occom’s descriptions of Montauk mourning and funeral practices, in particular,

concede that how one buries the dead makes tangible – indeed *grounds* – one’s spiritual and ethnic identity. Occom’s *An Account of the Montauk Indians* ask us, in other words, to consider that the terrain inhabited by a tribal community is supported by an assemblage of singular, yet interconnected, small plots.

A brief ethnography, *An Account of the Montauk Indians* spans only five or six pages in modern editions, but his descriptions of Montauk culture, especially their spiritual beliefs and mourning practices, reveal much about indigenous resilience against colonial missionary and legal practices. Occom first journeyed to the Montauks in 1749 and worked with the tribe and the surrounding community as a teacher after his education at Wheelock’s school was complete (Brooks, *Collected Writings* 15). He was financially supported (in a limited way) by the Boston Board of Commissioners for the Scottish Society for Propagating the Gospel, the organization that had also underwritten much of Occom’s educational expenses. As Joanna Brooks notes, Occom “demonstrate[ed] his commitment to his host community” when he married Mary Fowler, a Montauk and a former student, in 1751. “In deciding to marry,” Brooks explains, “the couple flouted Wheelock’s injunction that Occom avoid any ‘ingagements’ that might ‘interfere’” with Wheelock’s “Grand Design” for indigenous conversion and education (15). Brooks observes that Occom and Fowler’s marriage “also openly resisted colonial laws that forbade exogamous marriage between the Montaukett and other tribal communities, laws designed by the colony of New York to hasten indigenous population decline” (15). By 1755, however, the couple had four children. Occom’s *An Account of the Montauk Indians* then implicitly contests policies that suppressed Montauk reproduction, rewriting the idioms of ethnographic encounter to account for embattled forms of indigenous relation and kinship.

Composed against a colonial context that endorsed indigenous assimilation or outright extinction then, Occom's *An Account of the Montauk Indians* implicitly connects his own affirmation of indigenous reproduction with ethnographic descriptions of Montauk spiritual rites that revered ancestral knowledge or voiced forms of belonging to the dead. Indeed, we have already seen that Occom offered a measured account of Montauk religious rites, including the interpretation of dreams – “I don't see for my part, why it is not as true, as the English or other nation's witchcraft, but is a great mystery of darkness” (49). Occom and Mary, furthermore, “established a traditional home in a wigwam,” and Occom undertook to learn traditional indigenous medicinal practices while living among the Montauks (Brooks 15).⁵² In particular, Occom traces how connections with kin and tribe are measured by small performances: either through taking up the name of the deceased or “giving away” the “things that belonged to the dead.” In this sense, names and objects become the personal possessions that circulate within Montauk rituals of mourning. Occom begins his passage on Montauk mourning and funeral practices specifically with the corpse, describing how bodily remains are prepared for interment and the response of the community to the loss:

They use to wash their dead clean, and adorn them with all manner of ornaments, and paint the face of them with diverse colours, and make a great lamentation over their dead. When they carry the corpse to the grave, the whole company, especially of the women, make a doleful and a very mournful and loud lamentation, all the way as they go to the grave, and at the grave. (49)

As with Wheatley's Niobe, in Occom's account mourning for the dead seems to be the province of women in the community, who “especially,” he emphasizes, express “a very mournful and loud lamentation” for the dead. Women, in other words, provide the soundscape for grief during

the funeral and at the graveside. By contrast, the continuation of mourning in the aftermath of the funeral, Occom continues, becomes the peculiar purview of kin, and localizes around an aural muting or silencing – particularly a refusal to speak the dead relative’s name until the name is bestowed on or taken up by a surviving family member: “[N]either will the mourners mention the name by which their dead was called, nor suffer any one in the whole place to mention it till some of the relations is called by the same name” (50). As something that cannot be spoken until reclaimed by present kin, names roam through a kind of evanescent aural obliteration, only to reemerge as a reconstituted attachment, even a form of ownership, between the living and the dead.

For thinking through small plots as a critical reading practice, Occom’s descriptions of Montauk burial practices complicate how configurations of belonging – as expressions of familial attachment or possession – performatively transgress the work of internment, a work that ties both the bodily remains and the memory of a lost relative to a local piece of earth. In particular, Occom observes that the Montauks bury objects that “belonged to the dead” or “give [them] away” to surviving kin: “[A]nd they use to bury a great many things with their dead, especially the things that belonged to the dead, and what they did not bury they would give away” (50). The “things that belonged to the dead” appear as both a static and a laterally mobile form of inheritance. Rather than ostensibly passing vertically as a patrilineal inheritance, these objects are either buried in the earth or “given away,” a phrase which severs the passage’s initial model of possession, where “things” *can* “belong to the dead.” In Occom’s descriptions in *An Account of the Montauk Indians* then, the Montauk’s small plots offer two different endings for objects possessed by and associated with the memory of the deceased: they are either interred in the earth along with their owner’s bodily remains, or they engage in a circuitous wandering,

strange possessions migrating under new conditions of belonging and ownership. Such practices render the ground inhabited by the Montauk nation (and, perhaps implicitly, the entire continent) as an interconnected series of small plots, the tribal repositories of bodily remains and objects, and summons counter-circulations of possession, ownership, and inheritance as constitutive parts of an indigenous work of mourning.

Chapter Two:

Witnessing History Made Flesh in William Apess's Writings

“Did you ever know of Indians hurting those who was kind to them? No. We have a thousand witnesses to the contrary.”

William Apess

“The witness usually testifies in the name of justice and truth and as such his or her speech draws consistency and fullness. Yet here the value of testimony lies essentially in what it lacks; at its center it contains something that cannot be borne witness to ... The ‘true’ witnesses, the ‘complete witnesses,’ are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are ... the drowned. The survivors speak in their stead ... They bear witness to a missing testimony.”

Giorgio Agamben

Between 1977 and 1979, the Wampanoag Mashpee of Massachusetts attempted to reclaim ancestral lands as a source of its geographical unity, cultural heritage, and economic support. The Mashpees alleged that in violation of the Indian Nonintercourse Act (1790) “tribal land was taken from [the Mashpee tribe] between 1834 and 1870 with-out the required federal consent.” The jury, however, found that “what was a tribe in 1842 had voluntarily assimilated into the general society by 1869,” and denied the Mashpee land claim in the initial trial (*Mashpee v. New Seabury Corp.*). The First Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the original ruling (*Mashpee*).¹ The Mashpees continued to contest those rulings over the next thirty years and finally received federal recognition in 2007. This contemporary indigenous land claim in the United States

provides a point of departure for exploring how the Mashpee trials' pronouncements regarding assimilation can be historicized by revisiting the writings of William Apess (1798-1839), an indigenous Pequot activist and Methodist preacher, who agitated on behalf of the Mashpees for self-governance between 1833 and 1834. Apess, who was adopted into the Mashpee tribe and wrote extensively on its behalf during the 1833-34 struggle, never appears in the statements expressed by the judge, Walter J. Skinner, although the political struggle Apess supported became an important form of evidence within the trials. Critics of the original Mashpee struggle and the contemporary trials have suggested that the court papers construct a range of fictions through which the Mashpee land contention becomes imbricated within a larger reading of indigenous history and cultural assimilation.² By calling this ruling of assimilation a fiction, I wish to highlight its status as a historical construction, or a heuristic device, constructed by the court to encompass the scope of Mashpee history by insisting on the metonymic significance of static, discrete events within that history. Incidents from Mashpee history are repeatedly invoked during the trial, but often lack the names of specific participants, like Apess or, more importantly, the forms of protest these participants created in their struggle against Massachusetts's governing bodies. The Mashpee trials underscore the brutal historical logic Lenape scholar Joanne Barker has argued is at work in nearly all indigenous land and recognition claims: "[T]roubled notions of Native culture and identity attach to Native legal status and rights in ways that force Native peoples to claim the authenticity of a culture and identity" that has always already "been defined *for them*" (17; emphasis original). The contemporary trials therefore construct a version of the Mashpee past only to then read contemporary tribal life as a "failure" to inhabit that history, a process that leaves unacknowledged those moments in Apess's work where he creates counter-narratives to the U.S. legal order.³

Apess had much personal experience to draw on for such counter-narratives. Born in Colrain, Massachusetts to William and Candace Apes, Apess's paternal grandfather was a white man, while his parents and other grandparents claimed both Pequot and African ancestry, as he noted in his 1831 autobiography, *A Son of the Forest* (3).⁴ Apess's Pequot heritage was particularly precarious – the Pequots were massacred by English colonists at the conclusion of the Pequot War in 1638, and many of the survivors were sold into slavery in the Caribbean (O'Connell xxv). Separated from his family from the age of five, Apess was successively sold into indentured servitude to three different prominent families in Connecticut. Apess would not see his mother again for twenty years and had little contact with other members of the Pequot tribe after his childhood. As an adolescent, Apess sought recourse from these separations by joining other communities – the “noisy Methodists,” for one, whose congregations often drew its members from poor and itinerant indigenous and African American communities, and the New York militia, for another, which Apess briefly served with during the War of 1812 (*Forest* 25).⁵ Apess was eventually ordained as a Protestant Methodist minister in 1829, and would exploit his itinerant preaching circuit as a platform for his political activism among the Mashpee in Massachusetts in the 1830s. He was subsequently adopted into the Mashpee nation. Apess would also meet Mary Wood at a camp meeting in late 1820 or early 1821. In December of 1821, they were married, and had at least one son and two daughters. Apess lost his house and possessions in Mashpee to a series of debt actions in 1836 and 1837. Thereafter, he moved to New York City, where he lived until his death in 1839 of a cerebral hemorrhage (Konkle 106).

Given Apess's early (and perfectly legal under the auspices of the settler colonial state) separation from familial and tribal ties, it is perhaps no surprise that in one of his earliest essays,

The Indians: The Ten Lost Tribes (1831), he imagines himself summoned to give an account of God's justice in the face of the "flagrant" crimes of American settler colonialism:

Some have even arraigned the *justice* of God. I have been asked, time and again, whether I did not sincerely believe that God had more respect to the white man than to the untutored son of the forest. I answer, and always answer such, in the language of Scriptures: 'No: God is no respecter of persons.' I might meet a question of this kind by proposing another ... Is not the white man as sinful by nature as the red man ... [Is] he not an enemy to God and righteousness, prone to the commission of every crime, however flagrant in its nature and its tendencies? (113)

In this moment, Apess tellingly frames the question of God's justice through the legal term "arraigned" – to call before a court to answer a criminal charge – intimating that God Himself is called to testify, indeed to bear witness, to indigenous dispossession. Although Apess ultimately denies the charge laid against God's sovereign justice, by inscribing the "commission of every crime" within an interrogative address, Apess introduces lingering hesitation: why has God not answered the charge? And why must Apess answer for him, and only through "the language of the Scriptures," narratives temporally and geographically far removed from Apess's own moment? Perhaps the role Apess occupies summoning witnesses, even God, poses its own kind of answer. His presence within this moment of juridical encounter mirrors the unfolding of narrative within *The Indians* as a whole, a text that inserts New World indigenous histories within the long arc of Biblical narrative. *The Indians* argues that New World indigenous peoples are the descendants of the ten Hebrew tribes carried away into Assyrian captivity, tribes who never returned home and thereafter vanished from Old Testament histories.⁶ For Apess in *The Indians*, however, the ancient Hebrews live again, surviving within a host of ethnic and kinship

inheritances that mark present indigenous bodies. By rendering indigenous peoples the genealogical inheritors of Hebraic promise, I want to suggest that Apess offers an alternative historical ethos, a return to another location in time, one that “re-enfleshes” peoples who have long vanished from memory and narrative. If God cannot or will not testify to the lingering devastations of colonialism, then by refreshing histories as forms of protest, Apess summons what I would like to call a juridical theology that revives bodies that have vanished from colonial archives, a vanishing literary scholar Jean M. O’Brien (White Earth Ojibwe) has described in *Firsting and Lasting* (2010) as a spectralization of the “first” and “last” Native American in order to naturalize ongoing indigenous genocide by the settler state (1-5). More specifically, Apess contests the momentum of colonial historiography that always troped indigenous peoples as “vanishing” from spaces and histories.⁷ By returning not just to forgotten or evaded indigenous histories, but re-imagining those histories as materially revived in present bodies, however, Apess summons a counter-archive, one entrenched in flesh.⁸

As this passage from *The Indians* may suggest, Apess rarely considers questions of historical ethos apart from a visionary – and revisionary – theology grounded in the brutal realities of racial embodiment within everyday indigenous existence.⁹ To that end, his writings refuse to evade politico-theological arrangements that manage indigenous existence under the auspice of the settle state. The archives Apess invokes unsettle theories of sovereignty announced in contemporary accounts of political theology. As we have already seen, Carl Schmitt’s version of sovereignty depends on a transcendent and originary institution of the state that precedes the legal order. In *The Nomos of the Earth* (1950), Schmitt locates this originary act of sovereignty within colonial history and argues that European international law developed as a response to New World discovery.¹⁰ More expansively, in *Land and Sea* (1942), Schmitt’s reads territorial

appropriation as paradigmatic of world history in general, and British imperial expansion in particular: “World history is a history of land-appropriations, and with every land-appropriation, the land-appropriators not only contracted with each other but they also often fought” (63). Schmitt’s global history of land appropriation thus founds the settler colonial order, as well as the terrain of modern sovereignty and embodied citizenship.¹¹ Apess transferred what Schmitt understood as a primeval scene of theft to an ongoing and everyday indigenous experience, connecting the state of exception to a *longue durée* of colonial history. In *A Son of the Forest*, Apess announces: “The sentence of desolation has gone forth ... [I]mplacable wrath, goaded on by interest and prejudice, is ready to confound all rights, trample on claims of justice and humanity, and to act over those scenes of sanguinary vengeance which have too often stained the pages of colonial history” (68). Apess imagines the sentence of desolation emerging within affective realms such that feeling overwhelms the bodies performing the “scenes of sanguinary vengeance.” He entrenches the devastations of American states of exception deep within flesh, within patterns of thought and behavior, ultimately rendering them as an embodied history that marks indigenous communities. Apess’s writings therefore form what I am calling a juridical theology, where an attention to enfleshed histories disentangle state sovereignty from its unspoken authority derived from extra-judicial scenes of theft. His work diverges from political theology as it has been articulated recently in exploring histories left out of the legitimating maneuvers of state practice.¹² Instead, Apess is invested in those immanent accounts of crime banished from national archives, to everyday scenes of terror which are not (or cannot) be called crimes because to do so would undermine a *nomos* of U.S. territorial domination and expansion. In calling attention to these unmarked and unremarked-upon pasts, Apess insists that any national narrative must address those histories of violence – the sentences of desolation which

have gone forth and still go forth – devastating indigenous bodies. Apess’s writings figure history as remnants of the past inscribed on indigenous bodies, a historical resource that archives the past in flesh. This form of evidence, however, is precisely what remains unread in contemporary judgements of indigenous land and recognition claims.

At the level of narrative, Apess’s juridical theology renders histories of indigenous dispossession legible by attending to the racial body of the witness, to practices of testimonial narrative that can attest to “the stains of colonial history” embedded in flesh (68). Latin offers two versions of the witness, each offering insight into his juridical theology. The first is *testis*, whose modern counterpart is testimony, and suggests the “person who, in a trial or lawsuit between two rival parties, is in the position of a third party,” who mediates the dispute. The second is *superstes* and signifies one who has “experienced an event from beginning to end and can therefore bear witness to it” (Agamben *Remnants* 17). The witness occupies a singular paradox in Latin’s juridical legacy – existing either as a spectator in the adjudication process or experiencing the original violation and thus testifying to its veracity. Depending on the context, the witness can thus exist both inside and outside the moment of transgression, potentially as spectator *and* survivor. Given that many explorations of political theology are encoded within a language of spectrality – Vincent Lloyd contends, for instance, that political theology is conceptually “haunted by race” – it is important to recognize that Apess’s witnesses are not, in any sense, disembodied ghosts (7).¹³ His witnesses matter *and* have matter because they often take form as bodily fragments – skin, dismembered limbs, corpses – that resist configuring indigenous bodies as a spectral “vanishing Indian.”¹⁴ By attending to flesh, Apess’s juridical theologies are attuned to the material remains of racial pasts in quotidian affective arrangements and communal interactions, which continually threaten to disrupt the temporal orders of the

settler state.¹⁵ In this way, Apess offers a theologically-inflected critical practice for reading indigenous history analogous to Saidiya Hartman’s meditation on slavery and the archive in *Lose Your Mother* (2007), where she suggests that “[t]o read the archive is to enter a mortuary,” adding that “history is how the secular world attends to the dead” (17, 18). Because Apess’s juridical theologies so insistently summon the bodies of witnesses to speak, moreover, his writings are invested in publicly and visibly framing expressions of grief in ways that, as we will see in chapter three, Mary Prince’s own *History* troubles. In bearing witness to colonial atrocity, Apess’s witnesses, even those who testify to it through their death and dismemberment, are insistently located in the present, and not, as with Prince, in the “times that are gone” (Prince 64). The devastated bodies appearing in Apess’s writings – including broken kinship lines in *A Son of the Forest* (1831), King Philip’s dismemberment in *The Eulogy on King Philip* (1836), and testimonial skin-books in *An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man* (1832) – become figurations of the past inscribed on present indigenous bodies. I will consider the testimonial frameworks Apess creates out of alternative and queer kinship networks, Methodist congregational performances and political activism, and rites of memorialization and mourning. When read together, Apess’s witnesses demonstrate a persistent refusal to consent to the spectralizing maneuvers of modern politico-theological arrangements, especially those mobilized in the 1970s Mashpee recognition case.

Inassimilable Pasts

At its heart, the U.S. court’s reading of voluntary assimilation in the 1970s Wampanoag Mashpee trials offers one evidentiary account of indigenous bodies disappearing through American expansion. Involved in the Mashpee action was a claim for tribal recognition as well

as for approximately thirteen thousand acres of land in Mashpee, Massachusetts (Campisi 9). In order to mediate the dual claims for recognition and land, the court early summoned historical texts as evidence for either tribal survival or disappearance-through-assimilation. Crucial to any reading of Apess's archival witnesses then is the federal court's interpretation of indigenous assimilation and coercion within what they viewed as a surviving, accessible historical archive. The First Circuit Court judge presiding over the appeal, Walter Skinner, began by affirming that an extended history of cultural intermingling can be traced in historical records: "The Mashpees have a long history of intermarriage with non-Indians and acceptance of non-Indian religion and culture. These facts do not necessarily mean that the Mashpees are not a tribe protected by federal law, but they do make the issue of tribal existence a difficult factual question for the jury" (Mashpee). Questions regarding the identification of pre-contact indigenous communal formations and post-contact fusions of social and cultural expressions have long engaged the interest of scholars of indigenous history.¹⁶ However, a closer reading of the court documents suggests that an alternative line of inquiry resides in the way cultural purity is enfolded within a broader consideration of the authority of historical "facts" within a legal setting. What is troubling is that indigenous "history" appears in this case as a series of linear, discrete, discoverable data rather than through encounters of contestation, ambiguity, and volatility (Kaplan 13-14). Historical records, in other words, are matters of fact, not matters open to interpretation. In order to address the question of voluntary assimilation, both judge and jury only have recourse to historical records, heuristically and somewhat ominously defined in Skinner's judgement as capable of clearly marking coercive events and their consequences:

The plaintiff had an advantage because evidence of coercion from outside the community a century ago is more likely to be available today than is evidence of the state of mind of the

individuals who changed their lifestyles. That is, historical records would reveal forced migrations, governmental dealings, urban encroachments, the presence of outsiders, or other arguably coercive forces more readily than the important concerns or thought processes of the Indians. (Mashpee)

Skinner makes a telling distinction between assimilation and coercion based on the likelihood of finding either in historical records: assimilation is relegated to the *hidden* interior life of individuals caught up in the political events of Mashpee struggles of the 1830s and 40s, whereas coercion indicates the *public* relations between U.S. authority and indigenous communities. This distinction suggests that assimilation occurs beyond the horizon of observation and documentation, even if its effects are preserved in historical records.¹⁷

Skinner's judgment, furthermore, relies on a definition of "tribe" that is itself conflicted. Cited throughout *Mashpee v. New Seabury Corp.* is the legal definition of a "tribe," the parameters of which were decided in *Montoya v. United States*.¹⁸ A tribe, according to *Montoya*, is "... a body of Indians of the same or a similar race, united in a community under one leadership or government, and inhabiting a particular, though sometimes ill-defined territory," overturning an earlier definition as elaborated in *United States v. Joseph*.¹⁹ These standards for what constitute a tribe protected by the Nonintercourse Act constrict the possibilities for tribal recognition according to ethnic unity ("of the same or similar race"), political organization ("united in community" and "under one leadership or government"), and/or ties to a specific locale ("inhabiting a particular, though sometimes ill-defined territory"). As Skinner notes in *Mashpee v. New Seabury Corp.*, "A tribe may be so sophisticated or so assimilated as to fall outside the scope of protection afforded by the Nonintercourse Act" (Mashpee). This additional burden of proof dramatically constrains tribal appeals, and authorized Skinner to argue that the

Mashpee tribe, according to external markers of dress, behaviors, and spiritual affiliations, had “essentially ... assimilated” into Massachusetts society, leaving unsaid and unexplained when or how such an assimilation occurred and what an unassimilated Mashpee culture might look like. This portrayal of indigenous oppression presents a legal double-bind for the Mashpee plaintiffs: if the Mashpees can provide evidence of forced assimilation (or the dissolution of tribal identity), can they then agitate, as a tribe, for federal recognition?²⁰ What the court cannot acknowledge are the systemic forces – extensive, mediative, and diffuse – forming the material conditions for Mashpee tribal life to change and adapt, and to continue enduring²¹ into the present under the shadow of such “sentences of desolation.”²²

The Mashpee plaintiffs responded to the court’s request for evidence of coercive assimilation with historical records of resistance, making the case that *these* figures represent more potent evidence for the continuation of indigenous lifeways than the docile bodies the court imagines. The conclusion of the trial, however, reads the historical evidence of self-governance and self-determination as *failures*, as signs of the assimilation of the Mashpee community into the economic, political, and cultural habits practiced by the white inhabitants of Massachusetts: “The intense political activity that could have led the jury to find tribal existence in 1834 and 1842 was novel for the group and limited in time and scope of objective. The goal of becoming a district with certain rights of self-government was achieved in 1834. The jury could infer that the tribal organizations, having accomplished its purposes, became less important to the community” (Mashpee). Crucially, what is at stake for the court are the meanings of coercion and resistance: these moments of political activism and resistance are read by Skinner as a voluntary form of assimilation, as signs of the community’s dissolution, rather than expressions of its survival. Obscured in the texts of the later Mashpee court trials, Apess’s writings represent a legal

discourse counter to the Massachusetts court's notion of assimilation and consent and of the visibility of both in historical archives. The court understands Mashpee resistance as evidence that the tribe has assimilated U.S. political practices and its legal vocabularies within its own collective self-expressions. In reading both the trial records and Apess's autobiographical works, David J. Carlson in *Sovereign Selves* (2006) argues that the pervasiveness of discourses of assimilation describing indigenous identity at the 1970s trials would suggest that, were Apess's writings to have been invoked as a kind of historical record of tribal identity in the Mashpee land trials, "they would probably have been used as evidence *against the tribe*" (121; emphasis original). In reading Apess's works alongside the trials, I want to suggest that his accounts of the legal horizon of indigenous experience indicate a more complicated evaluation of what counts as evidence. Apess's configuration of an embodied archive, of histories entrenched in flesh in the present, marks an alternative kind of evidence formed *in extremis*, an evidentiary witness rendered illegible by the courts.

Kinship Acts

Apess's personal history illuminates the theologico-legal maneuvers he will imagine throughout his published texts, particularly his linking of the contested sites of indigenous genealogy, death, and burial to Biblical sites of genealogy, death, and burial. Apess was born in 1798 in Colrain, Massachusetts to William and Candace Apes. His parents were poor laborers and separated when he was a young child, leaving him and his siblings with his maternal grandparents.²³ Apess describes his early life with them as marked by neglect and abuse, but carefully distinguishes between the systemic injustice his grandparents inherited from a carnal white culture and their own moral culpability in a way that overtly connects the spectralizing

momentum of settler colonialism. After describing his grandparents' cruel treatment of him, including a beating where his arm was broken, he writes:

But this cruel and unnatural conduct was the effect of some cause. I attribute it in a great measure to the whites, inasmuch as they introduced among my countrymen that bane of comfort and happiness, ardent spirits – seduced them into a love of it and, when under its unhappy influence, wronged them out of their lawful possessions – that land, where reposed the ashes of their sires. (7)

Apess depicts a depressingly common image of everyday relations between indigenous peoples and American citizens produced out of the brutal terrains of settler colonialism. Apess specifically locates alcohol as an agent in indigenous spectralization – it “seduces” indigenous peoples from communal cohesion, kinship, and possession of the land. In describing his early life with his grandparents, Apess links his own experience of familial poverty and abuse to colonial exercises of theft, or the collective dispossession of indigenous lands, within what is a crucial articulation of connection with a local environment – burial sites. It is not only important that alcohol robs indigenous peoples of land through patrilineal connections to the earth “where reposed the ashes of their sires.” In doing so, he alters local landscapes into embodied repositories of the past.²⁴ Burial sites will continue to signify for Apess both personal and generational relationships to the land, especially in the two works that bookend Apess's literary career, *A Son of the Forest* and the *Eulogy on King Philip*.

In *A Son of the Forest*, Apess would return again and again to scenes of devastated kinship, often localized around encounters with the dead. Mark Rifkin has suggested that Apess's repeated recourse to “that lawful possession” emphasizes that “the broader dynamics of expatriation and erasure he addresses are realized as quotidian forms of private landholding

passed through legally recognized family lines” (*Settler Common Sense* 2).²⁵ Alongside the significance of lineage and inheritance, Apess is equally attuned to the psychological and social disruptions of death to Native peoples. In many cases, death and kinship become his dual frameworks for exploring indigenous dispossession, for depicting the everyday trauma felt by the kinless (or functionally kinless). More specifically, Apess’s mediation on death and kinship suggest the contours of a new juridical theology that can bear witness to these devastations, while making a theological case for refusing to participate in white practices of mediation on the dead (especially of the indigenous dead) as a sanctioned praxis of mourning.²⁶ An event narrated early in *A Son of the Forest* (but less attended to in criticism of Apess) speaks to this dual purpose. After Apess was taken from his grandparents’ home, he became an indentured servant to Mr. and Mrs. Furman, both Baptists who attended to his early education in Christian belief and precept. On one occasion, in an attempt to impress on the six-year-old Apess a respect for “a future state of existence” and initiate him into Christian contemplative traditions, Mrs. Furman directs him to a cemetery (9). In that space, Apess engages in an extraordinary act of resistance. He refuses to allow the cemetery to guide him towards either spiritual awareness of his soul or its potential state after death. As he goes on to describe:

She referred me to the graveyard, where many younger and smaller persons than myself were laid to molder in the earth. I had of course nothing to say – but, notwithstanding, I could not fully comprehend the nature of death and the meaning of a future state. Yet I felt an indescribable sensation pass through my frame; I trembled and was sore afraid and for some time endeavoured to hid myself from the destroying monster, but I could find no place of refuge (9).

Mrs. Furman begins by encouraging Apess to engage in an act of identification with those “laid to molder in the earth” who are “younger and smaller persons than myself.” In attempting to follow Mrs. Furman’s directive towards an ethical encounter with the dead, Apess can only respond with words of negation: “I had of course nothing to say,” “I could not fully comprehend the nature of death,” “I felt an indescribable sensation,” “I could find no place of refuge.”²⁷ On the one hand, it makes a certain kind of narrative sense that Apess can only respond with negation to what is the ultimate negation, especially given his age and (according to the standards of the day) his spiritual maturity. On the other hand, the graveyard strains the confines of the narrative in ways that suggest how the material reminders of the dead exceed meaningful contemplation of death as an existential possibility. In particular, Apess’s encounters with the dead rarely break free from the brutal realities of indigenous existence. Who is buried in this cemetery? Can Apess reconstruct kinship relations to the dead “molder[ing] in the earth” if he is “a cast-off member of the tribe” far away from the “lands where reposed the ashes of [his] sires”? (9, 10, 7). Apess’s refusal hints that a confrontation with the dead for purely theological reasons – in order to save his soul – may never erase his consciousness of familial attachment to indigenous peoples buried in the unmarked and unremarked-upon graves he opens *A Son of the Forest* with, the “land where reposed the ashes of their sires.” And this is for Apess a monstrous realization.

In the pages that follow in *A Son of the Forest*, Apess reconfigures this refused encounter with the dead against descriptions of tense encounters with what he imagines are indigenous women in the woods, a passage that has drawn more sustained critical attention in order to address his early racial consciousness.²⁸ As he builds narrative momentum towards this moment, Apess foreshadows his terrified response to these women by recalling that his moral education was greatly aided by his white masters using Native Americans as a subsidiary bogey-man to the

“monster” of death: “So completely was I weaned from the interests and affections of my brethren that a mere threat of being sent away among the Indians into the dreary woods had a much better effect in making me obedient to the commands of my superiors than any corporal punishment that they ever inflicted,” owing largely to the “lesson” he received “in the unnatural treatment of my own relations,” or his grandparents’ abuse (10). It is by no means accidental that Apess follows his refusal to be initiated into Christian contemplative practices by returning to questions of indigenous identity and existence, given the way they are inscribed as tools within evangelical behavioral management. Educated by personal experience and his white masters to be fearful of his “brethren of the forest,” Apess then describes an encounter with what he believes are indigenous women while collecting berries in the woods. In situating this passage alongside and against his earlier emphasis on the dead, his response – certainly an excess of imagination – may represent his attempt to narratively populate the forest with living and laboring indigenous bodies, even as it misrecognizes the racial identity of the women:

One day several of the family went into the woods to gather berries, taking me with them. We had not been out long before we fell in with a company of white females, on the same errand – their complexion was, to say the least, as *dark* as that of the natives. This circumstance filled my mind with terror, and I broke from the party with my utmost speed, and I could not muster courage enough to look behind until I had reached home. By this time my imagination had pictured out a tale of blood. (10-11)

Apess’s “tale of blood” reflects, on the one hand, an everyday moment in indigenous alienation from lifeways caught up within the theologico-political arrangements of gender and sovereignty. These bodies, in other words, represent the specter of a white paranoia haunted by macabre reports of indigenous violence. Apess becomes inscribed within that very paranoia, as he

renders his own bloody death as a “white settler” at the hands of these women. Rendered functionally kinless by the colonial legacies of alcoholism and abuse, his imagination inflamed by tales of “Indian” violence circulated within white historiography and the popular press, the landscapes of Apess’s vision are unsettled by indigenous deaths.²⁹ Given Apess’s persistent refusal to spectralize indigenous peoples, it may also be telling that Apess renders these imagined indigenous women as *present* (they have not vanished, either in death or further west through Indian Removal) and as potentially *resisting* bodies. These women offer the possibility that the sovereign order of the settler state can be violently disrupted, even if that violence is understood as a “savage” infusion, a “tale of blood” by others. At their heart then, Apess’s encounters with the graveyard, imagined indigenous persons, and the possibility of his own death early in *A Son of the Forest* may confuse a host of ethnic, gender, and ethical significations, a testament to the everyday violence out of which Apess will labor to create real and imagined kinship networks. But they also intimate the narrative disruptions his historical ethos will summon when he articulates a forgotten history of juridical recourse and sovereignty through kinship with ancient Hebrews and with Christ.

In opening *A Son of the Forest* with so many accounts of death and racial (mis)recognition, Apess suggests that his dispossessed natality and unhappy childhood occurred because of a series of legal thefts on bodies and lands, a history he will try in his earlier published texts, such as *A Son of the Forest* and *The Indians*, to counter by claiming kinship with other casualties of sovereign violence, namely the Old Testament Jews and Christ. In doing so, he frames improvised, queer arrangements of kinship out of evangelical spirituality. More specifically, Apess formulates in these two texts a Christology that accounts for Christ’s racialized presence in the world through a model of debt. He illuminates the intersections between the enfleshment

of Christ and the embodied experience of non-white Christians, and a legal discourse which makes transparent the indebtedness of white Americans to a brown Christ for personal and communal salvation.³⁰ The theological orientation at work here, interweaving Christ's racial presence and transactional salvation, performs a function of profound juridical import: Apess imagines that Christ as an advocate, as the mediator or *testis*, between the judgment of God and divine retribution is non-white, and thus contends that Christ's ethnic heritage is a significant factor in any anti-racist and anti-imperialist model of redemption.³¹ Apess's juridical theology thus emerges through an early reconfiguration of Christology that links Apess's biography and Native histories more generally to Biblical narratives in ways that reconfigure his early accounts of kinlessness as a "cast-off member of the tribe" (10). Apess closes *An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man* by rewriting personal salvation as an inheritance linking a brown-skinned Christ to dispossessed populations through the completion of redemption: "Jesus Christ being a Jew, and those of his Apostles certainly were not whites – and did not he who completed the plan of salvation complete it for the whites as well as for the Jews, and others?" (158). Here, Apess emphasizes Christ's individual ethnicity as a Jew as a way to claim communion with a brown-skinned divinity, moving towards an expression of collective identity as genealogical inheritors of Christ's race. Apess specifically frames his version of spiritual inheritance and salvific promise to the legal rhetoric of the transaction: "And you know as well as I that you are not indebted to a principle beneath a white skin for your religious services but to a colored one" (158). In imagining a racialized Christ as a spiritual creditor, Apess reverses the exploitative economic structures employed by white settlers to dispossess indigenous peoples of land and lifeways.

By engaging in what is essentially a covenantal relationship, where indigenous peoples profess a redemptive inheritance from a brown-skinned Christ, Apess offers a historical narrative where Christ shares in the dispossession and migrancy of indigenous peoples. Apess uses this account to judge the religious sincerity and economic prosperity of white Americans:

Now, if the Lord Jesus Christ, who is counted by all to be a Jew – and it is well known that the Jews are a colored people, especially those living in the East, where Christ was born – and if he should appear among us, would he not be shut out of doors by many, very quickly? And by those too who profess religion? (160)

Apess's final rhetorical question contends that the structures of American liberalism, grounded in private property and self-possession, have always been racist, yet he does so by imagining white responses to a brown-skinned Christ's coming as retreat behind the doors of private homes. These properties, and their possibilities for domestic safety and retreat, private isolation, and familial enclosure, are precisely the spaces denied the migrant and impoverished indigenous peoples Apess accounts for throughout his writings. By reconfiguring Christ in the image of brown-skinned ethnicity, Apess proposes that no domain escapes the reach of Christ's sovereignty – natal sites, burial grounds, forests, and domestic spaces register as important pivots in his revisionary juridical theology.

In order to re-imagine alternative relationships to dispossessed lands, Apess also fashions a religio-racial affiliation with diasporic Hebrews.³² Some of Apess's less well-known works, such as *The Indians*, when read alongside *A Son of the Forest*, articulates Apess's identification with another Jewish diaspora – the Assyrian Captivity of ten of the twelve Jewish tribes. This diaspora represents an opacity in the historical record since few returned to their homeland (at least as recorded in the Old Testament), unlike those communities carried away in the Babylonian

Captivity.³³ Rather than claiming this occurrence in Jewish history as merely an analogue to indigenous experience, Apess argues that New World Native Americans are direct descendants of these lost tribes, forming a racial genealogy linking Biblical history and indigenous experience and suggesting that indigenous peoples are a “chosen people.” In doing so, Apess ultimately warns that the continued devastation of indigenous lands and communities may summon God’s judgement, as it did for nations that enslaved and warred with the Hebrews. The second half of the autobiographical narrative *A Son of the Forest* takes up the histories of the Pequots and these lost Israelites, and engages in extensive discussions of the similarities between indigenous and Jewish cultures and languages (53-56, 74-96). The second half of *A Son of the Forest* thus situates Apess’s life history within other accounts of collective diaspora and survival:

When I reflect upon the complicated ills to which my brethren have been subject, ever since history has recorded their existence – their wanderings, their perils, their privations, and their many sorrows, and the fierceness of that persecution which marked their dwellings and their persons for destruction ... I am led to believe that they are none other than the descendants of Jacob and the long lost tribes of Israel ... There is a possibility that these unhappy children of misfortune may yet be proved to be the descendants of Jacob; and if so that, though cast off for the heinous transgressions, they have not been altogether forsaken and will hereafter appear to have been in all their dispersions and wanderings, the subjects of God’s divine protection and gracious care. (53)

Apess reads the Jews’ forced diaspora as both a repeated occurrence in a long history of racial experience and as a sentence of desolation to which indigenous communities can return to as a sign of survival, the script of which is this: although some believe the ten lost tribes have disappeared, we can testify that they survived because *we* have survived. By claiming kinship

with these lost tribes, Apess can also make a theological case for indigenous peoples being equally a chosen people with Jewish peoples and under the God's "divine protection." Apess, as we will shortly see, suggests that remaining under God's special protection may not keep indigenous peoples safe from harm but *does* promise a future retribution on the white inhabitants of the settler state. In Apess's reconstructed myth of beginnings, New World histories of contact and conquest become part of Western spiritual history, potentially providing juridical recourse to scattered indigenous communities, even as it may elide their own prior narratives of origin and kinship.³⁴

More suggestive is the version of juridical recourse imagined by Apess in *The Indians*, where, instead of continuing American narratives of vanishing (or, in Apess's usage, "melting") indigenous communities, he focuses on God's intervention in avenging the crimes of settler colonialism. Apess specifically situates indigenous diaspora and genocide within a divine temporality by returning to another point in time – in this case, the Hebrew exodus from Egypt:

The conviction rests with great force upon the minds of many intelligent men ... that the Indian tribes, now melting away like dewdrops in the morning's sun, are no less than the remnant of that people, the records of whose history has been blotted out from among the nations of the earth – whose history, if history they have, is a series of cruelties and persecutions without a parallel. That nation, peculiarly and emphatically blessed by God – his own highly favored and chosen people, preserved by the wondrous interposition of divine power, brought up out of Egypt and their cruel bondage by miraculous means, inducted into the promised land flowing with milk and honey, but strong in the purposes of rebellion – their murmurs rose to heaven, calling loudly for vengeance. (113-114)

Given Apess's efforts to demonstrate deep genealogical bonds to the Hebrews, this invocation of the exodus out of Egypt functions as something more than an analogy: it is prophetic. The Hebrews' exodus foreshadows indigenous deliverance. Although Apess does not overtly make this connection, by invoking "murmurs" and "vengeance," he recalls the devastating violence of that exodus – the plagues, culminating in the death of the Egyptian's firstborn, and the destruction of the Egyptian army (Exodus chapters 4-15). By claiming kinship with the Hebrews, Apess slyly warns of a coming eschatological disruption, a time of plague and vengeance to be visited upon the white inhabitants of the United States, mirroring the devastation of indigenous communities by disease, conquest, and economic exploitation. Apess's early texts perform an unsettling reversal of what had been state policies of Indian Removal and procedures of erasure encoded in narratives of the "vanishing Indian" (structures, we should recall, mirrored in contemporary recognition trials): far from the graveyards and ancestral mortalities he began *A Son of the Forest*, far from Apess's "monstrous realization," we are left with another vision of mass death, one that threatens the utter devastation of the settler state and its arrangements of sovereignty.³⁵

"We, in our synagogues..."

If Apess's reconfigurations of kinship networks, constructed out of the material realities of indigenous dispossession that persist within the politico-theological orderings of the American landscape, threaten to become narratives of eschatological revenge, he takes that energy and fuses it to Methodist spiritual practices in the aftermath of his conversion.³⁶ For Apess, Methodist congregational performances initiate affective expressions and arrangements of embodied spiritual experience that recall the racial body as a channel for spiritual authority. He

reads shouting and weeping, in particular, as signs that God inhabits the bodies and worship spaces of Methodist congregations. Early in *A Son of the Forest*, for instance, Apess narrates a collective spiritual experience where these encompassing emotional responses signify a visceral, somatic religious authority far removed from the spectralizing maneuvers of the politico-theological settler state working to “vanish” American indigenous peoples from the landscape.³⁷

As Apess describes the service:

When the minister preached he spoke as one having authority. The exercises were accompanied by the power of God. His people shouted for joy – while sinners wept. This being the first time I had ever attended a meeting of this kind, all things of course appeared new to me ... I was constrained to believe that they were the true people of God. One person asked me how I knew it. I replied that I was convinced in my own mind that they possessed something more than the power of the devil. (18)

The service summons an alternative form of authority, even perhaps of sovereignty, for Apess. The preacher’s voice and the congregation’s spirit possession offer him an alternative model of possession sanctioned by the strength of the congregation’s excessive affective responses: “they possessed something more than the power of the devil.” In other words, they are possessed by the spirit of God *and* possess spiritual authority, forming a model of possessive reciprocity compelling to Apess. It is also a model of a congregational, embodied form of possession that the Methodists access despite (or maybe because of) a lack of material goods. Apess attends the services of Protestant Methodists, who usually draw on poor, migrant populations for their congregations (Warrior 195-97). The enthusiasm of this Methodist service illuminate the embodied presence of a community so often figured through lack (of prestige, education, wealth), and transforms Apess’s status as an indentured servant into a new spiritual subject. The

weeping Methodists thus offer a set of practices for considering spiritual possession through its expressive repertoire that will inspire Apess's political activism among the Mashpee tribe.

More specifically, what Apess gains from these practices of enthusiastic, somatic expression is an initial iteration of spiritual self-possession that will inform later protests against American arrangements of indigenous spaces, even if he turns away (as we will see in his *Eulogy on King Philip*) from much of the substance of evangelical doctrine he had articulated in earlier works. Apess begins attending Methodist meetings while living as an indentured servant in the Williams and Hillhouse families, and against his masters' express permission. His early descriptions of his movement into Methodist congregational worship are consequently imbedded within larger discussions of individual liberty, and suggest the extent to which Methodist conversion had political and legal resonances for its non-white members:

About this time the Methodists began to hold meetings in the neighborhood, and consequently a storm of persecution gathered ... And it was openly said that the character of a respectable man would receive a stain, and a deep one too, by attending one of their meetings ... But it had no effect on me ... They had possession of the red man's inheritance and had deprived me of liberty; with this they were satisfied and could do as they pleased; therefore, I thought I could do as I pleased, measurably. I therefore went to hear the *noisy Methodists*. (18; emphasis original)

Robert Warrior (Osage) has suggested that Apess's turn to Methodism "offered hope for a reconstituted present" for indigenous peoples living in the "carnage of colonialization" (197, 193). In this moment from *A Son of the Forest*, Apess's recourse to spiritual practices and precepts also offered (at least initially) hope for a reconstituted past. Apess uses what appears to him a trivial discussion of individual character to illuminate a broader and deeper "stain" on

history, the devastations of indigenous peoples that have occurred (and continue to occur) in the United States, what we earlier saw him describe as the violence which “stains the pages of colonial history.” Perhaps even more significant is Apess’s movement from the collective – “the red man’s inheritance” – to an individual expression of everyday right – “had deprived me of liberty, which suggests that Apess imagines counter-fictions of a singular liberty emerging within plural congregational affiliations out of histories of theft and loss.”³⁸ In an attempt to rewrite that history, Apess joins a congregation that worships – passionately, forcefully, at full volume – all together, while using the state-sanctioned American theft of indigenous lands as justification for joining the “noisy Methodists.” His narratives of Methodism therefore emphasize that somatic and aural qualities of popular, enthusiastic worship can disrupt everyday arrangements of sovereignty (theft, poverty, and indentured servitude) experienced by indigenous persons like Apess.

Later in life, Apess fuses the somatic congregational performances of Methodism to practices of political activism and textual production among the Mashpee nation of Massachusetts. Apess’s *Indian Nullification of the Unconstitutional Laws of Massachusetts, or the Pretended Riot Explained* (1835) encompasses Apess’s journalistic account of political activism in Mashpee, Massachusetts, including multiple newspaper versions of the disturbance, and channels expressive worship into collective activism defined by collaboratively-created textual and embodied disruptions. Maureen Konkle argues that throughout *Indian Nullification*, “Apess orchestrated a systematic assault on white authority through various forms of writing” during the Mashpee struggle and created a range of socio-textual disruptions in Boston, where much of the discussion of the Mashpee struggle occurred (120). Under Apess’s leadership, the Mashpee tribe delivered a letter to the state legislature announcing their intention to rule themselves, according

to the rights encoded in the Constitution. The Mashpee tribe also sent a letter to Harvard College administrators urging the recall of Rev. Mr. Fish, the minister appointed to the parish and employed through external funding (174-77).³⁹ Through these textual accumulations, *Indian Nullification* counters the legal, economic, and political practices provoking the Mashpee tribe's dislocation from spiritual autonomy, economic security, and political authority. Konkle notes that *Indian Nullification*'s collaborative expression is profoundly linked to the demands of the Mashpee tribe itself: "The object of the conflict ... was for the Mashpees to secure collective control of an authority over the land they had inherited from [a] seventeenth-century transaction" (126). The Mashpee struggle thus began as an attempt to interpret a text, this "seventeenth-century transaction," but built to include other embodied forms of protest, particularly for inhabiting certain spaces. By addressing how *Indian Nullification* imagines indigenous bodies in space, I wish to consider how the bodies and buildings conjured in the documents of the Mashpee struggle mark the political possibilities of Apess's embodied archives, or those figures where historical meaning materializes in flesh.

Apess visited the Mashpees as part of his itinerant preaching circuit and soon became involved in their struggle for self-determination. He utilized his spiritual authority as a preacher to speak for the Mashpee tribe within the politico-legal realm. In this way, Apess resists the relegation of indigenous presence to spectral encounters by returning to the material architecture of the chapel, exploring how church buildings become sites for enunciating communal self-determination. Apess cites the centrality the church building takes in the Mashpee narrative of dispossession: "These pale men were certainly stealing from the Indians their portion of the Gospel, by leaving their own houses of worship and crowding them out of theirs" (171). Apess groups several different kinds of thefts – theft of the Gospel (both the materiality of the book and

a vocal evangelicalism) and the theft of physical spaces within which to worship as a corporate body. These thefts occur by means of crowding, or the accumulation of white congregants who abandon their own church properties, and whose sheer numbers also overwhelm the enthusiastic worship practices of Apess and other congregants. The material architectures enclosing, protecting, and marking the sites of indigenous spirituality are thus overtaken in the same way their lands have been stolen. Apess bitterly summarizes how the silencing of indigenous lifeways is encoded as perfectly legal: “The law allowed them to do so” (171).

Regaining possession of the chapel is thus an important step in articulating a collaborative embodiment of indigenous authority. As such, Apess shrewdly deconstructs the rhetorical strategies at work in keeping indigenous congregations from reclaiming worship spaces. In describing the white ministers’ initial refusal to vacate the church buildings, Apess suggests:

Both the divines mentioned above [Rev. Hawley and his successor, Rev. Fish] were willing to have the use of the property of the Marshpees, I fear, under a mere pretext of doing them good; and, therefore, that they and the overseers might have a support from the plantation, the owners were constantly proclaimed to be savages. I wonder what the whites would say, should the Indians take possession of any part of their property. Many and many a red man has been butchered for a less wrong than the Marshpees complain of.

(187)

This passage’s invocation of property and possession works on several registers keyed to who owns what at any given time. At the opening of the passage, the Mashpees seem to “own” the church property, which the American ministers have “use of.” In the next sentence, however, that ownership is reconfigured through a language that implicitly invites comparisons to American slavery, as the Mashpee’s technical ownership is constrained by “overseers” on the “plantation”

of the chapel and forest grounds. The Mashpee tribe's technical ownership is undermined by calling them "savages," much as African slaves were relegated to the category of the sub-human (or, in the language of the Constitution, 3/5th of a person).⁴⁰ These complicated rhetorical registers foreground the indeterminacy of pronoun usage in the statement that follows – "I wonder what the whites would say, should the Indians take possession of any part of *their* property." Is Apess pondering the results of an obverse theft, of Indians taking the property owned by Americans, or is he musing on the outcome of the Mashpees reclaiming control over "their" grounds and buildings? Even posing this thought as a possibility is structured as a rhetorical exercise – "I wonder" – given that Apess clarifies what has been the historical outcome for these indeterminate hypothetical questions. Such an attempt, whether it is framed as retributive theft or communal reclamation, nearly always ends in indigenous death, of the collective degradation of indigenous bodies – the "many and many [butchered]" bodies of the passage.

Given the realities of indigenous genocide, expressions of right of place and spiritual possession accrue particularly potent meaning in *Indian Nullification* when Apess describes how the reclaimed church buildings were used as communal meeting spaces to draft statements of resolution delivered to the Massachusetts state legislature and to Harvard College. In these moments, Apess not only foregrounds the role of the reclaimed worship spaces as a site for indigenous historical self-authorship, but also calls into question the written creations of American legal discourse:

We now, in our synagogue, for the first time, concerted the form of a government suited to the spirit and capacity of freeborn sons of the forest, after the pattern set us by our white brethren. There was but one exception, viz., that *all* who dwelt in our precincts were to be

held free and equal, *in truth* as well as in letter ... Having thus organized ourselves, we gave notice to the former board of overseers and the public at large, of our intentions. (179; emphasis original)

Apess acknowledges the community's debt to the "patterns" of government and legal organization offered by their "white brethren," but registers a stunning expression of difference from it: that their emancipatory texts will become more than texts. They will render an indigenous political order "*in truth* as well as in letter." The written texts generated from these meetings – the resolutions and notices articulating the "form of government suited to the spirit and capacity of freeborn sons of the forest" – will thus exceed their textual boundaries. Apess imagines that these new legal texts will no longer offer an approximate ideal which political arrangements struggle to enact, but will ensure the collective freedom of the Mashpee tribe. Apess follows this by arguing that the Mashpee struggle "acted in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution" in moving to "nullify the existing laws" restricting their exercise of self-determination (179). Here, even the Constitution exceeds its textual bounds, its "spirit" enabling the Mashpee tribe's collaborative act of self-determination. By recovering the chapel and exceeding the textual boundaries of their own political documents, the Mashpee tribe thus offers an account of "spiritually" enabled indigenous bodies, who testify to "free and equal" forms of inhabiting and belonging to reclaimed Mashpee spaces.

No matter the extent to which Mashpee collaborative expressions of embodied authority announce these alternative forms of collaborative engagement, they are framed as assimilationist, as "failures," during the 1977-79 Mashpee trials. Apess himself clearly demarcates the Mashpees' embodied and discursive practices from an American tradition of New England republicanism. Late in *Indian Nullification*, he remarks: "We daily see the Indian driven farther

and farther by inhuman legislation and wars, and all to enrich a people who call themselves Christians and are governed by laws derived from the moral and pious Puritans” (213).⁴¹ By focusing on “inhuman legislation and wars,” Apess is more concerned with the irregular and disproportionate application of law throughout the United States, which perpetuates the dispossessions of so-called “savage” peoples, particularly in the era of Jacksonian Indian Removal. Apess’s juridical theology expressed in *Indian Nullification* thus opens space for indigenous dissent from the legal and legislative histories of the settler state through embodied and collaborative spirituality. According to Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks, *Indian Nullification* “demonstrates the continuing use of writing as an instrument for communal remembering and land reclamation, as well as a powerful means of narrating Native continuance” (197). By turning to Apess’s *Eulogy on King Philip* and *An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man*, however, we see that he provides a more radical expression of juridical theology as one necessarily located in flesh. If *Indian Nullification* often reveals indigenous dispossession and protest by associating bodies with spaces, architectures, and spiritual expression, Apess goes far beyond his delineations of political possibility that approximate the “spirit” of texts like the Constitution. He more urgently associates communal re-memberment not solely with textual histories, but with a history preserved on the body, with a history made flesh.

“A thousand witnesses”

Apess twice performed his *Eulogy on King Philip, as Pronounced at the Odean, in Federal Street, Boston*, once on January 8 and again on January 26, 1836.⁴² In part commemorating the 160th anniversary of the death of the Wampanoag sachem Philip, or Metacom, the eulogy situates his dismemberment and death within a deeper history of attitudes towards the indigenous dead as

read against Puritan spiritual practices and mores.⁴³ In order to disentangle the complicated critique Apess performs in the *Eulogy*, I want to suggest that his juridical theology of the witness becomes more closely associated with the degraded body in a coded reference to the Eucharist in a moment early in *Indian Nullification* that speaks directly to his purposes in the *Eulogy*. While a connection between this passage and the *Eulogy* may appear elusive, it indicates how Apess's juridical theology becomes a form of public earthly protest, even as his *Eulogy on King Philip* considerably revises his position on white settler spirituality. In his litany of abuses of the church experienced by the Mashpees in *Indian Nullification*, he contends that the Mashpee congregants possess "as good a right to the table of the Lord as others" (176). The "table of the Lord" may refer to Christian communion more generally, suggesting that the Mashpee worshippers have been denied access to spiritual fellowship. It may, however, also be a reference to the Eucharist, which suggests that the Mashpee may have been refused a role in the sharing of the Eucharist. In this moment, Apess gestures toward the ways in which congregational worship practices may themselves become bearers of rights: the spiritual experience of sharing the Eucharist at the common "table of the Lord" invokes a sacramental right that may take precedence over other formulations of secular rights theory. It is potentially even more significant that Apess routes this notion of right through the sacrament reenacting the bodily mutilation and execution of Christ. According to a strand of Calvinistic thinking on the Eucharist, which may have had profound influence in Calvinistic Methodist communities, the sacrament is primarily read as an act of witnessing.⁴⁴ John Calvin, in attempting to mediate the vicious debates erupting over the reality and form of the presence of Christ in the bread and the wine during the Reformation, proposed what he hoped would be a compromise: he argued that the service of the Eucharist spiritually transported believers to heaven, where they could witness the scars of Christ's wounds, the

evidence of his bodily mutilation and death, and testify to his resurrection and present rule in heaven. In *Mutual Consent in Regard to the Sacraments* (1554), Calvin writes, “There is no ground for any individual to charge us with holding that [Christ] is absent from us, and thus separating the head from the members ... but, dwelling in us by his Spirit he raises us to heaven to himself, transfusing into us the vigour of his flesh” (240). If we read Apress’s reference to the “table of the Lord” within this doctrinal genealogy, his sacramental right summons Native Christians to bear witness to Christ’s execution as they are spiritually “raised to heaven to himself.” Furthermore, if indigenous Christians are spiritually present before Christ in heaven, then Christ may also testify to the degradation of their bodies in the New World. In the moment where he “[transfuses] into us the vigour of his flesh,” Christ is beckoned to serve as a witness to indigenous experiences of loss and dispossession. As with the genocides perpetrated against indigenous communities, notably Apress’s own Pequot tribe during the Pequot War (1634-1638) and Wampanoag and Narragansett peoples during King Philip’s War (1675-1677), Christ’s death was juridically sanctioned but understood by Apress to have violated a higher moral law. For indigenous Christians who, like Apress, read profound genealogical links with Biblical histories, the performance of the Eucharist commemorates Christ’s torture and death, but also testifies to their loss, dispossession, and death. This early moment in *Indian Nullification* thus subtly constructs one space where a liturgical performance may encompass juridical acknowledgment and recourse – in other words, where public *communion* initiates public practice of *communal testimony*.

Nevertheless, this small gesture towards a testimonial commons in *Indian Nullification* may become a problem when read against Apress’s later *Eulogy of King Philip*, where he is much more critical of Puritan worship practices and missionary endeavors. In witnessing the wounds of

a brown Christ, indigenous congregants reenact a bodily desecration that would have seemed a brutal, exhausting, everyday occurrence: the sacrifice and consumption of brown bodies in order to preserve Puritan settlements.⁴⁵ The communal feast may have invited comparisons to the execution of Metacom, whose dismemberment provided a more recent example of sacrificial death at the conclusion of King Philip's War for indigenous congregants. Increase Mather's *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England* (1676) overtly, if symbolically, links Metacom's bodily mutilation and death to a communal feast, the celebration of New England Puritans' "intended Thanksgiving" at the conclusion of the struggle:

And in that very place where [Philip] first contrived and began his mischief, was he taken and destroyed, and there was he ... cut into four quarters, and is now hanged up as a monument of revenging justice ... Thus did God break the head of that Leviathan, and gave it to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness. (139)

In this passage, the spectacle of Metacom's dismembered body, refused burial and displayed before the community, is imagined by Mather as spiritual food to a "people inhabiting the wilderness." When Apess turned to the casualties of colonial war in his *Eulogy of King Philip*, he explicitly invoked Mather's *A Brief History*, suggesting that these passages may have been before him as he composed the *Eulogy* (301-303).

More broadly, Apess's depiction of Philip's public dismemberment and death troubles the ethical relationship Jacques Derrida proposes between acknowledging the other and disposing of the dead in *The Beast and the Sovereign II* (like Apess's *Eulogy*, Derrida's own final text): "The other, the others, are precisely those who always might die after me, survive me, and have at their disposal what remains of me, my remains ... That's what is meant, has always been meant, by 'other'" (II. 126-27). If for Derrida the corpse demands an act of witnessing oneself as always

already “other,” then Apess addresses where infusions of racial violence into the body politic potentially forecloses that ethical horizon.⁴⁶ What of the host of indigenous dead denied the recognition of burial? Within the context of this theoretical problematic, Apess speaks of Metacom’s bodily degradation and display:

Accordingly, he was quartered and hung upon four trees ... [His] head was sent to Plymouth and exposed on a gibbet for twenty years; and his hand to Boston, where it was exhibited in savage triumph; and his mangled body denied a resting place in the tomb ... I think that, as a matter of honor, that I can rejoice that no such evil conduct is recorded of the Indians, that they never hung up any of the white warriors who were head men. (302-3).

Apess pointedly reverses the civilizational rhetoric deployed by Puritans during the conflict – Metacom’s dismembered and unburied body, rather than testifying to Puritan spiritual and political power, bears witness to New England colonial “savagery.” More significant is Apess’s recourse to the historical record, where “no such evil conduct is recorded of the Indians,” which, while not strictly historically accurate, does reflect Apess’s impulse to situate these displays of the dismembered Native body within conflicting indigenous and colonial ethical horizons.⁴⁷ In this moment, Apess has not only refused the logic of the settler state, where living indigenous peoples “vanish” from the landscape through forced migration or death, but he also contests the belief that they have no presence in colonial histories beyond that of fragmented bodily remainders.⁴⁸ Of course, the presence he describes is, paradoxically, an absence – “no such evil conduct is recorded” of indigenous combatants in colonial wars. Nevertheless, he locates this historical lack within a positive indigenous ethical horizon, where the bodies of the enemy dead are never “hung up” in an indigenous equivalent for these spectacular displays of New England

sovereignty. By returning to indigenous histories of the conflict, I want to suggest that Apess re-reads Metacom's bodily dismemberment and display not as signs of God's providential care for Puritan communities, but as a testimony to New England savagery, a counter-history elusively preserved in historical records, even one as canonical as Increase Mather's *A Brief History*.

Apess's *Eulogy*, his most extended work of mourning, thus initiates a political practice that attempts to re-member indigenous pasts against written histories of settler colonialism by returning to the scene of Metacom's bodily destruction and providing an alternative reading of its meaning within the long unfolding of American history. The devastations of King Philip's War may be the ideal framework for reconfiguring those historical relations, given its significance, in historian Jill Lepore's words, in forming the crucible out of which New England Puritans would transform their anxieties over colonial violence into a recognizably American colonial identity through an excess of historical writing: "However remarkable for the magnitude of its destruction and the depth of its cruelties, King Philip's War is almost as remarkable for how much the colonists wrote about it: more than four hundred letters written during the war survive in New England archives alone, along with more than thirty editions of twenty different printed accounts" (xiii). Apess, early in the *Eulogy* situates King Philip's War into an everyday history, indeed a micro-history of living and dying on the borders between colonial and indigenous spaces. He tells the story of a father who loses his son to disease, an utterly unremarkable and exhaustingly common occurrence within a long history of post-contact indigenous communities. Yet in this story, Apess's language retrieves this narrative through an ethics that insists on its historical singularity, on the material witness of the child's corpse, and on the public words of mourning and condemnation spoken by the father:

History informs us that in Kennebunk there lived an Indian, remarkable for his good conduct, and who received a grant of land from the state and fixed himself in a new township, where a number of white families were settled. Though not ill-treated, yet the common prejudices against Indians prevented any sympathy with him, though he himself did all that lay in his power to comfort his white neighbors, in case of sickness and death. But now let us see the scene reversed. This poor Indian, that had nourished and waited to aid the Pilgrims in their troubles, now vainly looks for help, when sickness and death comes into his family. Hear his own words. He speaks to the inhabitants thus: “When white man’s child die, Indian man he sorry; he help bury him. When my child die, no one speaks to me; I make his grave alone. I can no live here.” He gave up his farm, dug up the body of his child, and carried it 200 miles, through the wilderness, to join the Canadian Indians. (289)

At the opening of the passage, Apess locates the Indian father within the civic spaces of the settler state, specifically Kennebunk, Maine, where he has “received a grant of land.” In a few words, Apess seems to elide prior indigenous claims to the land, recognizing the sovereign authority of the settler state to manage land possession and civil membership, even if that authority is damaged by the “common prejudices” of his white neighbors.⁴⁹ If this moment announces the interpellation of the Indian father within settler-colonial governmental structures, it also appears (if less overtly) to understand his interactions with his white neighbors within New England moral arrangements. The Indian father is “known” for his “good conduct,” a character recorded under the gaze of his Pilgrim neighbors, and practices an ethics of “sympathy” and reciprocity, sharing in his neighbors’ grief when everyday incidents of “sickness and death” fracture communal well-being.

Apess does not, however, close the story here: what began as a narrative of one indigenous body's inscription within the civic structures of the settler state becomes an indictment of white apathy through the exhumation of another body, that of the father's dead child. At the moment in the *Eulogy* when Apess publically charges us to "hear [the father's] own words," he summons his audience – both the listeners hearing him deliver the eulogy and the generations of readers who will encounter this history in the text of the *Eulogy* – to bear witness to this father's loss and anger. Yet, the father's words offer as many questions on what "history" can and cannot "inform us" as it answers, straining our capacity to inhabit the historical ethos Apess here performs. Indeed, when I read his words, I wonder what their names are, this father and child of Kennebunk. I wonder how old the child was when he died. I wonder what infection may have killed him, or if it even matters in the face of his father's terrible grief. I wonder where his mother is, if she too has been separated from her kin by disease, displacement, or death.⁵⁰ I wonder how Apess might turn to his audience and speak *of* this father, how he might speak *as* this father, how he might embody this father's words to his white listeners. What tone of voice could express the devastating experience of burying a child, only to re-bury him in a strange land? What gesture could convey the wrenching task of carrying a child's exhumed corpse "through the wilderness" for two hundred miles? By speaking of this father and son of Kennebunk, Apess renders a historical ethos that may not ever be capable of providing answers to these questions, of constructing a complete narrative of this child's life and death. In the end, it could be that Apess leaves us with an agonistic history that refuses the spectralizing maneuvers of the settler state by confronting us with only the starkest of mortal narratives, with the corpse of this dead child unearthed and carried by his father.

The father's final exhausted declaration, "I can no live here," returns his audience to the landscapes of indigenous dispossession. His words indict the settler-colonial state, which has trafficked for too long in the alienation of indigenous peoples from lands and lifeways, what Apess in *A Son of the Forest* before so deftly connected as "the land where reposed the ashes of [my] sires" (7). As early as *A Son of the Forest*, the earth was rendered as a repository of indigenous bodies, as a material witness to unbroken lines of kinship and community, an attachment between persons and land often recalled even in Christian burial liturgies in the refrain "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust." By the time Apess composed the *Eulogy*, however, his intimation that earth (and *the* earth) could testify to indigenous communal and cultural lineages seems to have shifted. As I am summoned by Apess to bear witness to this father's devastating grief, I wonder if he was haunted by the dirt clinging to this child's exhumed corpse, by the lingering texture and smell of decaying earth accompanying him on his long journey north.⁵¹ In this, Apess's final text, perhaps the dirt lingering on the body of the child can only testify to unsettled burials, to the removal of the corpse from the land, to fractured and alienated kinship lines.⁵² What then becomes of a juridical ethics derived from "the earth was given to the children of men"? What possible earthly expression can account for this dead child, carried so far from home? What can any earthly political practice hope to accomplish if this single and singular child of men is dead?

Apess's reformulation of Psalm 115:16 does not gift the earth "to the *children* of men," but announces that "God has given to all men an equal right to possess and occupy the earth" (168). Because this juridical revision cannot find fulfillment through lineage, I want to suggest that Apess approaches an answer to the devastating problematic of the dead child when he gestures towards what it might mean for shattered kinship lines to inherit and bear rights in their flesh.⁵³

Rather than grounding right through the groundscapes of civic belonging or property attachments or self-ownership under the auspice of the settler state, near the end of the *Eulogy* he locates a version of juridical ethics in *unsettled* bodies, and ultimately in a shared and embodied form of witnessing: “Did you ever know of Indians hurting those who was kind to them? No. We have a thousand witnesses to the contrary” (307). It is a testimonial praxis that reveals the long, deadly history of the American settler state, and resists the archival erasures of the “vanishing Indian.” It is a form of witnessing that continually unearths – even exhumes – the bodies devastated by the territorial expansions of the settler state, and gestures towards an alternative formulation of right grounded in witnessing the violent displacements and degradations of those bodies. It is, in this sense, a work of mourning analogous to Ukawsaw Gronniosaw’s subtle but important reclamation of spiritual authority in his bleak refrain that the “child could not hear” whether a burial liturgy was spoken over her or not (see chapter one). Through the unsettling imagery of the eulogy, it is because the body of the dead child *can* be exhumed that enables a public testimonial praxis for Apess at all, unlike, as we will see, the opacity Mary Prince draws between present enslaved sorrow and the past atrocities of slavery (see chapter three). The disinterment of the dead child, nevertheless, measures the distance between a discursive horizon of rights within the settler state and its final worldly limits by reminding us that bodies marked by dispossession and migrancy still require a piece of the earth. For Apess, Metacom, the father from Kennebunk, and his child become three of “a thousand witnesses” who can testify to the displacements of colonial expansion, to “sentences of desolation” committed on the flesh of indigenous peoples. They bear witness to indigenous histories that have remained buried – “vanished” – within American history, and, more importantly, reveal that the circumstances that killed the child of Kennebunk linger as a mortal inheritance for indigenous communities into Apess’s (and our

own) present. Apess's juridical theology of flesh may, finally, be a juridical theology of remains, of what marks our closest connection to the earth, but which evade our attempts to fully account for it beyond its present materiality.

A History Made Flesh

If Apess's *Eulogy on King Philip* attends to certain material histories, to Native bodies dismembered or unsettled after death, *An Indian's Looking-Glass for the White Man* (1832) conjures an obverse history, one that re-inscribes the crimes of the settler state on the bodies of white Americans. This text thus provides Apess's most condensed examination of modern racism and its impact on U.S. legal institutions. In an unsettling passage, he imagines a series of legal texts calculating the crimes of European colonizers and inscribed on white skin.⁵⁴ These living skin-books form an embodied counter-history to the legalized thefts, dispossessions, and genocides perpetrated during centuries of Euro-American expansion, and their preservation in court documents, legal histories, and political texts. His skin-books, furthermore, serve as witnesses to this past at a moment when, in many cases, slaves or non-white persons faced restrictions or outright prohibitions on their in-court testimony.⁵⁵ Apess opens the passage by invoking a global event of witnessing, a call to "assemble all nations together in your imagination" (157). Once this court of the imagination is convened, he continues:

Then let the whites be seated among them, and then let us look for the whites, and I doubt not it would be hard finding them; for to the rest of the nations, they are still but a handful. Now suppose these skins were put together, and each skin had its national crimes written upon it – which skin do you think would have the greatest? I will ask one question more. Can you charge the Indians with robbing a nation almost of their whole continent, and

murdering their women and children, and then depriving the remainder of their lawful rights, that nature and God require them to have? And to cap the climax, rob another nation to till their grounds and welter out their days under the lash with hunger and fatigue under the scorching rays of a burning sun? I should look at all the skins, and I know that when I cast my eye upon the white skin, and if I saw those crimes written upon it, I should enter my protest against it immediately and cleave to that which is more honorable. (157)

By commanding, “let *us* look for the whites,” Apess suggests that this will be a collaborative legal judgment, one that includes all ethnicities devastated by Euro-American colonialism. He then follows by registering a visceral legal fantasy – that the genocides of the American past become thinkable, conceivable, and publicly visible on the skins of the white inhabitants and that non-white casualties of colonialism will be active readers of those violations on white skin. When situated within histories that mark the limits of testimony, Apess’s skin-books attempt to render the crimes of settler colonialism legible on white bodies, thereby refusing a racial logic which read whiteness as an unmarked indicator of civilization and moral superiority. His skin-books thus serve as witnesses to histories of racial violence, indeed to the very histories overwritten, and thus unrecognized, in the 1970s Mashpee trials. They form the central testimony and conflicted theological formulation within his juridical theology, and illuminate in their materiality the lingering mutilation of archival spaces by legal excesses, by exercises of sovereignty that unmask both the exceptionality of state authority and the everyday existence of those condemned to live under the shadow of the decision.

By imagining that white skin marks an archive for reading colonial atrocity, moreover, Apess attempts to reverse the historical momentum of settler colonial devastation of black and brown bodies, as well as rethink an important trope in the literature of the colonized in the period,

which often read dismembered body parts and scars and brands on non-white bodies as evidence of settler colonial brutality. As a generational survivor of the Pequot massacres, a tribe “erased” from the historical record after the Pequot War (1634-38), for instance, Apess begins the passage by fusing his own tribal history to a larger pattern of crimes committed against indigenous communities, of “robbing a nation almost of their whole continent, and murdering their women and children, and then depriving the remainder of their lawful rights” (157). In many ways, Apess’s Pequot lineage initiated him into a literal history of flesh, where, during the Pequot War, bodies and body parts accrued significant political importance. Andrew Lipman has examined the cultural meanings of exchanges of heads and limbs during the war, exploring how in the Puritan symbolic order, decapitating enemies and displaying their heads established dominance, while the Pequots “often exchanged wartime trophies” of heads, scalps or limbs “to affirm alliances” (4). During the conflict, Puritans legitimated the bodily mutilation and displays of indigenous flesh by returning to Old Testament “mandates” for such violence, including David’s beheading of Goliath (I Samuel 17:46) (Lipman 10). In this way, the Puritans used indigenous bodies and body parts to express a particular kind of sovereign message, one that decisively read dismembered brown bodies as signs of white dominance.⁵⁶

If Apess’s rendering of skin-books is formed against a historical backdrop in the exchange and display of body parts during the Pequot War, the passage also situates these living texts within the context of American slavery, what he calls the theft of persons from “another nation” (157).⁵⁷ By imagining a counter-history where white skin makes legible the lingering wounds of colonial crime, Apess’s words revise images from slave narratives of the period. William Grimes’s slave narrative, *The Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave* (1825), for instance, concludes with Grimes proposing that the political ideals of the Constitution find meaning:

If it were not for the stripes on my back which were made while I was a slave, I would in my will, leave my skin a legacy to the government, desiring that it might be taken off and made into parchment, and then bind the Constitution of glorious happy *and free* Americans. Let the skin of an American slave bind the charter of American liberty. (68; emphasis original)

Here, Grimes renders an embodied history that both testifies to the cruelties of slavery, and maintains fidelity to the emancipatory possibilities of the Constitution, possibilities that are brutally evaded in the everyday arrangements of the American slave order (and call back to Apess's own indictment in *Indian Nullification* that US political realities fail to live up to the "spirit" of the Constitution).⁵⁸ Although Grimes uses his own skin (rather than white skin) as evidence for the failures of U.S. legal system, both Apess and Grimes's embodied histories remain haunted by the illegibility of indigenous and African American archives in U.S. accounts of territorial expansion. Their skin-books attempt to bridge the scattered sites of legal mutilation – of the dismemberments of bodies, communities, and histories – and thus imagine that a body may itself bear witness to those losses, may become part of a global history made flesh.⁵⁹

It is as an archival witness, however, that Apess's skin-books illuminate the crucial theological paradox of his legal fantasy: that the atrocities of the past *can* become materially legible on skin alone. In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Giorgio Agamben meditates on the inexpressible and unfathomable lacunae that are so central to Holocaust testimonies, given that the "'true' witnesses, the 'complete witnesses,' are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are ... the drowned" (34). They are those who did not survive.⁶⁰ Agamben's insight into the incomplete nature of any testimony urge us to ask: What kinds of indigenous narratives could possibly encompass the long, deadly history of the

American settler state, marginalized in the profound archival erasures that Drew Lopenzina has called procedures of “colonial *unwitnessing*” (5; emphasis original)? How might the “national crimes” Apess invokes become meaningfully inscribed, mediated as they are by skin alone, and not the scars or brands so central to the testimony of oppressed peoples? Out of this ethical aporia, What Apess offers in *An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man* may solve Agamben’s testimonial paradox: his white skin-books propose that no matter the form Agamben proposes that testimonies to atrocity always already exist prior to language: “Perhaps every word, every writing is born, in this sense, as testimony. This is why what is borne witness to cannot already be language or writing. It can only be something to which no one has borne witness” (38). What Apess offers in *An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man* may solve Agamben’s testimonial paradox: his white skin-books propose that no matter the form of the narrative inscribed within these books, the skin *itself* embodies, or materializes, a past. Apess summons unmarred white skin as an originary witness to any narrative account of settler colonial crime he has or will produce. In Apess’s conceptualization then, white bodies always already testify to the guilt of colonization. Their very skin reverses both a theological logic which had read dark skin as a sign of divine punishment, and African American and Native American invocations of dismembered and scarred black and brown skin as evidence of colonial atrocity.⁶¹

What I chose not to reveal until now is that Apess begins this passage on white skin and guilt by invoking the human body as the image of God: “Now let me ask you, white man, if it is a disgrace for to eat, drink, and sleep with the image of God, or sit, or walk and talk with them. Or have you the folly to think that that the white man, being one in fifteen or sixteen, are the only beloved images of God” (157). Apess opens then by appealing to an incarnational logic that opens a new ethical aporia for imagining embodied testimonies. On the one hand, the skin-

books, those sacred, originary witnesses, testify to bodies as “beloved images of God,” as the *imago dei*, the human form impressed with the mark of divine love. On the other hand, white skin summons a litany of crimes committed in the wake of New World settler colonialism, which the rest of the passage takes such pains to render. This tension is ultimately underscored in the interrogative syntax of the sentences. For Apess, his skin-books pose questions, not theological declaratives – white skin offers testimony to both divine love *and* to creaturely guilt, and functions as an extra-judicial appeal to human equality *and* to the earthly violations devastating indigenous communities in the New World. Apess’s juridical theology in *An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man* ends with a conflicted theology of flesh as markers of terrible crime and divine possibility, more fraught than any legal fiction of voluntary assimilation can account for. It is therefore a move of some irony that the U.S. courts initially denied the Mashpee its tribal identity, evading the evidentiary witness of Apess’s unsettling enfleshed histories. Apess’s skin books remain the unread texts of the 1977-79 trials.

Chapter Three:

Mary Prince and the Matter of Salt

“My dearest most beloved Lamb! ...
I see still, how the soldier fierce
Did thy most lovely *Pleura* pierce,
That dearest Side-whole!
Be prais’d, O God, for this Spear’s blow!
I thank thee, soldier, for it too.
I’ve lick’d this Rock’s salt round and round
Where can such relish else be found!”
A Collection of Hymns

“Every man jack of us as we got off the slave
ships, the white god’s priests used sea water to
make the magic cross on our foreheads and
bind us with salt to this land.”
Nalo Hopkinson

Mary Prince’s *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave, Related by Herself* (1831) offers an extended treatment of Prince’s labor on the salt ponds of Turk’s Island. The toil to convert saltwater to consumer salt was unfamiliar and brutal to the eighteen-year-old Prince – who had worked largely until then as a house slave in Bermuda: “I was given a half barrel and a shovel, and had to stand up to my knees in the water, from four o’clock in the morning until nine, when we were given some Indian corn boiled in water, which we were obliged to swallow as fast as we could, for fear the rain should come on and melt the salt” (71). The struggle to harvest the salt before it “melted” away in the rain represents an earthly terrain where both white overseers and climate work against the labor of slaves. As Prince describes, the salt ponds on Turk’s Island

become a scene of ecological hostility, and – between the sun and saltwater – it is the slaves’ bodies that are laid waste:

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

(71-2)

This visceral account of the salt marshes “eat[ing] down to the very bone” of the laborers’ feet and legs underscores the emblematic conflict of the narrative. Salt is at once a nutrient necessary for maintaining biological wellbeing and – perhaps its grimmest association in this context – a commodity used for thousands of years as a preservative, of suspending biological tissues in time.¹ This passage, however, upends these associations, exposing a powerful association between enslaved bodies and the broader politico-theological indictment of colonial slavery in the *History*.² Instead, the *History* grafts these associations to an affective circuit where salt materializes the “great torment” of slavery on the bodies of slaves, while also figuring as a sign for colonial apathy. Earlier in the account when Prince remembers her time on Turk’s Island, she says: “Oh, the trials! the trials! they make the salt water come into my eyes when I think of the days in which I was afflicted – the times that are gone; when I mourned and grieved with a young heart for those whom I loved!” (64). The “times that are gone,” as I will argue, summons a fraught temporality, an experience of lost time that has everything to do with imagining an earthly work of mourning, what I earlier defined in chapter one as a reiterative performative repertoire for expressing sorrow, that refuses to speak. Materially, in its depiction of the corrosive fragmentation of bodies, it summons a version of what Christina Sharpe has called

“residence time,” a way of representing the sustained circulation of body parts in the ocean: “Around 90 to 95 percent of the tissues of things that are eaten in the water column gets recycled” (41). Narratologically furthermore, it is a work of mourning whose contours evade the colonialist reading practices mediating it, instead exercising what Édouard Glissant in the *Poetics of Relation* has called “the right” to practice “opacity” (189).³

In trafficking between salt’s material, affective, and temporal economies, the *History*’s salt marshes serve as a counterpoint to Phillis Wheatley’s “Niobe in Distress for her Children, slain by Apollo” (1773), who alters Ovid’s Niobe, petrified and unable to voice her sorrow, to imagine the “vocal hills” repeating and amplifying Niobe’s grief (see chapter one). As with the classical sources for Wheatley’s poem, in the *History*’s geographies, saltwater similarly wears away the bodies of slaves, where the fragments of their flesh endures within and around the waters of the Caribbean. Prince’s work of mourning, however, departs from representations of the earth often imagined by other Anglophone indigenous, African, and African-descended writers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. If Robert Wedderburn, for instance, invokes “the earth was given to the children of men” as a scriptural mandate for imagining anticolonial collectivity and futurity, Prince depicts the earth as complicit in the daily brutality of slavery, diverging from what Apess imagines in *An Indian’s Looking-Glass for the White Man* (1832) and the *Eulogy on King Philip* (1836), which, as we already saw, are both invested in publically representing settler colonial atrocity, either through the legibility of his skin-books or the exhumation of the dead indigenous child (see chapter two).⁴ The *History* offers an important narratological mandate for concealing sorrow from white imperial view. By characterizing the “great torment” of slavery through an unspeakability that is nevertheless materially present in Prince’s “saltwater tears,” the *History*’s “the times that are gone” summons a work of mourning grounded in restraint and

refusal, posing a subtle but significant departure from two particular cultural discourses that mediated the narrative to the British reading public – namely antislavery activism and evangelical Moravianism. As we will see, both cultural discourses encoded reading practices that shared an interconnected impetus to collapse enflashed boundaries between subjects by circulating feeling, or, in the idiom of eighteenth-century ethical theory, by sharing sympathy. For abolitionist literature, this is grounded in what we might call a secular theology emphasizing the spectacle of enslaved injury, while for Moravianism it appears in spiritual practices where believers venerate – and ecstatically embody – the wounds of Christ.

Using the narrative's representation of salt and saltwater as a way to trace both the colonialist reading practices demanded by the *History's* cultural context and the conceptual outlines of its evasive work of mourning poses a difficult hermeneutical task.⁵ Published in 1831 two years before slavery's abolition in the British Empire (passed by Parliament in 1833 and effective August 1, 1834), the *History* was edited and heavily supplemented by Thomas Pringle, the secretary of the Antislavery Society, with Susanna Strickland working as Prince's amanuensis, both evangelical Christians and antislavery activists. The narrative's harrowing account of the brutality of Caribbean slavery was immediately taken up by pro- and anti-slavery advocates, who debated the veracity of her *History* in the press and in court, where it spurred two separate libel cases in 1833.⁶ Given the text's intense mediation through the editorial hands of Pringle and Strickland, as well as its imbrication within the cause of British abolition, Moira Ferguson, Sara Salih, Gillian Whitlock, Nicole Aljoe, and other critics of the *History* have focused on the intertextuality of competing authorities and authors on the narrative, on the court cases and legal documents debating its veracity, and on its significant presence in the pro- and antislavery press.⁷ According to Pringle, Prince's *History* "was written out fully, with all the narrator's repetitions

and prolixities, and afterwards pruned into its present shape, retaining, as far as was practicable, Mary's exact expressions and peculiar phraseology. No fact of importance has been omitted, and not a single circumstance or sentiment has been added" (3). We may never recover what it means to call a text produced in such a way as "essentially her own," but Prince's narrative underscores Nicole Aljoe's contention that West Indian slave narratives are always mediated texts: "[E]very single West Indian slave narrative is explicitly mediated in some way – by a white transcriber, editor or translator ... Every single West Indian narrative is a collaborative text, drawing on more than one voice" (14).

Attending to the matter of salt – and its significant symbolic heft – offers another way to intertextually trace the cultural discourses mediating the *History*, including one that has received less attention in secondary criticism on Prince – her conversion to Moravianism.⁸ Organized in 1722 on the estate of Nikolaus Ludwig, Count von Zinzendorf in Germany, the Moravian church (also called the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Church of the Brethren) became a significant evangelical presence in the Caribbean, founding their first mission on the Danish colony of St. Thomas in 1732.⁹ By the time Prince began attending Moravian services in the 1820s, the sect had been evangelizing in the West Indies for a century. Unlike Anglican clergy and laity, who often failed to serve the enslaved, the Brethren were encouraged to minister to slaves in their own local languages and dialects (Thomas 124).¹⁰ Salt, in this evangelical context, often figures as an important emblem for spiritual purity and enrichment.¹¹ Within Moravian iconography in particular, salt appears in liturgies that underscore the sect's visceral emphasis on a believer's somatic encounter with Christ and intense meditation on his death, what was sometimes disparagingly called a "blood and wounds" theology.¹² An early Moravian hymn from the 1754 *Collection of Hymns ... Designed chiefly for the Use of the Congregations in union with the*

Brethren's Church, for instance, invites the singer to “smell” and “kiss” the wounds of Christ, including the “lovely pleura” or “dearest side-whole,” where a Roman soldier pierced his side during the crucifixion (336).¹³ The rapid escalation in the hymn from contemplating to smelling to kissing Christ’s wounds becomes more unsettling given the lyrics’ explicit acknowledgement that it is a haptic encounter with the “Corpse’s wounds” – and not Christ’s resurrected body – the singer ecstatically announces. The hymn’s veneration of Christ’s wounds crescendos in a stark material transformation – rather than lingering with Christ’s corpse, the singer proclaims that his bodily remains become a stone (perhaps an allusion to the tomb?) that offers spiritual delight and sustenance: “I’ve lick’d this Rock’s salt round and round / Where can such relish else be found!” (336). Where Prince’s toil in the salt ponds testify to the slave’s bodily degradation in service to the salt industry, Christ’s transfiguration from bloody corpse to “relishing” rock-salt reads woundedness in service to the singer’s spiritual growth. As Misty G. Anderson has argued, “the intensity” of a Moravian hymn like this “pivots on the implication of the singer in the event of crucifixion, a position that dislocates the singer from historical time and launches him into an imaginatively tactile relationship that breaks down the boundaries of the body of Christ and, by extension, the singer’s subjective autonomy” (197).¹⁴ The purpose of the hymn, in other words, is to create an affective feedback loop -- to lose sense of where Christ’s body ends and the believer’s begins.

With their extensive presence in the Caribbean, Moravian missions in the West Indies constitute an important archive for reading Prince’s narrative, given how often the Moravian church and its missionaries appear in the *History*, as well as in the public debates and court cases prompted by its publication, especially concerning the principle dilemma for tracing any project of mourning in the text: the sexual violations that elusively underscore the *History*. Much of the

secondary criticism on Prince focuses on how and why such violations are so muted in the narrative – and why they take up such a central place in the public debate surrounding the *History*.¹⁵ Turning to the court cases, it becomes clear why any reading of Prince’s sexual abuse is already entangled within Moravian spiritual registers. Consider, for instance, the March 1, 1833 trial record for the second libel case, *Wood v. Pringle*:

She [Prince] had lived seven years ... with Captain Abbot ... One night she found another woman in bed with the Captain in her house. This woman had pretended to be a friend of witness. (Laughter). Witness licked her, and she was obliged to get out of bed. (A laugh). The captain laughed, and the woman said she done it to plague witness. Witness took her next day to the Moravian black leader, when she denied it, and witness licked her again. (A laugh) ... She had been a member of the Moravian Society, and discharged herself in consequence of her connection with Captain Abbot. (147, 148)

As a supplemental archive to Prince’s *History*, the court record presupposes an unflinching colonial hermeneutic, its parenthetical breaks of “(Laughter)” and “(A laugh)” overdetermining any listener’s sympathetic response beyond that of condescending amusement. On its surface, the cross-examination purportedly reveals Prince’s sexual promiscuity with the white Captain Abbot and her violent reaction to his infidelity, which falls on the unnamed woman, probably also enslaved. More broadly, we recognize the account as a bid to discredit Prince as a witness, both in the local space of this trial for libel, and in the discursive arena of pro- and antislavery debates. The reiteration of disruptive laughter in these parenthetical breaks highlight a tension in the court records that has everything to do with bodies and their relations to colonial economic and legal systems that traffic in physical violence and sexual exploitation. Prince’s recourse to an unnamed “Moravian black leader” against Abbot’s infidelity may suggest the presence of an alternative

space for hearing violations against African women's bodies. While her plea to the "Moravian black leader" ultimately failed (a failure I will return to later in the chapter), that Prince seems to have made it at all indicates that something in Moravian doctrine or pietistic practice encouraged her to imagine the congregation as a space for redress. As we will see, Moravian spiritual practices ambivalently function in the narrative to offer redress *and* coercively silence the sexual violations in the narrative.

The reading practices summoned by antislavery literature and Moravian spirituality urge particularly pressing questions when entrenched in the quotidian terrors of West Indian slavery. What might it mean to "kiss each Corpse's wound" or "lick this Rock's salt round and round" for slaves, especially for African women suffering sexual exploitation and physical violence? When Moravian spirituality read Christ's wounded flesh as sacred, as a site for spiritual meditation and even adoration, what might it mean that Prince pays unflinching attention to the devastated bodies of slaves, even when she cannot speak to her own sexual violation? When both abolitionist reading practices and Moravian liturgical exercises so heavily emphasized shared feeling, and even overwrought sympathetic identification, with the bodily pain of others, how might we engage with the *History's* refusal to accept that the "people in England" can "feel what a slave feels" (74)? In exploring these questions, I will first consider sympathy as imagined in eighteenth-century ethical theory and abolitionist discourse in order to understand the text's subtle distinctions between the possibilities and limits of "knowing" and "feeling." I will then turn to Moravian spiritual practices – including congregational hymn-singing and prayers, *das sprachen* ("speakings"), or confessional meetings attended by small groups of believers, and the composition of eulogistic *lebensläufe*, or biographical "life courses" often composed for funerals – to untangle the narrative's conflicted representation of bodies in pain. By lingering with the

narrative's saltwater imaginary, I want to suggest that the *History's* close juxtaposition of salt and feeling forms a peculiarly visceral and yet restrained work of mourning, where salt's corrosive power exposes the "great torment" of slavery, and makes particular claims for the opacity of enslaved grief. I consider how the *History's* work of mourning exposes crucial limits to cultural discourses that appropriated enslaved pain within reading practices that insistently narrativized their suffering and wounded bodies.

"I have felt what a slave feels"

Mary Prince was born in 1788 in Brackish Pond, Bermuda (now Devonshire Parish) to parents who were both slaves. Her father, who was named Prince, worked as a sawyer for David Trimmingham, and her mother labored as a house-slave in the home of Charles Myners. Prince had siblings, at least three brothers and two sisters, but only her sisters, Hannah, Dinah, and Rebecca, are named in the *History* (62, 76). In 1788, Prince and her mother and siblings were sold to Captain Darrell, who gave Prince and her mother to his daughter. Prince cared for Darrell's granddaughter, Betsey Williams. At the age of twelve, Prince and her sisters were sold away from their mother to different masters (60-64). Prince was purchased by Captain John Ingham (the Mr. I—of the text) of Spanish Port, and was frequently severely beaten (64-71). Prince would often run away from the household to her mother or father, who interceded with the Inghams to be more lenient in their treatment of Prince. After an incident when a cow slipped his lead and then turned over a milk jug, provoking Ingham's wrath, she ran to her mother, who concealed her in "a hole in the rocks" across a "salt-water channel" from her family (70). Her father, hearing of it, returned Prince to Ingham, but warned Ingham: "[The] treatment she has received is enough to break her heart. The sight of her wounds has nearly broke mine," marking

an early instance in the narrative where Prince contrasts colonial apathy with the affective fidelity of enslaved kin (70).

In 1806, Prince was separated from her family when she was sold by the Inghams to Mr. D—, who owned the salt ponds on Turk’s Island where Prince labored for almost a decade. In 1815, Prince was sold for the final time to John Adams Wood, who took her to Antigua. While there, Prince worked primarily in the house, as a laundress and a nursemaid. Like Robert Wedderburn’s grandmother, Talkee Amy (chapter four), Prince also participated in a shadow economy to earn her own wages whenever her master was traveling. She took in laundry and bought or sold yams, pigs, and other provisions to ships in the harbor (81-2). Around 1822, Prince joined the Moravian Church, who in 1826 solemnized her marriage to the freedman, Danial James.¹⁶ A carpenter and cooper, James had financed his own manumission, and was then living in Antigua. In 1828, the Woods traveled to London, taking Prince with them. In England, Prince’s position with the Woods became legally and financially precarious: because the 1772 *Somerset v. Stewart* case (colloquially called the Mansfield Decision) concluded that slavery was inconsistent with British law, Prince was technically free to leave the Woods’ household. Prince did not have any means to support herself in London and the Woods refused to provide her with reference letters to attain work somewhere else. Prince, in other words, was free in Britain, but only if she could manage to find alternative work, and she could not return to Antigua (and her husband) without reentering slavery. Prince ultimately took shelter with the Moravian congregation in Hatton Garden, who introduced her to Thomas Pringle (90). In 1829, while Prince was working in the Pringle household, Pringle attempted to facilitate Prince’s manumission so she could return to Antigua, but the Woods refused to free Prince or sell her to someone who would (95-99). Pringle used his contacts with various evangelical groups, including the Moravians and the Quakers, to

petition the Woods to manumit Prince.¹⁷ When those attempts failed, the Antislavery Society unsuccessfully petitioned Parliament for Prince's freedom on June 24, 1829.¹⁸ After all of these attempts failed, the only other option was the court of public opinion, where public pressure might succeed in prompting the Woods to manumit Prince. Prince subsequently began working with Susanna Strickland and Pringle on her narrative. By the time the *History* was published in 1831, abolition saturated public debate and her narrative quickly went through three editions. Prince's story came under public scrutiny, however, when James Macqueen, the editor of the *Glasgow Courier* and a strong supporter of British West Indian interests, published a lengthy diatribe against Prince, Pringle, and the abolition movement in *Blackwood's* in November 1831.¹⁹ Although Pringle successfully sued Macqueen (via the London publisher of *Blackwood's*, T. Cadell) for libel, he was only awarded damages of £5.²⁰ Not long after *Pringle v. Cadell*, John Wood counter-sued Pringle for libel, arguing that as editor of Prince's *History*, he was responsible for the unflattering characterization of the Woods in the narrative, underscoring that for legal purposes, Pringle could be considered as much an "author" of the *History* as Prince. Wood won his case, and was awarded £25 in damages.²¹ Prince was called to testify in both cases, meaning that *Wood v. Pringle* constitutes one of the final archival appearances of Prince.²²

Before turning to the *History's* rendering of Moravian communities in the Caribbean and London, I would first like to address the narrative's subtle evasions of the language and logic of sympathy (an "imaginary change of situation," in the words of Adam Smith) that informed much of the antislavery rhetoric Prince found herself invoked on behalf of in the 1830s.²³ Prince's suppression of sympathetic exchange will have significant theological importance in subsequent sections of the *History*, even though she rarely refers to or describes evangelical practices in the early part of her narrative. This is particularly true for a Moravian spirituality that encouraged

believers to be (as one hymn rendered it) “like as the wounds” of Christ, or to contemplate becoming co-extensive with Christ’s bodily injuries (*Litany of Wounds of the Husband* 235-6). Many of the text’s careful distinctions between knowing and feeling occur in the first half of the *History*, laying the groundwork for the narrative’s developed and theologically nuanced work of mourning, or its refusal to render wounded bodies as textual objects to be read, meditated on, or venerated. While in London, for instance, when Prince recalled the day she was sold away from her mother, she questioned whether language can adequately account for how she felt and thought:

I cannot bear to think of that day, – it is too much. – It recalls the great grief that filled my heart, and the woeful thoughts that passed to and fro through my mind, whilst listening to the pitiful words of my poor mother, weeping for the loss of her children. I wish I could find words to tell you all I then felt and suffered. The great God above alone knows the thoughts of the poor slave’s heart, and the bitter pains which follow such separations as these. All that we love taken away from us – oh, it is sad, sad! and sore to be borne! (61)

Prince at first mourns that she cannot find a language through which to speak her grief and suffering, questioning if pain cannot be vocalized, can it be then understood by others? Given this difficulty, the narrative has recourse to scriptural cadence when she remembers her mother’s loss. Her mother, “weeping for the loss of her children,” recalls Jeremiah 31:15: “A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.” In this verse, the prophet Jeremiah uses Rachel’s mourning to gesture towards the desolation of Hebrew tribes carried into captivity by the Babylonians, where one mother’s pain encompasses collective grief. While the verse lingers on the devastation brought by familial separation and death, it is also important that by the time of

Babylonian oppression, Rachel is a mother who is long dead. After giving birth to Benjamin (originally named Benoni, or “son of my sorrow”), Rachel died and was buried between Ramah and Bethlehem centuries before Jeremiah’s prophetic career (Gen. 35:16-19). What Jeremiah imagines then is the voice of a ghost mourning her dead and captive children. As Orlando Patterson has argued in *Slavery and Social Death* (1982), Prince’s mother is rendered socially dead under the shadow of slavery, in a spectral “condition of liminality” where she “forever mourns [her] own” and her children’s “social death” (60). Her mother’s grief, like Rachel’s, haunts the landscape, narratively disembodied except for the sonic register of her “pitiful words” and “weeping.”

In offering an identification between the spectral mourning of Prince’s mother and Rachel, this allusion (evidence either of Pringle or Strickland’s editorial hand, or Prince’s own familiarity with scriptural narrative), on the one hand, opposes the ongoing disembodiment and dehumanization of enslaved grief, what the narrative would later castigate as the colonial conviction that African slaves are “without natural affection” (71). On the other hand, by rendering Prince’s body as a conduit for grief – “the woeful thoughts that passed to and fro through my mind” – or a sorrow that moves *in extremis*, the passage troubles a reader’s ability to move with it. Prince continues by making a radical distinction between a reader’s ability to cognitively and affectively understand enslaved experience and God’s capacity to inhabit this scene of suffering: “The great God above alone knows the thoughts of the poor slave’s heart” (61). Even if language forsakes Prince, only God has the ability to enter into affective communion with the “thoughts of the poor slave’s heart.” Although it is certainly possible that Prince may have only admitted shared feeling with God in order to cater to evangelical readers of her *History*, that Prince does so as a way to evade any experiential transferability of grief

suggests the opening contours of her work of mourning.²⁴ And while such gestures towards the unspeakability of grief are common both in slave narratives and in eighteenth-century moral philosophy, it is the theological implications of it that are of singular importance for reading Prince. In the *History*, enslaved sorrow – what she called the “salt water” that “comes into [her] eyes” – becomes a harrowing site of sacred reticence, or a theological chasm, between the possibilities and limits of sharing pain.

By imagining God as the only entity capable of feeling with Prince and her mother, the narrative attempts to foreclose what would become an enduring problem underscoring many North American and Caribbean slave narratives.²⁵ As Saidiya Hartman has explored in *Scenes of Subjection* (1996), the affective momentum of nineteenth-century white abolitionist discourse in the United States often focused on the physical torture of black slaves to arouse the feelings of the white reader, grounded in a performative ethos that “[projects] oneself into another in order to better understand the other” (18). Hartman argues that such an emphasis on the bodily violation of slaves in abolitionist discourse ended by erasing enslaved suffering as the white reader appropriates that body in order to experience heightened states of pity and horror: “By exploiting the vulnerability of the captive body as a vessel for the uses, thoughts, and feelings of others, the humanity extended to the slave inadvertently confirms the expectations and desires definitive of the relations of chattel slavery” (19). Although Hartman focuses on sympathy as an instrument utilized by pro and antislavery Americans to manage African affective relations in the United States, British antislavery activists were also fluent in the language of sympathy, especially given its deep roots in Enlightenment philosophy.²⁶ Ramesh Mallipeddi, for instance, in *Spectacular Suffering: Witnessing Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic* (2016) turns to texts by African-descended peoples, and suggests that “slaves generated a melancholic counter-

knowledge of slavery” out of embodied experiences as “an affective response to the forces of abstraction” that so insistently “commodified their bodies” (6).²⁷ In his reading of Prince in particular, Mallipeddi turns to Rob Nixon’s term “slow violence” in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), what Nixon defines as “a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (2; qtd. Mallipeddi 78).²⁸ Mallipeddi uses slow violence to think through the descriptions of illness and bodily injury that underscore much of Prince’s *History*, arguing that the “incremental and quotidian sufferings that beleaguer a slave’s daily existence” run counter to the overwrought “spectacular suffering” imagined and depicted in abolitionist literature (78). While Mallipeddi’s schema to retrieve enslaved testimony from a conceptual matrix that overdetermines the meaning of suffering for the everyday consumption of white observers by returning to the slow violence of enslaved experience is important, Prince’s *History* seems concerned with another affective limit – not those moments where the language and logic of sympathy is emptied of its spectacular momentum, but to moments where the texts refuses an experiential transfer of suffering at all.

If we turn to Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759), the complicated legacy of sympathy Prince’s *History* implicitly traces and interrogates becomes clearer. Although the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* argued that sympathy formed the ground for ethics in civil society and provided much of the conceptual scaffolding for the abolitionist cause once it emerged in the 1780s,²⁹ in a famous instance, Smith anticipated the scenes of subjection described in slave narratives by speculating on how a witness might respond if confronted by acts of torment:

Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond

our own person, and it is by imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations ... By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him. (13-14)

In a counter-intuitive leap, Smith begins by positing an acute critical gap between perception and the imagination. For Smith, merely seeing or hearing or otherwise “sensing” someone else’s pain cannot discomfort the “ease” of the spectator, and will never incite feelings of pity or compassion. Instead, the witness must replace – must imagine – him or herself as the receiver of bodily wounds, meaning that pain and imagination are, as Elaine Scarry describes in *The Body in Pain* (1985), equally “anomalous” (162).³⁰ According to Smith, the witness to the scene of torment surrenders to what the tormented feels and substitutes himself for the victim, compelling the breakdown of bodily autonomy so necessary to the momentum of sympathy. It is how, in Smith’s words, “we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him” (14). Smith’s version of affective intimacy therefore offers a kind of imagined penetration of suffering bodies by a witness.

When the body “entered into” is enslaved – or always already subject to so many forms of physical and sexual terror – it introduces particularly troubling implications. Because Smith believed the imagination (rather than the senses) were instrumental in brokering an exchange of somatic experience, the body entered into is peculiarly mediated through narrative. In this sense, it is perhaps not surprising that Smith understood sympathy to operate especially strongly during acts of reading. He believed that disembodied narrative could inspire the imagination and trigger sympathetic identification between a reader and a character: “Our joy for the deliverance of those heroes of tragedy or romance who interest us, is as sincere as our grief for their distress, and our

fellow-feeling with their misery is not more real than that with their happiness” (14-15). In the same way, Thomas Pringle frequently appeals to the sympathy of readers in the extensive introduction and supplemental essay that bookend Prince’s narrative. For instance, in the postscript to the second edition of the narrative, he urges the reader: “Whatever be the subsequent lot that Providence may have in reserve for her, the seasonable sympathy thus manifested on her behalf, will neither be fruitlessly expended nor unthankfully received” (129).³¹ Although Pringle is here alluding to his hope that tangible aid will result from the “flavor” of a reader’s “seasonable sympathy” (specifically that the publication of the *History* would support Prince in her declining health), in a broader sense, Pringle, like many antislavery activists of the period, believed that a reader’s sympathetic identification with Prince would evoke a proper emotional response to the narrative he had edited.

Because sympathy relied so heavily on the imagination, the result is a further attenuation of the transfer of embodied experience. As David Marshall has concluded in *The Figure of Theater* (1986): “It is no coincidence that Smith illustrates a discussion of how we enter into the sentiments and actions of others with a description of reading; whether we are confronted with a person or text, we must face a fiction” (171). But Ian Baucom in *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005) argues that the imagination’s recourse to fiction means that “the historical ... can be accessed only at a spectatorial remove that the imagination does not so much bridge as create. It can be apprehended solely as a speculative allegory that imagination does not so much decode as fabricate” (250). For Smith then, sympathy constituted both an ever-receding narratological horizon, impossible to fully capture or inhabit. While Smith may have ultimately doubted the effectiveness of sympathy as a procedure for sharing the body of an other, he nonetheless believed that efforts towards the possibility of sympathetic identification fostered civil concord.

Given Smith's rendering of sympathy as at once an inhabitation of one body by another, *and* as a practice of white readerly imagination, it is perhaps unsurprising that into the late eighteenth-century, as Sean Gaston has argued, a desire for affective communion endured as "the persistence of the untouchable," of bodies just out of reach (132).³²

By representing God or Christ – also a body just out of reach – as the only capable sympathizer to plight of the enslaved, Prince herself ultimately renders this question of bodies and pain a deeply theological one. As Elaine Scarry has suggested, in the New Testament "[b]elief comes not, as so often in the Old Testament, by being oneself wounded but by having the wound become the object of touch" (215). Evading that haptic possibility – both in the context of abolitionist discourses of sympathy and later in her portrayal of Moravian spiritual practices – becomes a central tenet of Prince's work of mourning. To that end, Prince early approaches the parameters of her politico-theological assault on practices of sympathy in her descriptions of working the saltwater ponds of Turk's Island. Twice the *History* speaks directly to readers – the first time shrewdly implying that they are merely ignorant of the torments of the salt ponds: "Oh that Turk's Island was a horrible place! The people in England, I am sure, have never found out what is carried on there. Cruel, horrible place!" (74). If the text's readers possessed real knowledge of Turk's Island, in other words, they would surely denounce such physically devastating labor. Since this outcry has clearly not occurred, Prince authorizes herself to narrate these atrocities. Yet, it is in her second direct appeal to readers that she makes her subtle assault on the logic of sympathy, that connection between knowledge and feeling so important to Pringle's abolitionism, a central part of the narrative's exigence:

Oh the horrors of slavery! – How the thought of it pains my heart! But the truth ought to be told of it; and what my eyes have seen I think it my duty to relate; for few people in

England know what slavery is. I have been a slave – I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows. (74)

By inhabiting multiple registers of experience – sense, affect, knowledge – the passage reclaims enslaved existence from biopolitical regimes that abstract their bodies as capital, while also doubting that white readers can fully access those registers.

By “telling the truth” of the quotidian terrors of West Indian slavery, Prince turns to a sheer quantity of everyday experiences, to multiple stories of enslaved bodies devastated by the salt ponds of Turk’s Island – to the number of slaves with experiences of flesh mutilated in the service of saltwater capital. In a harrowing litany of wounded bodies, she tells of a young slave named Ben, beaten and imprisoned for stealing “a little rice one night,” of Sarah, an elderly woman “thrown among prickly-pear bushes” for not being “quite right in the head” and unable to work fast enough to suit Mr. D—, until she died of the “venomous prickles,” and of Daniel, a disabled slave, severely whipped because he could not endure the grueling pace of labor in the salt ponds. Prince, in particular, lingers with Daniel, rendering in excruciating detail the degradation of his body by salt, both a commodity and an instrument of punishment:

Poor Daniel was lame in the hip, and could not keep up with the rest of the slaves; and our master would order him to be stripped and laid down on the ground, and have him beaten with a rod of rough briar till his skin was quite red and raw. He would then call for a bucket of salt, and fling upon the raw flesh till the man writhed on the ground like a worm, and screamed aloud with agony. This poor man’s wounds were never healed. (74)

The description of Daniel’s punishment pushes the limits of preserving a body for white readers to sympathetically inhabit. The momentum of saltwater capital crescendos in a stark dehumanization, as Daniel “writhes on the ground like a worm” from the salt thrown on his

wounded body. Daniel's narrative concludes with him enduring in this tormented existence. Unlike Sarah, Daniel's story does not end with death, but with his continuing disability, with "wounds" that "were never healed." Because the passage lingers with injuries that will not mend, its readers are summoned to attempt inhabiting suffering that continues indefinitely into the future because it never achieves narrative closure. The passage, in other words, constricts a sympathetic exchange of somatic experience by foregrounding its temporal limitlessness within the textual confines of the *History*.

While the ongoing futurity of Daniel's wounds bears out Mallipeddi's reading of the slow violence exerted on the bodies rendered in the *History*, there also exists theological implications for his wounded body, specifically in how his injuries could be taken up and read by evangelical readers of the narrative. The extension of his unending bodily wounds into the future recalls the politico-theological momentum of Prince's overall descriptions of the salt ponds of Turk's Island, while anticipating the central paradox of Moravian blood and wounds theology: can spiritual practices that focus so intensively on the theological value of woundedness – on the viscerality of Christ's bodily injuries – really be invested in healing? Can such a theology of the body hope to redress the crimes that result in never-ending wounds? Ultimately, the narrative of the salt ponds hints at the testimonial implications of this paradox. After retelling Daniel, Ben, and Sarah's histories, Prince admits, "In telling my own sorrows, I cannot pass by those of my fellow-slaves – for when I think of my own griefs, I remember theirs" (75). Although Prince only narrates Ben, Sarah, and Daniel's stories, the implication is that there are always more. The extent of enslaved grief, like Daniel's wounds, remain limitless and impossible to fully inhabit – bodies always already just out of reach.

To Redress Sorrow and Suffering

The Turk's Island passages in the *History*, in confronting the impetus to make experiences of pain visible and legible, attempt to evade the cultural momentum of abolitionist sympathy.³³ Other moments in the *History* extend that work of mourning further. Once the narrative begins to engage more overtly with evangelical, especially Moravian, practices for voicing sorrow, however, the tone becomes conflicted and ambivalent, as the narrative wavers between reading evangelical Moravian practices as potential sites for redressing violation or as colonial instruments for suppressing expressions of enslaved anger, grief, and pain. In two early passages, for instance, the narrative overtly engages with evangelical providentialism, testing its capacity as a meaningful hermeneutic for interpreting catastrophic loss. After Prince left Turk's Island for Antigua, a story reached her that a few slaves attempted to build a separate space for communal worship: "[The] poor slaves had built up a place with boughs and leaves, where they might meet for prayers, but the white people pulled it down twice, and would not even allow them even a shed for prayers" (76-7). On the one hand, Prince is here circumspect in her language – it is just as likely that this shed built from boughs and leaves provided a gathering place to perform West African or West African-inflected spiritual practices.³⁴ On the other hand, by using the general term "prayers," Prince more broadly protests stereotypes of African slaves that refuse them affective attachments, and appeals to white evangelical readers to consider the depravity of a colonial society that would limit spiritual resources for the enslaved.³⁵ As the story unfolds, more telling is Prince's appeal to an earthly order that sustains enslaved spiritual practices when every colonial institution on Turk's Island is an instrument of its suppression: "A flood came down soon after and washed away many houses, filled the place with sand, and overflowed the ponds;

and I do think that this was for their wickedness; for the Buckra men there were very wicked. I saw and heard much that was very very bad at that place” (77).

What Prince offers is an interesting extension of the hostile ecological system she rendered during her earlier depictions of saltwater’s deterioration of enslaved bodies on Turk’s Island. While her earth endures as a scene of environmental wreckage, she re-reads the flood in service of a larger ethical order, one that redresses pain inflicted on the bodies of slaves, forced to work on sacred days, either on the salt ponds or for physical relief: “On Sundays, after we had washed the salt bags, and done other work required of us, we went into the bush and cut the long soft grass, of which we made trusses for our legs and feet to rest upon, for they were so full of the salt boils that we could get no rest lying upon the bare boards” (72). In one sense, the flood is impartial – it impacts both slaves and white colonists by destructively “wash[ing] away many houses.” Prince acknowledges, on the other hand, that it devastates the terrain of the island’s primary export – the salt ponds, which were “overflow[ed]” and “filled with sand.” And while Prince argues that the flood interceded on behalf of the slaves whose shed for prayers was pulled down, she also prophetically interprets it as an effect of the brutalities of the “wicked” slave system in that “very very bad ... place” more generally.³⁶

This is not the only instance where the *History* offers a scene of ecological collapse that summons a more complicated rendering of any overarching earthly order in the Caribbean. Prince, for instance, recounts another incident from early in her life when owned by the Inghams. While emptying an old, cracked earthen jar, a “heavy squall of wind and rain came on suddenly,” and the jar broke in Prince’s hands (68). She was severely beaten for the offense by both her master and mistress over the next two days (68-9). Immediately following her second whipping,

when her mistress went to fetch Ingham some water (after he became “quite wearied” from whipping Prince), she relates:

There was a dreadful earthquake. Part of the roof fell down, and everything in the house went – clatter, clatter, clatter. Oh I thought the end of all things near at hand; and I was so sore with the flogging, that I scarcely cared whether I lived or died. The earth was groaning and shaking; every thing tumbling about; and my mistress and the slaves were shrieking and crying out, ‘The earthquake! the earthquake!’ It was an awful day for us all. (68-9)

Prince continues by describing how in the aftermath, she crawled to the front of the house, and sought shelter under the steps of the piazza. She stayed there until the next morning, “wish[ing] more than ever to die” (69). During the account, Prince nowhere claims (as she would regarding the flood on Turk’s Island) that the earthquake occurred as an earthly retribution for the “dreadful state” of her body after her punishment by the Inghams (69). Neither scene can be read as an instance of divine providentialism, for the destructive force of the storms, floods, and earthquakes that strike the landscapes of the narrative fall on both colonists and slaves alike, even if the ruin of the salt ponds on Turk’s Island ultimately, but perhaps tentatively, suggests for Prince some evidence of an over-riding ethico-ecological order. Although Prince prophetically interprets the flood on Turk’s Island, she refrains from situating the rainstorm or the earthquake within a similar earthly order.

Despite the subtle differences in the prophetic interpretation of the events, the two scenes concern questions of extra-judicial redress and systemic colonial injustices. Prince, in an unusual narratological move undoubtedly directed towards evangelical readers, retroactively re-reads her experiences with the Inghams as a sign of divine care: “But the hand of that God whom then I knew not, was stretched over me; and I was mercifully preserved for better things” (68).

Such an attempt to thrust her experiences of bodily punishment and environmental ruin within a divine juridical order anticipates a moment later in the *History*, when she would similarly read her sale to the Woods as predetermined: “It was ordained to be, I suppose. God led me there” – with the exception of that subtly evasive “I suppose” (78).³⁷ With her “I suppose” Prince registers her own doubt, a lingering inability to situate the institution of slavery and its quotidian terrors within an overarching evangelical theodicy. We might understand her inconsistent portrayals of an earthly order responsive to human prayer as less of a contradiction, and more of an experientially informed gesture at the limit of a prophetic position that, under most circumstances, reads ecological catastrophe as retribution for human depravity. Such a refusal to definitively interpret events in her early life contrast sharply with an evangelical urge – especially in many Methodist and Moravian congregations – to read life experiences as signs of divine approval or reproach, and suggests that even when Prince appealed to evangelical expectations with her gestures towards ecologically-ordained providentialism, the question of extra-judicial redress would take greater significance as the narrative unfolded.

However much Prince may have doubted any iteration of an earthly providentialism could account for the destructive force of slaveowners in the early part of the *History*, the latter half of her narrative suggests that she may have been drawn to certain features of Moravian rite that offered her resources for challenging her owners, especially the Woods. Of particular importance to Prince were communal penitential practices and educational opportunities offered by Moravian and Methodist congregations on Antigua by the time the Woods bought Prince in 1815. Moravian missionaries founded a congregation on St. John, the capital of the island, in 1756, and early on ministered to enslaved communities. According to Sue Thomas’s extensive archival reckoning, by 1824, over six thousand slaves had joined Methodist congregations and

over eleven thousand were attending Moravian services, or more than half of the enslaved population on Antigua (124-5).³⁸ Moreover, by the 1770s many of the small community gatherings, *das sprachen* or “speakings,” where prayers, confessions, and hymns were collectively spoken, were led by “helpers” (sometimes also called “godmothers” or “godfathers”) drawn from African and African-descended members of the congregations (Thomas 124). Alongside speakings, Moravian missionaries and helpers also organized a school that met on Mondays and Wednesdays between 11AM and 3PM that we know Prince attended (Thomas 125). Prince describes sneaking away to hear female Moravian missionaries and helpers teach slaves and free Blacks reading, writing, and religious doctrine:

I followed the church earnestly every opportunity. I did not then tell my mistress about it; for I knew she would not give me leave to go. But I felt I *must* go. Whenever I carried the children their lunch at school, I ran around and went to hear the teachers. The Moravian ladies (Mrs Richter, Mrs Olufsen, and Mrs Sauter) taught me to read in the class; and I got on very fast. In this class there were all sorts of people, old and young, grey headed folks and children; but most of them were free people. (83)

Once Prince joined the Moravian congregation on St. John around 1822, she would have been able to participate in speakings, attend services and classes, and register to become a communicant – what Prince called “hav[ing] my name put down in the Missionaries’ book” (83). She would thus have been exposed to specific Moravian spiritual practices that had everything to do with reiteratively interpreting one’s life experiences through a model of providential redress in services and gatherings led by missionaries and African helpers.

Prince’s interest in Moravian spirituality extended beyond a strategic investment in literacy: the narrative also provides subtle hints that Moravian teaching enabled her to engage in small

acts of resistance to her owners, especially in offering her some freedom of movement.³⁹ In *Black Cosmopolitanism* (2005), Ifeoma Nwankwo argues that through “her emphasis on spatial language, Prince powerfully asserts her own agency, her own right to determine where and why she moves” (176). Although Nwankwo addresses Prince’s expression of what she calls a “racially based notion of community,” in particular, Prince’s attention to place, performance, and mobility is also important for conceiving of spiritually significant sites of redress.⁴⁰ She recalls, for instance, that they facilitated her marriage to Daniel James, a relationship the Woods expressed deep hostility to. When accompanying the Woods to London in 1828, furthermore, Prince was aided onboard ship by the steward, who attended the same class as her husband: “I was thankful he was so friendly, for my mistress was not kind to me on the passage; and she told me, when she was angry, that she did not intend to treat me better in England than in the West Indies – that I need not expect it. And she was as good as her word” (86). When the Woods continued to treat her poorly in London, Prince used her Moravian connections to leave the Woods’ household (89-90). After the Woods cast her from their house for the fourth time, claiming that Prince’s rheumatism and declining eyesight should not preclude her from working, Prince relates that the Moravians provided her with temporary shelter from the Woods, stating, “And so I came out, and carried my trunk to the Moravians” (90).⁴¹

Alongside practical matters of education and financial support, Moravianism seemed to offer Prince some means for imagining juridical redress and relief when an ecological providentialism failed to provide satisfying answers early in the *History*. Prince gives her earliest extended account of her encounter with evangelical penitential practices when she attends a Methodist speaking on Antigua (82-3). The speaking incorporates many of the spiritual practices performed by Moravian and Methodist communicants, including an emphasis on hymn-singing, praying,

and public confession and intense spiritual self-reflection, what would emerge in her narrative as a peculiarly fraught practice for slaves. “I never knew rightly that I had much sin till I went there,” recalls Prince, with the “sins” identified by the attendants as less a matter of internal failing, and more a matter of the brutalities of the institution of slavery. The service begins with a prayer led by one of the women, then alternating hymns and prayers: “[T]hey were the first prayers I ever understood. One woman prayed; and then we all sung a hymn; then there was another prayer and another hymn; and then they all spoke by turns of their own griefs as sinners” (82).⁴² As with the narrative’s refusal to recount her own labor on Turk’s Island without also speaking of Ben, Daniel, and Sarah, Prince listens as another slave named Henry confesses before the small gathering:

The husband of the woman I went with was a black driver. His name was Henry. He confessed that he had treated the slaves very cruelly; but said that he was compelled to obey the orders of his master. He prayed them all to forgive him, and he prayed that God would forgive him. He said it was a horrid thing for a ranger to have sometimes to beat his own wife or sister; but he must do so if ordered by his master. (82-3).

Prince here returns to the devastating competing ethical injunctions proffered by slavery. Under the biopolitical regime of the plantocracy, Henry is “compelled to obey” his master, even if his orders force Henry to break a higher ethical commandment: harming his kin. Henry testifies to the emotional toll his forced punishment of “his own wife and sister” brings, and seeks spiritual solace by asking for the community and God’s forgiveness. In one sense, Henry expresses this devastating ethical aporia within a juridical setting that left slaves with few options for redress.⁴³ Alongside other forms of covert or overt resistance, this Methodist speaking may have provided

a space for uttering ethical denunciations: here, Henry can publically name the “horrid things” rendered legal under the auspice of Antiguan slavery.

After hearing Henry’s condemnation of his master and witnessing his re-entrance to the community through public forgiveness, Prince then depicts her own initiation into evangelical penitential practices:

I felt sorry for my sins also. I cried the whole night, but I was too much ashamed to speak.

I prayed God to forgive me. This meeting a great impression on my mind, and led my spirit to the Moravian church; so that when I got back to town, I went and prayed to have my name put down in the Missionaries’ book (83)

Unlike Henry, Prince does not describe the sins she is asking forgiveness for, only that she was too “ashamed to speak” of them. As Sue Thomas points out, Prince’s emphasis on her shame in this scene serves to initiate her into Methodist and Moravian penitential practices that linked a sinner’s experience with shame to the affective burden Christ bore during the crucifixion – where, through his willing surrender to suffering, he “hast to shame submitted,” as one hymn rendered it (qtd. Thomas 126). It also covertly links this scene of potential redress to other moments in the narrative that hint at the sexual oppression and exploitation that form part of the everyday terrors of slavery for African women. Early in the *History*, for instance, she describes how Ingham would compel her to bathe him, an order where outright refusal meant certain physical punishment: “He had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked and ordering me then to wash him in a tub of water. This was worse to me than all the licks. Sometimes when he called me to wash him I would not come, my eyes were so full of shame. He would then come to beat me” (77-8).⁴⁴ Here, the *History* leaves the reader with the faintest trace of Prince’s body physically wounded by severe punishment or devastated by sexual violation. It is this harrowing

either/or that takes on such central importance in her efforts to seek redress at the Moravian chapel – despite the court’s challenge to strip that attempt of meaning through its own strident laughter – as revealed in the supplemental archives to the *History*.

“till the water burst out of her body...”

In the two libel cases provoked by the *History*’s publication, Prince’s character as a witness came under sharp scrutiny, and her experiences of physical and sexual violence – experiences that “filled her with shame” – and hinted at in the *History*, become matters of public record. As the legal report for *Wood v. Pringle* (1833) described, Prince was interrogated about her relationship with the white Captain Abbot, who she evidently lived with for seven years, until Abbot’s infidelity drove her to seek redress at the Moravian church. Prince’s attempt summoned the loud laughter of the court, which parenthetically disrupt the narrative. Although earlier I focused on how the court’s laughter overdetermined the narrative through an unflinching colonial hermeneutic that constructed a somatic archive that refused the evidentiary witness of Prince’s own words, now I wish to attend more closely to Prince’s attempt to seek redress at the Moravian church with the unnamed “Moravian black leader” as a matter of bodily endurance and survival.⁴⁵ By the time Prince encountered and began attending the services of the Moravians in Antigua in 1822, she had been with the Woods for at least seven years. Her health, never stable after her treatment by the Inghams and over ten years working in the corrosive environment of the salt ponds, continued in a severe decline, and she began a strenuous campaign to purchase her own freedom (80-1). When she was not needed at the Woods, for instance, Prince took in laundry or traveled to the docks to buy and sell goods, such as coffee, yams, or livestock, on board the ships in the harbor (81-2). When Prince became so ill with rheumatism that she

became “very lame” and “forced to walk with a stick,” she also worked to find someone who might be willing to purchase her from the Woods, negotiating with Adam White, a cooper and free Black, and Mr. Burchell, a white colonist, and bartering her service for freedom (79, 81). None of these offers moved the Woods, who refused to allow Prince to purchase her freedom or sell her to someone who would. At the end of the paragraph describing her efforts to achieve manumission, Prince admits, “A gentleman also lent me some to help to buy my freedom – but when I could not get free he got it back again. His name was Captain Abbot” (81). Aside from the supplementary materials, this passage is the only overt reference to Captain Abbot in the *History*, and sidesteps their sexual relationship. It situates him within the financial maneuverings of Prince’s bid for freedom, before her body – chronically afflicted by rheumatism and erysipelas, an inflammatory disorder of the skin⁴⁶ – failed. While it is unsurprising that the narrative evades their sexual relationship, that Prince invokes Captain Abbot in a long series of passages detailing her bodily ruin *does* make her appeal to the unnamed “Moravian black leader” more revealing.

In the context of the libel cases, Prince’s relationship to Captain Abbot suggests that he offered money for her freedom in exchange for sexual favors, exploiting her sexuality and her deteriorating health. When the arrangement unraveled because of the Woods’ refusal to sell or manumit Prince and because of Captain Abbot’s own infidelity, Prince turned to the one of the only other site of recourse left available to her: the Moravian chapel and the unnamed “Moravian black leader.” Although Prince failed in her attempt to seek redress for this incident, the rest of her narrative suggests that she continued to consider the Moravian church a shelter against the reality of her declining health. By the time Prince married Daniel James in 1826, for instance, her bodily ailments centrally figures in her account of the Woods. Prince recounts that after her

marriage, “I fell ill again with the rheumatism, and was sick a long time; but whether sick or well, I had my work to do” (85). Prince further relates that, angered by her relationship with James, the Woods escalated their treatment of her: “She [Mrs. Woods] could not forgive me for getting married, but stirred up Mr. Wood to flog me dreadfully with his horsewhip ... Mrs. Wood was always abusing me about him. She did not lick me herself, but she got her husband to do it for her, whilst she fretted the flesh off my bones” (85). Here, the narrative leaves the reader with a harrowing image of her body disintegrated, “fretted” by the treatment of the Woods, until only the bones remain to testify that flesh had once been present. In this sense, perhaps part of the redress sought was the transformation of the wound from a secular form of punishment to a theologically-laden sign of sacrifice suffered.

Despite the contingencies of the evangelical and antislavery reading publics, which compelled the erasure of sexual exploitation and violence in the narrative, that Prince so closely connects her recourse to the Moravians (through marriage or at the chapel) to an image of her body removed of flesh offers a dark obverse to the way a spiritual erotics centered on contemplation of Christ’s wounds underwrote much of Moravian theology. As we earlier saw, Moravians often displayed a surprising, even alarming, propensity to venerate the wounds of Christ, but this veneration also found explicit form in sensually charged lyrics. This congregational liturgy reinscribed Christ’s crucifixion and death in a spiritual erotics that frequently framed atonement as a mystical marriage between Christ and believer through a sacred encounter with his devastated flesh, and would even become liturgically codified in a *Litany of Wounds of the Husband*.⁴⁷ As one such call and response from the *Litany* reads:

[Come] as his body,

And his sinful spouse,

Redeemed and reconciled,
And attended by his holy angels. (238)

Moravian lyrics often centered on – and explicitly eroticized – the wounds of Christ in liturgical practices that stressed shared feeling and a somatic exchange of embodied experience. More significantly, some went so far as to re-gender Christ as a wounded woman or mother (Anderson 100-2).⁴⁸ Zinzendorf, for instance, once provocatively read Christ’s side wound as a womb: “[H]is side is the womb in which my spirit was conceived and carried” (qtd. Fogelman 77). Although a disruptive “time of sifting” that unsettled the sect between 1743 and 1750, and the death of Zinzendorf in 1760 shifted Moravian spirituality away from the evangelical excess of its earlier spiritual erotics, such language remained a central part of Moravian worship well into the nineteenth century when Prince would have encountered them.⁴⁹ Reiterations of the *Litany of Wounds* and Moravian hymnody continued to imagine Christ’s passion as a source for spiritual fortitude and meditation: “Powerful wounds of Jesus / So moist, so gory, bleed on my heart / So that I may remain brave and like as the wounds,” as another hymn put it (235-6). These instances of liturgical veneration frame the encounter between Christ and communicant as either the catalyst for a spiritual marriage or as the grounds for mystical identification with him. Although the trial record certainly editorializes on Prince’s behavior (which Pringle’s supplement to the *History* takes pains to underscore), still, why is it so important in the court narrative that Prince sought redress at the Moravian chapel?⁵⁰ Outside of Anti-Moravian literature that suggested otherwise, Moravian communities highly valued sexual purity, especially from women.⁵¹ According to this reading, the trial attendees responded with laughter because Prince displayed a failure to read the centrality of sexual purity in Moravian practice. It is not difficult to see, however, how radical figurations of Christ as a woman or an other-mother – which go much

further than scriptural accounts of Christ's compassion towards prostitutes like Mary Magdalene – may have been the source for Prince's attempt to seek redress at the Moravian church when her own life was ruptured by sexual infidelity and abuse.

Despite the *History's* intense mediation through antislavery and evangelical narratological practices, and the hostility of the court records, the narrative nevertheless outlines a work of mourning centered on restraint. One account in particular suggests the limits of a Moravian liturgy that venerated the maternal womb/wounds of Christ. Prince's descriptions of the francophone slave Hetty early in the *History* refuses a spiritual hermeneutic that would read wounds as sacred, despite (or perhaps because of) the disquieting resonance between descriptions of Hetty's bodily ruin and Christ's. Chronologically, this incident appears early in the *History*, during a period when Prince calls God the one "whom then I knew not" (68). As with moments when the narrative retroactively re-reads the events of Prince's life through evangelical language, it is difficult to read the passages on Hetty without hearing the echo of Moravian hymns on Christ's death. As Prince begins her narrative of Hetty, she relates that she called her "Aunt Hetty," suggesting that she offered a substituted "shadow" or queer kinship bond – that she became an other-mother to Prince – after Prince was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Ingham and separated from her mother and brothers and sisters. As Prince recalls, Hetty was repeatedly beaten, often for trivial reasons. In the instance that led to Hetty's death, Hetty was severely whipped, while pregnant, when a cow she was minding slipped its lead. Prince narrates that Ingham "flogged her as hard as he could, both with the whip and cow-skin, till she was all over streaming with blood. He rested, and then beat her again and again" (67). The punishment forced Hetty into premature labor, and, after delivering a stillborn child, she endured a lingering death:

Ere long her body and limbs swelled to a great size; and she lay on a mat in the kitchen, till the water burst out of her body and she died. All the slaves said that death was a good thing for poor Hetty; but I cried very much for her death. The manner of it filled me with horror. I could not bear to think about it; yet it was always present to my mind for many a day. (67)

On the one hand, the passage's visceral description of the transformation of Hetty's body into water recalls Psalm 22, almost universally read as a messianic rendering of Christ's passion. The psalm begins with the haunting question, "My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me," and continues with a litany of abuses suffered by the speaker's body, including: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels" (Ps. 22:14). That the speaker's body "is poured out like water" prophetically anticipates Christ's death, when his side was pierced by the Roman soldier's spear: "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came out blood and water," a moment, as we have already seen, also recalled in Moravian hymns that encouraged singers to re-imagine Christ's "Corpse's wounds" delivered by the "Spear" as a "this Rock's salt round" (John 19:34). On the other hand, Prince's own reaction to Hetty's death refuses to hallow it within a contemplative tradition that would read bodily ruin as a source for spiritual meaning and meditation. As Sue Thomas incisively observed, "[T]here is no eroticization or transfigurative spiritual reach" for Hetty's "shamed body" (127). In an inversion of Moravian penitential practice, Prince understands Hetty's death as a horrifying event that *compels*, rather than invites, her meditation. She mourns that she "could not bear to think about it; yet it was always present" to her mind "for many a day" (67). Hetty's wounds offer no sacred spectacle parallel to what enables communion between Christ and believer. Instead, the reader is confronted with bodily destruction that persist

as psychic remainders, with a past that is “always present,” an extension of the “times that are gone” described earlier in the *History*.

The *History*'s recourse to Moravian congregational support and spiritual practices remains conflicted and ambivalent. While Moravian liturgies may have enabled resistance to some forms of colonial exploitation, the complicated politics of mediation that led to its publication and circulation, and the racist laughter encoded in textual supplements like the libel trial records, makes reading its broader work of mourning a difficult task. The court record ends by stating that Prince “discharged herself” from the Moravian congregation “in consequence of her connection with Captain Abbot,” suggesting that the radical possibilities of Moravian erotic spirituality, if preserved in liturgical practices, still could not offer a sufficient space for seeking redress (147). Nevertheless, one other Moravian spiritual practice remains that may offer a formal framework for tracing the *History*'s mediation of a work of mourning: the *lebensläufe*, a biographical “life course” often composed for and read aloud at Moravian funerals. Reading the *History* as a type – and as a significant extension and reformulation – of the *lebensläufe* enables the narrative's representation of precarious and vulnerable bodies to refuse the sacralization of suffering, a refusal that protests evangelical and abolitionist transformations of enslaved bodies into merely texts to be read. In such a way, the *History-as-lebensläufe* becomes a work of mourning that can summon critical practices that read flesh *as* flesh and attend to the psychic inheritance of bodily vulnerability that persist into the present in ways that nevertheless refuse them full legibility.

“...under the vessel’s bottom”

If Prince’s narrative of Hetty’s harrowing death lingers with bodily remains that evade legibility within a Moravian blood and wounds theology, how might contemplative genres explicitly adapted to cope with human finitude confront the devastating litany of wounded and dismembered bodies in Prince’s *History*? Sue Thomas has recently argued that we reconsider Prince’s *History* as an exemplar of a Moravian *lebensläufe*, or spiritual biography, and situates it within a growing canon of *lebensläufe* by African-descended peoples, including the newly recovered *The Memoirs of Salone Cuthbert* (written in 1781 and published in 1829) and *The Narrative of Archibald Monteith, a Jamaican Slave* (published in 1864), both Jamaican converts to the Moravian church.⁵² Usually composed just before the death of congregants and performed at funerals, *lebensläufe* of African and African-descended Moravians were often “written in the third person by ministers” and “combine the subject’s own oral testimony and the writer’s idealized interpretation” of the speaker’s “spiritual odyssey,” specifically his or her journey from “bondage to sin to freedom in Christ” (Sensbach, *Separate Canaan* 111). A collaborative genre that combines the eulogy with the spiritual confession, *lebensläufe* mediate the words of individual believers, as well as the minister-as-writer’s voice, thus sharing similarities with the layering of speakers and authorities (including Prince, Susanna Strickland, and Thomas Pringle) within the *History*. Thomas reads Prince’s *History* as a whole as a similar kind of meditation testimony composed near the end of Prince’s life, and situates it within the same generic genealogy as Cuthbert and Monteith’s *lebensläufe*. Because the *History* maintains a conflicted and ambivalent relationship to spiritual tropes that would reiteratively interpret life experiences as signs for an over-arching providentialism, I turn instead to a single passage in Prince’s narrative where she depicts her mother for the final time. By reading within and against the generic expectations of

Moravian *lebensläufe* (and eulogies more generally), I want to suggest that this passage works as an internal *lebensläufe* for Prince's mother in the *History*, but one which goes beyond the *lebensläufe*'s focus on the fixed boundaries of the single life, often notated even in the present through birth and death dates linked by a hyphen. This internal *lebensläufe* for Prince's mother gestures towards a collective maternal and sororal work of mourning, the contours of which attempt to account for both the "times that are gone" and the psychic remainders of those times that persist into the present.

Appearing near the end of Prince's description of her time in Turk's Island, the passage recounts the last encounter between Prince and her mother narrated in the *History*. It begins by describing how one Sunday morning – performing within the temporal rhythms of biblical parable – Prince sees her mother for the first time since they were separated on Bermuda: "One Sunday morning I was on the beach with some of the slaves, and we saw a sloop come in loaded with slaves to work in the salt water" (76). This particular Sunday, in other words, begins with one of Prince's starkest evocations of a saltwater capital – a shipload of bodies transported to toil in the salt industries of Turk's Island's ponds and marshes. Prince uses this opportunity to seek word on members of her family, who, as far as she knows, remain on Bermuda: "When I came upon the deck I asked the black people, 'Is there any one here for me?' 'Yes,' they said, 'your mother'" (76). What should constitute a reunion between female kin is transformed into an evocative historical ache – an experience of suffering so deep as to become an unspeakable torment for Prince and madness for her mother that then exemplifies a multitude of experiences under slavery:

But when I saw my poor mammy my joy was turned to sorrow, for she had gone from her senses ... She did not know me. They had been overtaken by a violent storm at sea. My

poor mother had never been on the sea before, and she was so ill, that she had lost her senses, and it was long before she came quite to herself again. (76)

Prince's linguistic register foregrounds her mother's psychic instability – the storm at sea has separated her mother from herself, severing her “senses” from her own memory and life experiences. Emptied of her own subjective singularity, her mother instead has recourse to a harrowing iconography in the archives of saltwater slavery. As the passage relates, “She ... said she had been under the vessel's bottom” (76). Unwilling or unable to lucidly endure the squall at sea in the ship's hold, Prince's mother believed that she had been conveyed beneath the saltwater, and imagines her body dragged in the wake of the sloop on its storm-tossed journey to the salt industries of Turk's Island. Lost to herself and her kin, her mother's passage under the vessel's bottom both rehearses the millions of lives lost in the Middle Passage, extending outward to “the times that are lost.”

In one sense, through her layering of historiographical and iconographic imagery evocative of the Middle Passage, Prince's mother anticipates her own eulogy as a member of these millions of dead. Yet, it remains a complicated eulogy in that it refrains from depicting the mother's singular death itself. The text prophetically anticipates her death some years later on Bermuda, editorially rendered in an extended footnote by Pringle. Before addressing Pringle's footnotes, I would first like to conceptually situate the passage-as-*lebensläufe* as a Barthian *punctum* within the larger *History*, a *punctum* that summons not only the specter of her mother's death, but it also haunted in her mother's madness by the unending historical weight of the Middle Passage. In imagining herself surviving “under the vessel's bottom,” the passage's representation of Prince's mother reveals the complicated testimonial layers of what Jacques Derrida, in one of the eulogies he wrote for colleagues collected in *The Work of Mourning* (2001), identified as the difference

between speaking *of* but also *with* and *to* the singularity of the dead. In his eulogy for Roland Barthes, “The Deaths of Roland Barthes,” for instance, Derrida returns to Barthes’s *Camera Lucida* (1980), specifically to Barthes’s meditation on the “Winter Garden Photograph,” a photograph of Barthes’s mother as a child. The only photograph discussed in the essay not cited or reproduced, Barthes justified its visual absence because it possessed meaning only for him. Attached to the singular life and death of his mother, the photograph functions as a *punctum* in the essay, a “wound” that only injures him (Barthes 73). Like the “Winter Garden Photograph,” Prince’s mother’s journey “under the vessel’s bottom” appears to only wound Prince, and her psychological wounding precludes the reunion hoped for in Prince’s weary question, “Is there anyone here for me?” At first, her mother’s untimely madness and survival – and her death relegated to a footnote – figure as the *punctum* of the passage.

But the passage refuses to remain in the intimate circuit of Prince’s mother’s singular life and death, allowing the passage’s *punctum* to encompass collective grief. Derrida’s reading of Barthes’s *punctum* offers one way to conceptually trace the passage’s complicated movement between singular and collective sorrow. While for Barthes the *punctum* figures through a singular absence, Derrida extends the reach of its singularity by connecting the reader to the loss that wounded Barthes: “It pierces, strikes me, wounds me, bruises me, and, first of all, seems to concern only me” (39). More importantly, Derrida grafts this singular affective circuit – what “seems to only concern me” – to a temporal vanishing point: “Its very definition is that it addresses itself to me. The absolute singularity of the other addresses itself to me, the Referent that, in its very image, I can no longer suspend, even though its ‘presence’ forever escapes me, having already receded into the past” (39). By inserting himself within the affective circuit of the *punctum*, Derrida’s re-reading of Barthes in the eulogy, Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas

argue, suggests that as soon as the strike of the *punctum* registers, “in words if not in images, the singular death is pluralized, opening up a space and time that can be read and so reckoned with other times and other deaths” (25). While the *History* makes the case for framing the woundedness of Prince’s mother as an expression of collective mourning, it does so without bringing the reader into that collective circuit (what Prince throughout the narrative troubles and attempts to evade). Instead, the passage creates a circuit between Prince, her mother, and the millions of slaves who experienced of the unspeakable pasts of the Middle Passage that brings them into a shared re-imagining of slavery’s saltwater capital.

By representing Prince’s mother’s psychic journey “under the vessel’s bottom” as a *punctum* that both refuses to speak her death and evokes collective experiences of the Middle Passage, the passage summons a testimonial iconography frequently invoked to render the Middle Passage: the bodies of living or dead slaves tossed overboard, often consumed by the sharks that habitually followed in the wake of ships (Rediker *The Slave Ship* 5). On board this unnamed vessel, her mother’s words may recall, above all, the 133 living slaves thrown overboard the British slave ship *Zong* in September 1781, exactly fifty years before Prince’s own narrative was published in 1831. A massacre that enabled the ship’s owners to file an insurance claim on the “lost” cargo, the incident sparked multiple court cases and intense public debate.⁵³ The event was subsequently rendered, according to Ian Baucom in *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005), as both a singular, and yet exemplary, case of the abstraction of slave bodies and labor that haunts the quotidian and spectralizing operations of finance capitalism (301-2). Baucom argues that the *Zong* massacre troubles the dialectic between witnessing a catastrophic event in its singularity *and* its exemplarity that is the legacy of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses of sympathy, where the “witness is apt to take its melancholy as an invitation to sympathize with

the abstract spectacle of its own suffering as it is to hold itself to the singular instances of historical injustice in which it invests its interest” (300). The difficulty in witnessing an event in its singularity and exemplarity – for speaking *of* and *to* catastrophic events, as Derrida put it – is, of course, an ethical aporia returned to again and again in the *History*. In “telling the truth” of slavery, Prince’s narrative summons readers to sympathetically inhabit her own body, a readerly performance thwarted when Prince’s life history also invokes the limitlessness of other embodied experiences of slavery – of Sarah, Ben, Daniel, Henry, Hetty, or her mother – or of the multitudes tossed overboard the *Zong* and other slave ships connecting the factories of West Africa with the plantation industries of the New World. Layered within a testimonial practice that juxtaposes the singularity of Prince’s experiences within an extensive and ever-extending archive that amplifies slavery’s somatic and embodied expressive repertoires, her mother’s words both remain her own *and* speak for slavery’s countless dead.

In this sense, Prince’s *History* confronts a testimonial limit explored by M. NourbeSe Philip in her long poem *Zong!*, particularly what she calls “chart[ing] the outline of the wound,” or a work of mourning that performative traces the archival boundaries of the massacre: “[I]t is a work of haunting, a wake of sorts, where the spectres of the undead make themselves present. And only in not-telling can the story be told” (201). For Philip, the eulogistic boundary, the “wake of sorts,” for that space of “not-telling” is materially marked by saltwater, by the linguistic limit that provides a vocabulary for disinterring bodies from the earth – exhumation – but cannot offer “a word for bringing bodies back from the water” (201). Prince’s mother, however, *has* been “brought back from the water,” and experiences a kind of psychic “exaqua” resurrection within the boundaries of Prince’s *History* (Philip 201). Her mother’s harrowing descant that she had been “under the vessel’s bottom” dwells within that space of “not-telling” –

within the *punctum*'s gap – in Prince's narrative, thereby revealing a tension also at the heart of eulogies, such as the Moravian *lebensläufe* that Prince would undoubtedly have been familiar with and encountered on Antigua. On the one hand, her mother had been held under the vessel's bottom, psychically surviving what for many slaves thrown overboard or overworked on the plantations was a very different "spiritual odyssey" than that offered in Moravian *lebensläufe*. Rather than framing their lives as an ascent from the bondage of sin to freedom in Christ, for many West Indian slaves, in death their bodies "sank without tombs," their spirits – perhaps – returned to West Africa, to "Guinea Land" (Walcott, "The Sea is History" 27). Bearing witness to (which, as we already saw with Apess, means living to retell the experience) these bodies lost to the sea, her mother's refrain functions as a kind of eulogy for those deaths – a mourning gesture Prince herself refuses to perform for her own mother in the conclusion of the passage.⁵⁴ Within the confines of Prince's *History*, this passage stops far short of providing closure on her mother's own life, lingering instead in the psychic limbo this journey at sea exercised on her mother. "[I]t was long before she came quite to herself again," is Prince's weary summation of the temporal expanse of her mother's retreat from (and slow return to) lucidity. Prince's last word on her mother speaks only of her return to Bermuda: "My mother worked for some years on the island, but was taken back to Bermuda some time before my master carried me thither" (76).

In the end, the passage refuses to speak a full *lebensläufe* or eulogy on her mother's life. An extended footnote by Pringle instead gives her mother's fate, as well as Prince's oral testimony of the death of her father and fate of other family members:

Of the subsequent lot of her relatives she can tell but little. She says, her father died while she and her mother were on Turk's Island; and that he had been long dead and buried

before any of his children in Bermuda knew of it, they being slaves on other estates. Her mother died after Mary went to Antigua. Of the fate of the rest of her kindred, seven brothers and three sisters, she knows nothing further than this – that the elder sister, who had several children to her master, was taken by him to Trinidad; and that the youngest, Rebecca, is still alive, and in slavery in Bermuda. Mary herself is about forty-three years of age. (76)

Pringle's footnote inverts a dynamic explored by Derrida in "This is Not an Oral Footnote," where he argues that texts using footnotes and other annotations impose politico-theological hierarchies of authority: "[I]f one considers that a text so absolutely performative, self-sufficient, self-interpretive, initial, and inaugural, and poetic in the strong sense of the word, is a divine speech act or divine writing, then the hierarchical relationship between the main text and the annotations ... reproduces a theologico-political model" (193). If for Derrida footnotes remain spatially – and thus politically – subordinated within the textual confines of the page, the intense editorial mediation of Prince's narrative (and of slave narratives more generally) functions as its own "divine speech act or divine writing," giving the known fate of her family members, speculating on what is unknown, and re-inscribing their lives and deaths within the political values of antislavery.⁵⁵ Rebecca, after all, is still "in slavery in Bermuda" – a pointed reminder to British readers of the ongoing work of abolition, as well as an attempt to incorporate them into Caribbean sororal mourning. By subordinating the singularity of the lives of Prince and her kin to the demands of antislavery activism, in the end, Pringle's editorial intrusion more closely aligns with the exigence of Moravian *lebensläufe*, which itself demands a similar re-inscribing of life experience within the biographical rubric of a "spiritual odyssey" from a spiritual bondage to redemptive freedom in Christ. For Prince, the maternal and sororal practice of mourning encoded

in her refrain, “she said she had been under the vessel’s bottom,” evades these generic expectations. The act of recall evoked by this refrain, as well as Prince’s stories of Ben, Sarah, Daniel, and Henry, becomes a way to practice opacity – to speak a work of mourning that lingers in the psychic limbo of slavery’s salt marshes.

Chapter Four:

Robert Wedderburn's Future Remnant

“The time is fast approaching, when such rulers act righteously, or be drawn from their seats; for truth and justice must prevail – combined armies cannot stop their progress.”

Robert Wedderburn

“After the end of anticolonialism's promise, our sense of time and possibility have altered so significantly that it is hard to continue to live in the present as though it were a mere transitory moment in an assured momentum from a wounded past to a future of salvation. The horizon that made that erstwhile story so compelling as a dynamo for intellectual and political work has collapsed. It is now a superseded future, one of our futures past.”

David Scott

Inspired by the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804), the French abolitionist Charles de Rémusat's tragedy *The Saint-Domingue Plantation; or, The Insurrection* (1825) offers a meditation on the future conditional of revolutionary projects.¹ Early in the second act, Timur, the play's avatar of Toussaint L'Ouverture, prophesies: “The revolt will break out everywhere, all at once! It will spread like wildfire, swift as a winter hurricane, swallowing everything in its path ... It will sweep away plantations, houses, dead bodies ... Saint-Domingue will be ours! Our land!” (61; ellipses original). Timur concludes his impassioned speech by calling the purged land, “Our new Africa!” (61). Throughout Rémusat's tragic drama, Timur expresses Caribbean revolutionary aspiration as an oncoming catastrophe of climate, as a wildfire or a hurricane

building until it overtakes and upends the institution of slavery in a single culminating moment.² In this rendering, the earth itself resists the continuance of the colonial order. Timur imagines revolution as an utterly transformative force that materially alters the killing fields of slavery into a new natal land.

Within the revolutionary history re-imagined by the play, it is significant that Timur's new name for Saint-Domingue is *not* Haiti, the indigenous Taino name for the island restored by Jean-Jacques Dessalines at the conclusion of the Haitian Revolution.³ Timur's prophecy remakes the landscapes of New World colonialism in the image of a particular past, into a "new Africa" now located in the Caribbean. If the temporal horizons of Timur's speech efface the island's indigenous population, they also evade the bodily remains left in the wake of slavery's brutal history – according to Timur, the catastrophe even carries away all the "dead bodies." Timur reimagines the island returned to a reclaimed space purged of the dead, both those interred during decades of slavery and those killed during the revolutionary upheaval.⁴ In the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution, Rémusat's European drama suggests that a revolutionary future may only be conjured through a particular kind of historical elision, performed through both symbolic and material and material erasures.⁵ Rémusat's drama lingers in this tension, where the Haitian Revolution – often denoted the "first successful slave revolt" – offers new avenues for envisioning an anticolonial nation, but did not (or could not) fully transform a global order founded on slavery, imperial dispossession, and environmental devastation.⁶ For Timur the radical possibilities of the Haitian Revolution remains an incomplete historical possibility, a possibility that, as Jeremy Matthew Glick has recently argued, continue to extend an "unfinished" horizon for imagining "a transformative future" for writers living into a neocolonial present (6).⁷ The play ponders a set of questions that would be taken up by others writing in the

aftermath of the Haitian Revolution: how might writers imagine the meaning of revolution – and their visionary announcements of an anticolonial future – in Haiti and beyond – throughout the Caribbean, or across the globe? How might these works envision replacements to the integrated systems of capitalism and slavery that so enraged (and constrained) Timur? And, perhaps most crucially, how might recursive encounters with revolutionary pasts refuse the historical and embodied elisions represented in *The Saint-Domingue Plantation*?

By rendering an anticolonial future purposely through rhythms of historical erasure, especially through the catastrophic removal of the dead, *The Saint-Domingue Plantation* performs a politico-theological work opposed by many nineteenth-century indigenous and African-descended writers, despite (or perhaps because of) its recreation of an overtly white abolitionist future.⁸ As we saw already, William Apess envisioned the excesses of settler colonialism that had been evaded in American history persisting in the flesh-as-archive, and critically re-imagined white skin as a material marker of colonial atrocity (see chapter two). In this chapter, I wish to consider how Jamaican radical and heterodox preacher Robert Wedderburn (1762-1835/36?) turns to a post-Haitian Revolution futurity as a horizon for envisioning a global anticolonial political order that attempts to reanimate suspended black histories. In this way, as Ifeoma Nwankwo reminds us, Wedderburn's oeuvre is closely connected to thinking that underscored much of nineteenth-century writing by peoples of African descent.⁹ Nwankwo suggests that in naming a relationship to the Haitian Revolution, African-descended writers and activists could “[connect] with each other,” and, to the alarm of white spectators, “[foment] a massive revolution that might overturn the whole Atlantic slave system” (7).¹⁰ Early in his short-lived periodical *Axe Laid to the Root* (London, 1817), for instance,

Wedderburn offers an account of a remnant who will survive a reinscription of the violence of the Haitian Revolution in some future Jamaican uprising:

Prepare for flight, ye planters, for the fate of St. Domingo awaits you ... Recollect the fermentation will be universal ... They will slay man, woman, and child, and not spare the virgin, whose interest is connected with slavery, whether black, white, or tawny. Oh ye planters, you know this has been done; the cause which produced former bloodshed still remains, -- of necessity, similar effects must take place" (86).

Wedderburn prophesies that the same "fate awaits" Jamaican planters as experienced in Saint-Domingue during the Haitian Revolution, and renders these historical trajectories global when he warns, "recollect the fermentation will be universal." The verbal shift between "recollect" and "will be," however, layers past and future history, prophetically announcing a temporal paradox: the coming revolution has already happened and is already known – it need only be remembered, or "recollected." It remains, nevertheless, a future anticipated in Jamaica, where "similar effects" have not, but "*must* take place." Wedderburn's contrapuntal shifts between past and future verb tenses, as well as historical and spiritual histories, inscribe a non-linear temporal progression that moves between particular times and locales for where and when this "universal" revolution will occur. Wedderburn turns to a post-Haitian Revolution futurity as a horizon for envisioning a global anticolonial political order, an order that prophetically restores revolutionary Caribbean histories through recursive temporal arrangements announced by a prophet.¹¹ Wedderburn warns that the coming conflagration will "not spare the virgin" and or those "whose interest is connected with slavery," whether "black, white, or tawny." In his commitment to revolution and its necessary violence, Wedderburn repeatedly transgressed the meliorist and gradualist positions of much of British abolition and antislavery rhetoric and political activism, perhaps explaining

why the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 and of slavery in 1833 figure so rarely in his prophetic oeuvre.¹² In offering the Haitian Revolution as his historical touchstone, Wedderburn affirms revolutionary violence as an appropriate expression of diasporic political activism. Wedderburn's modifying clause, "whose interest is connected with slavery," urges a pressing question: in the eyes of the dispossessed, who in the colonial world does *not*, in some way, benefit from slavery? Wedderburn's "universal fermentation" thus can only conceive of a post-revolutionary remnant left alive through a precarious innocence. Wedderburn critically frames the work of revolution as a struggle against the closely intertwined infrastructures of property, slavery, and capitalism at work in the Atlantic world.¹³

By attending to the Haitian Revolution as an unfinished event, I wish to consider how Wedderburn continually renders Caribbean futurity not only as an anticipated revolution but as an outcome of a *prophetic* announcement – or one that forewarns an imminent future.¹⁴ Wedderburn, in particular, calls the experiential residue of this announcement a "time . . . fast approaching," where the present contracts or suspends in expectation of a coming revolution: "The time is fast approaching, when such rulers act righteously, or be drawn from their seats; for truth and justice must prevail – combined armies cannot stop their progress." As a revolutionary future conditional, the "time fast approaching," in particular, contests the teleological violences of progressive formulations of history, instead tarrying with what has been called, by Walter Benjamin and others, messianic history. They draw from St. Paul, especially his rendering of *hōs mē* in I. Corinthians 7, where he observes that "the appointed time is grown very short," and believers must live "as if" (or *hōs mē*) Christ's coming is nigh. A messianic formulation of history attempts to describe a particular *experience* of temporality, of waiting in the present for the instantiation of a future that is imminent. For writers like Wedderburn, we live not in the end

times, but in the time of the end. Those who have taken up Paul in the twentieth century, however, have grafted the structure of *hōs mē* to more immanent experiences of history, often revisiting, in particular, *revolutionary* longing as an anticipation of futures that are always already lost.¹⁵ Maurice Blanchot in *The Book to Come* (1959), for instance, reads prophetic revelation as just such an announcement of impossibility: “[P]rophetic speech announces an impossible future, or makes the future it announces, because it announces it, something impossible, a future one would not know how to live and that must upset all the sure givens of existence” (79). Walter Benjamin, even earlier, contended in the *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940) that a temporal disruption, what he calls a *Jetztzeit* or “now time,” occurs in revolutionary histories where the present is punctuated by pastness. Benjamin’s messianic time offers a non-linear experience of history where each moment in the present is potentially connected to past fulfillments of revolutionary promise or catastrophe, what he calls a “sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for an oppressed past” (263). Benjamin formalizes *Jetztzeit* in thesis IX in his meditation on Paul Klee’s painting *Angelus Novus*, where history becomes a scene of ruin witnessed by the angel of history, whose “face is turned toward the past” and who perceives that past as a “single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet” (257). In a crucial moment, the angel wishes to resurrect the past and thereby enact a messianic moment – specifically “to awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed” (257-8). The prophet of messianic time then, according to Giorgio Agamben, “contemplates salvation only to the extent that he loses himself in what cannot be saved” (42).

Indeed, in the historical arena of transatlantic slavery, what might it mean to “awaken the dead” in an “impossible” future that “cannot be saved”? Or what might it look like to

prophetically and performatively *anticipate* this impossible reanimation in the present? In his reading of Benjamin, literary theorist Paul Saint-Amour offers one avenue for imagining just such a reanimated history, specifically through the temporal dimensions of witnessing. He proposes that this history of ruin summons testimonial frameworks that must bear witness to finitude, to the traces of incomplete or unfulfilled futures offered by the dispossessed: “[What] if some of the most trenchant critiques of violence we possess were mounted by those faced with a future they believed already lost to violence? In response, the angel of history would need, while facing the past, to bear witness to the past, to bear witness to past apprehensions of the *future* as the disaster or the storm oncoming” (23; emphasis original). While I believe that Mary Prince’s “the times that are gone” summon in their work of mourning something like the psychic excesses of a future “already lost to violence,” a history that “cannot be saved” (chapter three), I wish to argue that, for Wedderburn, the Haitian Revolution appears as an unfinished event throughout his writings, a futurity he attempts to anticipate and announce through a protean rhetorical persona, one that speaks *as* and *through* different characters within complicated and layered narrative frameworks. In particular, I want to suggest that Wedderburn performs the work of witnessing through heterodox practices of prophetic polyvocality that dislocates revolutionary agency from a singular speaker, dispersing it to different voices instead. The “presence” of prophetic announcement becomes a moving target, then, an ineffable moment that travels through varied points of testimonial subjectivity and experience, only to be mediated to audiences through narrative layers within radical periodical culture. Wedderburn, for instance, in a passage I linger with more fully in a moment, writes *as* his half-sister, Miss Campbell (who herself ventriloquizes other slaves on a plantation, as well as the white elites of the Jamaican plantocracy) in a series of personal letters reproduced in a radical newspaper ostensibly written

for an enslaved audience in Jamaica, but also circulated among working-class readers and activists in London. Wedderburn's "time fast approaching" performatively manages what Blanchot describes as a temporal disruption that is constitutive of prophetic speech: "When there is no more rest except in the land of midnight, then prophetic speech, which tells of the impossible future also tells of the 'nonetheless' that breaks the impossible and restores time" (81). It is this tension between an impossible future and its "breaking" and "restoration" that Wedderburn's prophetic performances attempt to bridge. His radical political aspirations, more importantly, demand polyvocal testimonial practices accountable to what he understands as the possibilities – and limits – of anticolonial revolution. He performatively reanimates prophetic speech because he assumes its mantle can be taken up by others even if he perishes, executed by the state or lost in the necessary violence of revolution. Wedderburn is always attuned to a historical reality – not all will live to see this future. It may only arrive for a remnant. Wedderburn's "time fast approaching," then, illuminates a tension central to the stories we tell about the possibilities of revolutionary futures, what anthropologist David Scott has called a collapse of the assurance that revolution offers a telos from "a wounded past to a future of salvation" for all (210).

By turning to what I would like to call the "present time of the colony," or colonial temporal arrangements that seek to coercively render Afro-Caribbean spiritual performances and social projects suspended or inert, Wedderburn reads his own prophetic announcements as just such an unsettling of static and suspended colonial temporalities – and what Blanchot calls their "firm, lasting presence[s]" – before conjuring his own heterodox practices to teach the future remnant who succeed in seeing an "impossible" future "how to live" in it. In this sense, Wedderburn's understanding of a "time fast approaching" marks a way of inhabiting the present. In what

follows, I consider how Wedderburn's political activism and writings question the conflicted relationship between earthly finitude and a longing for total revolution in order to render that remnant a politically and spiritually enabled possibility. Even in moments where the Haitian Revolution is not explicitly invoked, Wedderburn uses varied embodied practices of resistance to conceive of a messianic present, or a temporal opening for a reclaimed future. I argue that by turning to three arenas of spiritual contact and cross-fertilization – his participation in London urban radicalism and Thomas Spence's agrarian communalist project, his anticolonial redefinitions of Methodist theology in London and the Caribbean, and his crucial juxtaposition of Jamaican Obeah with Maroon fugitive practices – we can see how Wedderburn creates versions of historical rupture that anticipate an imminent future. In the chapter's last two sections, finally, I take Wedderburn's insight that only a remnant will survive to see this anticolonial future to a reading of the tragic dimensions of his prophetic project.¹⁶

A Most Violent Inheritance

In his merging of a revolutionary futurity with an eschatological stance, Wedderburn's prophetic stance participates in a transatlantic surge of millenarianism most often associated with the aftermath of the French Revolution, and we may trace some of its insurgent energy to Wedderburn's heterogeneous biographical and spiritual background.¹⁷ Within the broader historical scope of his prophetic personas, Wedderburn closely incorporated much of his origins, family history, and early life experiences into his revolutionary exigency. They form a local narrative of colonial violence that often function to arouse his prophetic expectations for a redeemed present, and serve to complicate received Enlightenment political traditions (radical or not) that articulated relationships between kinship, possession, and property. For Wedderburn,

the intersection between his personal biography and a global prophetic expectation has everything to do with a matrilineal inheritance, with a chronological schema that arranges and connects bodies, despite experiences of disrupted kinship and genealogy in the colonial Atlantic world. In the *Horrors of Slavery*, Wedderburn recalls that his mother, Rosanna, when owned by the Scottish doctor James Wedderburn, so persistently resisted his sexual advances that he chose to sell Rosanna back to a previous owner, Lady Douglas (46-48). Rosanna, who was pregnant at the time, demanded that her son's freedom be a condition of the sale, which Lady Douglas honored (48). If Wedderburn never experienced slavery himself, he still witnessed the brutal realities of the slave system, especially the harsh treatment of his mother and grandmother by their respective owners. Around the age of five, Wedderburn came under the care of his grandmother, Talkee Amy, who ran a business buying and selling goods in Kingston, Jamaica on behalf of her master, Joseph Payne (48-9). Wedderburn recalls that "such was the confidence the merchants of Kingston had in her honesty, that she could be trusted to any amount; in fact, she was the regular agent for selling smuggled goods" (48). Despite her keen business acumen in the world of Caribbean smuggling, Talkee Amy's master feared her practice of Obeah, and frequently mistreated her (*Horrors* 48-50). His early experiences as a witness to the pronounced cruelties of the slave system on African women remained with Wedderburn for the rest of his life. Indeed, as I show in a later section, Wedderburn routed much of the insurgent energy and heterodoxy of his prophetic persona through female speakers, including Talkee Amy, as well as Miss Campbell, his (probable) half-sister and primary correspondent in the last installments of the *Axe Laid to the Root*.

If Wedderburn's early, familial encounters with the slave system in the Caribbean profoundly affected the depth of his prophetic orientation, his adult wanderings along the Atlantic littoral

and participation in London urban radical politics helped shape its global scope. Wedderburn left Jamaica as a young man and at sixteen joined the Royal Navy, where he is thought to have been trained as a tailor (McCalman 53-54). He served aboard the H.M.S. *Polyphemus* during the American Revolutionary War, before finally disembarking in London in 1779 at the age of seventeen (Wedderburn 45). In London over the next forty years, he usually earned a scarce living as a journeyman tailor and quickly became associated with forms of popular insurgency driven by war and post-war cycles of trade recession, inflation, and food scarcity.¹⁸ At various points in his career, he was forced to engage in petty theft, fraud, and pimping, survival strategies he never attempted to sanitize even after his religious conversion in 1786, when he stopped to listen to a Methodist street preacher in the impoverished Seven Dials district of London, and converted to Wesleyan Methodism (Wedderburn 66). Although a popular form of evangelical Methodism remained for Wedderburn an important spiritual resource for resistance and protest, he more often understood Methodism through heterodox Unitarian and Socinian lens and as an eventual avenue to radical political activism.¹⁹ Wedderburn, for instance, published his first work, *The Truth Self-Supported* in 1802, which is not, as we might expect, an overt piece of radical journalism (although it certainly has political implications, as I hope to show in a later section), but an anti-Trinitarian pamphlet. By April of 1819, he was organizing and leading the Hopkins Street Chapel, a Unitarian congregation and debate club, until its eventual closure in 1828.²⁰ Under Wedderburn's leadership, the Hopkins Street Chapel debates often focused on questions of slave resistance and strategies of revolt, an undertaking deeply alarming to government sponsored spies who infiltrated the meetings (McCalman 3). When Wedderburn urged that slaves have a right to massacre their masters, for instance, he was prosecuted for blasphemy and sentenced to two years in Dorchester Prison.²¹ While serving his sentence,

Wedderburn received a sympathetic visit from abolitionist William Wilberforce. Because of Wedderburn's unrespectability, he never became actively associated with the British abolition movement.²² He was prosecuted multiple times for his various expressions of political radicalism, religious heterodoxy, and petty crime. New archival research has also revealed that in 1831, near the end of his life, Wedderburn appears to have travelled to New York City, where he was implicated in a fraud case (Chase). The *New York Evening Star* covered the case and provides a comprehensive list of Wedderburn's crimes as a social outcast, referring to him as "a tailor and breeches maker, field preacher, anti-bank deposite politician, romance writer, circulating librarian, and ambulating dealer in drugs, deism, and demoralization in general" (January 6, 1834). Shortly thereafter, Wedderburn evidently returned to London, where he last appears in the archive in March 1834, when London surveillance records indicate that he was in attendance at a debate at the Theobald's Road Institute (Chase). Wedderburn probably died in 1835 or 1836 (Chase).²³ His early history under the shadow of a slave society in Jamaica and his experiences in an indigent and disruptive London underworld continually left him on the margins of respectable society. Nevertheless, we see that his life and activities remain unusually well documented. It is through his own autobiographical writings, as well as through newspaper accounts of his trials and British surveillance reports, that we possess records of Wedderburn's life and political activism.²⁴

Given this history of unruly resistance to so many forms of authority – including the sexual predations of Caribbean slave society, the legal economic networks and infrastructures of British imperialism, and political repressions and economic hardships of postwar Europe – Wedderburn fervently believed that he had inherited his rebellious disposition from his mother, maternal grandmother, and paternal grandfather, suggesting that the future revolution he envisioned had

survived in him as a queer, embodied legacy of genealogy and kinship. He recalls, for instance, that his mother frequently responded with anger to her ill-treatment by James Wedderburn, and maintained that she passed that temperament on to her son:

I have not the least doubt but that from her rebellious and violent temper during that period, that I have inherited the same disposition – the same desire to see justice overtake the oppressors of my countrymen – and the same determination to lose no stone unturned, to accomplish so desirable an object. (48)

Wedderburn openly reads his “rebellious and violent” temperament as a legacy of Caribbean sexual tyranny, experiences that were so thoroughly evaded in Mary Prince’s *History* (see chapter three). By insistently foregrounding his mother and grandmother’s abuse, he implies the revolutionary future he foresees is incited by this matrilineal heritage. In this way, he taps into a dynamic extensively explored by Marlene Daut in *Tropics of Haiti* (2015), who argues that many nineteenth-century narratives of the Haitian Revolution featured mixed-raced protagonists seeking vengeance from “colonial fathers” refusing to “recognize or pass down to them the rights of citizenship” (4).

It is perhaps because of this dispossessed inheritance that Wedderburn found himself so moved by Thomas Spence (1750-1814), a working class English radical born in Newcastle, who advocated for common land ownership administrated through local parish systems after witnessing the threatened enclosure of Newcastle’s Town Moor in 1771. Spence, who moved to London in 1787, kept a book-stall in High Holborn, and participated in and led various radical organizations and initiatives until his death in 1814.²⁵ Offering what Iain McCalman has called a “secular revolutionary” politics, Spence merged radical political ideas and millenarian imagery to form a revolutionary “plan” to reform practices of ownership and possession, drawing in

particular on the scriptural tenet, “the earth was given to the children of men” throughout his writings (65). After 1801, Spence routinely circulated “his land-reforming ideas through tavern free-and-easies,” small, informal gatherings that did not often come to the attention of a pervasive and growing culture of governmental surveillance (McCalman 18).

Wedderburn became involved in these gatherings in the 1810s, and probably joined the Society of Spencean Philanthropists in October 1814 after its re-organization by Thomas Spence’s successor, Thomas Evans.²⁶ As we have seen, Wedderburn was influenced by an alternative account of juridical inheritance and agrarian communalism imagined by the Spenceans – that “the earth was given to the children of men” – which continually appears in Wedderburn’s writings and in spy reports of his speeches.²⁷ Although historians and critics such as Iain McCalman and David Worrell have done extensive and much-needed work situating Wedderburn’s revolutionary politics within a London underworld of radical thought and tactics, I want to examine more closely how Wedderburn alters several implications of Spence’s radical agrarianism to form a Caribbean-inflected archive of inheritance that will become crucial for reading Wedderburn’s histories of the Haitian Revolution, Caribbean spirituality (especially Obeah), and Maroon resistance.²⁸ In a subtle but important revision of Spence, Wedderburn in the *Axe Laid to the Root* entrenches his conception of a radical inheritance within a form of dwelling marked by *tenancy*, rather than *possession*. In doing so, Wedderburn complicates Enlightenment relationships between kinship, inheritance, and property-ownership, and draws from alternative scriptural articulations of social arrangements to imagine an anticolonial future where property does not exist.

Spence’s political platform, elaborated in the late 1790s and early 1800s, was relatively simple: he called for a redistribution of land to be held in common, equating communal property

ownership with popular sovereignty. Spence's "Plan," as laid out in such pamphlets as *A Supplement to the History of Robinson Crusoe* (1782), *The Rights of Man* (1793), *The End of Oppression* (1795), and *The Rights of Infants* (1796) and in periodicals like *Pig's Meat* (1793), refined and elaborated on this basic principle of communal agrarianism. His plan was extensive and wide-reaching: he called for the end of aristocracy and landlords, the public ownership of land by democratic, self-governing parishes, equal payments of land rents, universal suffrage (including female suffrage) at both the parish level and through a system of deputies elected by parishes to a national senate, a "social guarantee" extended to provide income for those unable to work, and the "rights of infants" to be free from abuse and poverty (Worrall 1-3; McCalman 1-8). Echoing this commitment to an abolition of private property, Wedderburn gives a detailed overview of Spencean doctrine in the first issue of the *Axe Laid to the Root*, whose early appearance in the periodical suggests how significant Spence's radical agrarianism was as a foundation for Wedderburn's own political ideas:

The Spenceans presume that the earth cannot be justly the private property of individuals, because it was never manufactured by man; therefore, whoever first sold it, sold that which was not his own, and of course there cannot be a title deed produced consistent with natural and universal justice. (84)

Wedderburn's summary of Spence's guiding principles constitutes a sustained assault on the relationship between property ownership and civil society, especially as clarified in Locke's *Second Treatise on Government*. Locke, as we might recall, evades scriptural tenets when he describes the evolution of a state of nature to civil society: "It is very clear, that God ... 'has given the earth to the children of men,' given it to mankind in common. But this being supposed, it seems to some a very great difficulty how any one should ever come to have a property in any

thing” (111). Wedderburn contests this move, not through a proto-Marxian argument that laborers (such as indigent craftsman like Wedderburn, or the millions of slaves in the New World) remain alienated from the products of their labor, but because the earth itself was not “manufactured by man.” Wedderburn brings geological insight to bear on his political formulation of justice that follows in the rest of the passage. The physical terrain of the earth’s surface remains for Wedderburn beyond human capacity to assemble or fundamentally alter.²⁹ This crucial geophysical limit on labor and manufacturing potential inspires the radicalism of the passage. On the one hand, for Wedderburn civil society ultimately derives from God as a divine gift shared equally by all members of the community. Private property, on the other hand, leaves no paper trail – no archive – “consistent with natural and universal justice,” an earthly formulation of juridical ethics parallel to the planetary scope of Wedderburn’s rejection of labor as the originary and fictional event of property ownership and self-possession (84).

If Wedderburn’s account of Spence’s Plan invokes “natural and universal” law to protest an economics that binds labor to property (a system that dispossess many), he also insists that the Spencean system corrects imperfect Old Testament economies.³⁰ As he continues in the first installment of the *Axe Laid to the Root*: “The Spenceans recommend a division of rents, in preference to a division of lands: – as Moses’s system failed. Spence’s plan is an improvement upon that system which came from heaven. It admits no mortgages; it needs no jubilee” (85). Wedderburn’s invocation of Moses functions as an implied rebuke to God’s sovereign justice as expressed in a legal code that “came from heaven.” Wedderburn argues that Mosaic law, while more egalitarian than a contemporary European economy of primitive accumulation and industrial expansion, still remains deeply flawed because it materially divides what cannot be divided – land. By allocating the earth among tribes and families, Mosaic law requires what we

might call a periodic eschatological event to restore economic equality – a jubilee. In Leviticus 25:8-12, the jubilee inaugurates a sacred time where all debts are forgiven, all prisoners and slaves are freed, and all agricultural labor is suspended:

You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land ... and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you.

The Levitical jubilee resets history in a Benjaminian present where the everyday economic catastrophes that overwhelm persons and families are erased.³¹ Wedderburn, on the other hand, insists that the alternative arrangements of social relationships with the earth announced by Spence requires no jubilee because the underlying cause of land dispossession never gains historical momentum.

More importantly, Wedderburn resists connecting land ownership to ownership in flesh, an economic logic that invites a radically different account of an earthly commons from the slave societies of the Caribbean. He urges the Jamaican slaves who are his explicit audience: “When you are exhorted to hold the land, and never give it up to your oppressors, you are not told to hold it as private property, but as tenants at will to the sovereignty of the people” (83).³² By referring to the freed slaves as “tenants,” Wedderburn urges a particular kind of dwelling in the world, one that echoes philosopher Michel Serres, who in *Malfeasance: Appropriation through*

Pollution? (2010) argues that to “practice ... the dispossession of the world” is, at its core, to practice a form of “tenancy” (73). For Serres, this encompasses a recognition that “we live as transients or tenants, deprived of a fixed abode” (20).³³ In Serres’s account of earthly dispossession, practicing tenancy resists forms of life that contribute to communal poverty and environmental degradation. As such, tenancy constitutes more than a practice. For Serres, it becomes a kind of liturgical awareness. Attuned to this form of dwelling’s liturgical resonances, Anahid Nersessian calls Serres’s tenancy “an almost penitential practice of not simply minimizing but actively relinquishing our real and metaphysical stakes in the appropriation of a planetary environment” (80). In Wedderburn’s formulation, this environmental awareness would necessarily include not just land appropriation and exhaustion, but also the bodies consumed by exploitative and wasteful colonial economies, a legacy of bodily degradation he believed he had inherited. Rather than enacting a recurring jubilee to atone for the economic catastrophes of the past, then, Wedderburn’s earthly prophetics entrench communal sovereignty within an everyday messianism of tenancy, to a form of dwelling that *can* continue into the future because it resists what he perceives as the devastating momentum of property ownership and the laying waste of bodies and lands in New World slave economies.

It is Wedderburn’s conception of sovereignty as tenancy within a specifically Caribbean imaginary that constitutes his most significant departure from Spence. However, this may not be clearly evident until we turn to moments where Spence invokes New World discovery and colonialism as part of his radical political imaginary. His short pamphlet *A Supplement to the History of Robinson Crusoe* (1782) envisions a Caribbean utopia, called “Crusonia,” that functions as a radical epilogue to Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and was envisioned by Spence to form part of a larger project for working-class education and reform.³⁴ Spence

structures the narrative as a dialogue between two figures, an unnamed English “Captain” and a resident of Crusonia, only denoted “Mann.” As the mouthpiece for Spencean doctrine, Mann could function as a representative of “Everyman,” or, more intriguingly, as an avatar of Crusoe’s indigenous servant, sometimes called “Man Friday” in *Robinson Crusoe*. Mann narrates for the Captain the history of the island once extended colonization commenced after Crusoe is rescued. Crusoe and Friday become iconographic figures mediating the new history of sovereignty within Spence’s utopic Crusonia:

This puts me in mind to tell you of the names given to this famous island, and these are Cruson or Crusonia, from Robinson Crusoe, the founder of the empire; and the inhabitants Crusons or Crusonians. They likewise have [Crusoe], poor fellow, upon all their standards, ensigns, flags, etc. just as represented on the frontispiece of his history ... They name the continent, which they have colonized, Fridinea, from his Man Friday, because it was his country, but this is only a provincial name, to distinguish the continent, from the island, for the general name, of the whole nation, both on the island and continent, is the United Parishes of Crusonia (10).

Mann here imagines a utopian state grounded in an iconography that draws from both Crusoe and Friday. The fact that Friday’s name contributes to this geography potentially includes Caribbean indigenous culture within Spence’s egalitarian and agrarian re-imagining of sovereignty – it was “his” *and* Friday’s “country.”

Nevertheless, while the familiar tenets of Spence’s radical agrarian communalism structure island governance as “united parishes,” his deployment of the Crusoe narrative is, to say the least, a potentially counter-productive choice. In Defoe’s novel, Crusoe does not *ask* Friday’s name, he *gives* him one, and bestows a new name on himself in the process: “And first I made

him know his Name should be *Friday*, which was the Day I sav'd his Life; I call'd him so for the Memory of the Time; I likewise taught him to say *Master*, and then let him know, that was to be my Name" (149). Friday's new name recalls his enslavement through its link to Crusoe's new name of "Master," a history retained in Spence's text when he calls Crusoe the "founder of an empire." Although Crusoe's naming of Friday purportedly testifies to Crusoe's rescue of Friday from the "cannibals," attentive readers may recall that Friday's name results in a curious archival error. When Crusoe finally leaves the island, he discovers that the calendar he has been using to mark days is mistaken, meaning Crusoe did not save Friday's life *on* a Friday (Prewett Brown 36). Given the vagaries of Crusoe's temporal record-keeping, Spence's complementary cartographic imagination in "A Supplement" retains and embeds histories of indigenous dispossession and slavery within a new agrarian communal order in the Caribbean because Crusonia's very naming practices archive those histories.

In Spence's utopic Caribbean geography, the tension between colonial and radical agrarian political imaginaries is captured in a statement near the end of the dialogue, when Mann proclaims: "You could not in any country possess a place more properly" (9). As with the retention of Friday's name, Mann's use of "possess" is unsettling. What does it mean to "possess a place"? How is a land to be "properly" (ethically? juridically? politically?) possessed, especially in the historical present of European discovery, colonial expansion, and the genocides of slavery and indigenous displacement? Wedderburn's own invocation of "tenancy" rather than "possession" implies that every arrangement of ownership, even one significantly redefined in Spence's radical agrarian communalism, remains accountably to histories of slavery and colonialism. In Wedderburn's summary of Spencean doctrine in the *Axe Laid to the Root*, he

situates histories of Caribbean possession by European imperial powers within a genealogy of “force”:

I must inform you of one Thomas Spence, who knew that the earth was given to the children of men, making no difference for colour or character, just or unjust; and that any person calling a piece of land his own private property, was a criminal; and though they may sell it, or will it to their children, it is only transferring of that which was first obtained by force or fraud. (82)

The colonial genealogy of “force [and] fraud” is a legacy that Wedderburn’s own inheritance of a revolutionary temperament contests. In Wedderburn’s account of Spencean agrarianism, we are left with glimpses of two separate, unfolding histories – one an imperial order grounded in property and “proper” possession, and one a migrant and insurgent form of tenant life.

For Wedderburn, the “earth was given to the children of men” became a peculiarly resonant protest, not just because of his early history in the Caribbean or his further radicalization of Spence’s agrarian communalism, but because of his own experiences as an impoverished father. Wedderburn’s prophetic persona limns radical futurity through models of inheritance, either inflected by his own kinship lines or by a political genealogy that reads the earth as an inheritable gift from God. As with much of Wedderburn’s prophetic vision, we are confronted with the limits of inheritance as an eschatological imaginary. Wedderburn probably had a family, although we are not sure of their names and histories. In one of its only appearances in the archive, his family allusively emerges in one of his last written texts, his late autobiography *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824), where Wedderburn recalls how he applied to his Scottish half-brother, Andrew Colville, for assistance in a time of “extreme distress.” “I was out of work and

my wife lying in,” Wedderburn recalls (59). Wedderburn’s justifies his appeal to kin by invoking another Old Testament model of inheritance described in Deuteronomy 21:15-17:

If a man have two wives, one beloved and another hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the first-born son be hers that was hated; Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved first-born before the sons of the hated ... But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the first-born, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath. (Wedderburn 59)

Wedderburn was given nothing by his brother and was threatened by his father when he made a similar request.³⁵ We may never know what happened to his wife and child, or if the radical line of inheritance Wedderburn read as a legacy of his mother and grandparents continued into his own family’s future.

The Present Time of the Colony

Wedderburn’s kinship relations informed his broader understanding of systemically disrupted histories, which he incorporated into his account of a contracted present that awaits a future revolution, what I am calling “the present time of the colony.” Wedderburn’s heterodox prophetics work to encode certain spiritual habits, or reiterative appeals to spiritual power, in order to enable and illuminate ways of surviving and resisting colonial sovereignties.³⁶ If Wedderburn’s invocation of tenancy functions as a practice for earthly dwelling in the future, then his sense of a “time fast approaching” marks a way of inhabiting the present, of enduring in the *Jetztzeit* of the colony’s imminent end. The performative remnants of Wedderburn’s prophetic denouncements of colonial time appears even in his earliest work, his contentious

theological pamphlet *The Truth Self-Supported*, a text that lays the theological groundwork for conceiving a spiritually heterodox historical rupture. In *The Truth Self-Supported* (1802), Wedderburn brought a keen spiritual awareness to his account of history's disrupted (and disrupting) unfolding during the time of the colony, and (more specifically) often understood his conversion as an interruption of everyday experience by divine power. Given that Wedderburn, as Iain McCalman reminds us, converted to Wesleyan Methodism several decades before he became involved in radical politics, it is not perhaps surprising that Wedderburn would often mediate his earthly prophetics through his reconfigurations of Methodist spiritual practices (McCalman 50). My reading of Wedderburn therefore participates in recent work retrieving arrangements of popular Methodist insurgency and rebelliousness, especially in Britain and colonial America.³⁷ By turning to Wedderburn's encounters with evangelicalism in its singularity, moreover, I want to suggest that Wedderburn carries (and adapts) the experience of Methodist conversion into practices for anticolonial resistance in the Caribbean. He imagines that resistance as a kind of liturgically-enacted temporal pause, where the speech of the prophet mediates sacral authority and declares the arrival of "universal" revolution (Wedderburn 86). The time of personal conversion can initiate the time of global revolt. Misty G. Anderson, for instance, has examined how what she calls "the event of Methodist conversion" summoned an interruption of "divine presence into historical time and an individual consciousness that threatened both to reveal the self and yet, in the process, to change it" (4).³⁸ Wedderburn describes his conversion to Wesleyan Methodism early in *The Truth Self-Supported* as a rupture in his account of self-perception and as a prelude to a more extensive dislocation of evangelical doctrine, which Wedderburn undertakes in the rest of the pamphlet. While walking in an impoverished district of London, Wedderburn describes hearing a Methodist street preacher

calling for repentance: “Passing the Seven-Dials one Lord’s day, the author stopped to hear a preacher of Mr. Westley’s connection. The words that he spoke, struck his mind with strong conviction of the awful state he was in, both by nature and practice . . . and he was enabled, by the Holy Spirit, to accept with joy, the offered Grace” (66). Wedderburn perhaps most overtly suggests this rupture through the third person mediation, a rhetorical move that separates the conversion event from his own attempt to narrate it. Wedderburn, furthermore, frames the spiritual encounter between himself and the discursive horizon of the Wesleyan preacher as a kind of physical accosting – the preacher’s “words” forcefully “struck his mind” and, through the intervention of the Holy Spirit, the state of his soul was revealed to him. Wedderburn does not linger long within this space of self-reflection on guilt. In the rest of *The Truth Self Supported*, he scrutinizes what he understands as corrupted Christian history and ecclesiology. In later works, furthermore, he will target a communal guilt, one provoked by the practice of slavery, as a far more devastating legacy of European settler colonialism across the Atlantic world.

More particularly for *The Truth Self Supported*, Wedderburn implies that the horizons of colonial bodily degradation and disrupted inheritance he would describe so thoroughly in his more autobiographical works emerge as a political implication of orthodox narratives of the atonement. He fervently argues that ecclesiastical authorities have misread Christ’s original soteriological undertaking. The pamphlet targets what Wedderburn identifies as three distortions within Christian theology and practice: the divinity of Christ, a substitutionary (or sacrificial) version of atonement, and arrangements of ecclesiastical authority. Although it may be difficult now to recognize the radical nature of Wedderburn’s evaluation of traditional Christian doctrine, the scope of his critiques have profound implications for his understanding of Christ’s unfolding sovereignty in the present. In detailing his rejection of Trinitarian doctrine, for instance,

Wedderburn turns to the Bible to support his claim: “The author rejects the doctrine of the Trinity as an error, for the Scriptures assert *ONE GOD*” (69). By utilizing scripture as the founding text of his critique, as we have seen in his invocations of the Levitical jubilee and of a “hated son’s” inheritance, Wedderburn depicts the Bible as a radical archive, linking it to other moments in his career when the Old and New Testaments are used to justify his revolutionary politics. This insurgent spiritual energy becomes peculiarly apparent when Wedderburn turns to doctrines of Christ’s work of atonement and penitential practices framed by his death. Because Wedderburn does not believe in Christ’s divinity, he also rejects his resurrection from the dead, arguing that any model of salvation that takes seriously scriptural assertions of Christ’s humanity must also acknowledge his mortality:

It is generally taught by professors of the present age, that, the atonement of Christ, was to satisfy the Justice of God – the assertion is unscriptural, – they also assert, that, God could not be reconciled to a sinner without his justice was satisfied by the death of Christ – this is also contrary to scripture; the word atonement signifies *covering* – so, the atonement of Christ, is, for the use of the awakened sinner, who sees himself exposed to the judgement of God, and who would despair, were it not for this Covering, or City of Refuge – it is a fact, though strange, that the Spirit directs the awakened sinner to this DEAD MAN, as an Hiding-place, and there, he experiences such safety, that his fears are calmed. (71)

Wedderburn opens his attack by targeting what he believes is a misunderstanding of the work of salvation – specifically, a “substitutionary” (in the jargon of theologians) model of the atonement where Christ dies as a “substitute” for the sins of the world, thereby “satisfying” God’s sovereign justice.³⁹ Substitutionary atonement is, as Slavoj Žižek argues, an eminently “legalistic” approach to understanding the atonement, and reads the work of the cross as payment for sin as a

kind of “debt” (102). Wedderburn argues that Christ’s work of atonement is not directed towards assuaging God’s divine wrath but towards calming the fear of the “awakened sinner.” In what is a deeply psychological reading of salvation, Wedderburn renders the sinner as one who perceives that she is guilty and “exposed to judgment,” and may hide from God *in* Christ.

It is at this moment, however, that Wedderburn’s rhetoric shifts from psycho-theological critique. He calls it a “fact, though strange” that sinners are covered by Christ, suggesting that what follows marks a border of personal belief for him. He names Christ the “DEAD MAN” and singularly imagines salvation through the intercession of a (un-resurrected) corpse. Christ *as* corpse covers the “awakened sinner” who is “dead to sin” but “alive in Christ,” in Wedderburn’s unsettling alteration of Paul’s language (Rom. 6:11).⁴⁰ In Wedderburn’s idiom of redemptive embodiment, the individual sinner clothes herself *within* Christ’s bodily remains, safely sheltered from God’s wrath. What Wedderburn imagines is that the time of atonement is a time of death, when the abrupt conclusion of Christ’s life on earth paradoxically enables a new relationship to eternity for the “awakened sinner.” When Wedderburn expands the register of mortal embodiment to a broader practice of communal inhabitation, what he calls a “City of Refuge” or the “Hiding-Place,” Christ’s bodily remains become a city of the dead, where the congregation of “awakened sinners” survives through the death of Christ. Within the scope of his messianic prophetics, what Wedderburn offers in *The Truth Self Supported* is an inversion of a messianic redemption of history, where the only way to truly “wake the dead” – as Benjamin’s angel of history wished to do – is to be covered by the corpse of the Messiah, whose coming was (and is again in the future) meant to atone for sin, but whose bodily remains are only a “Hiding-Place” for those living in a violent present.⁴¹ Whatever resurrection history Wedderburn foretells for the future is thus always already marked by the singular death of the mortal son of God. Christ’s

death incorporates God as father within the devastated genealogies Wedderburn spends so much time accounting for in the *Axe Laid to the Root* and *The Horrors of Slavery*, and suggests that the dispossessed have a spiritual resource in a divine familial tragedy that ends in the irrevocable death of a son.

If Christ's death stalls the theological present of salvation, I want to suggest, further, that we see Wedderburn's prophetic disruption of the present time of the colony in surveillance records, which not only mediate traces of Wedderburn's recourse to multiple spiritual traditions (such as Obeah, evangelical Methodism, Judaism, or other radical prophetic movements), but also archive oral and embodied characteristics of Wedderburn's prophetic practices. In surveillance reports, we not only possess records of Wedderburn's speeches, if recorded for reasons of governmental hostility and paranoia, but also tantalizing details of how he may have moved and interacted with his listeners. Such details foreground the critical significance of Caribbean bodies within Wedderburn's performatively rendered prophetics. Throughout the 1810s and 1820s, Wedderburn's heterodox performances at the Hopkins Street Chapel in London work to reiteratively habituate spiritual and political power in order to enable and illuminate ways of surviving and resisting colonial sovereign violence. We see this dynamic at work particularly in surveillance records, which not only mediate Wedderburn's recourse to multiple spiritual and millenarian traditions, but also archive traces of the oral and embodied characteristics of Wedderburn's prophetic practices. Although circulated through the infrastructures of state hostility and paranoia, nineteenth-century surveillance descriptions of Wedderburn's speeches contain evocative details of how he may have moved and interacted with his listeners. British surveillance records display a hyper-awareness for how Wedderburn's denunciations of

colonial temporal sovereignty and warnings of a spiritual insurgence infiltrate the London underworld.

Within the horizon of his radical activism, Wedderburn's condemnations of Christian hypocrisy inspire the heterodox tactics he applies to Caribbean resistance of the colonial order. Wedderburn consistently refused to imagine a Caribbean unmarked by Afro-Caribbean spiritual and political expressions. During a November debate at the Hopkins Street Chapel, for instance, Wedderburn responded to the topic, "which is the greater crime, for the wesleyan Missionaries to preach up passive obedience to the poor Black Slaves in the west Indies, or, to extort from them at the rate of 18, 0-0-0 per annum, under pretence of supporting the gospel" (126). The spy relates that Wedderburn replied to the topic with an excess of blasphemous language:

As soon as the question was given out Wedderburn came forward and addressed himself to the chairman and the two West Indian Blacks which were invited last night by Wedderburn and that they might expose the villainy of our church and State by Sending out those vipers of Church Missionaries to suck the blood of the poor innocent Blacks in the West Indies and make them believe the great God was with them but instead of God it was the devil and the Missionaries that was sent from London by the Secretary of State for the Home department and for no other motives than to extort money for by the great Wesleyans pretending to preach the Gospel to poor devils and passive obedience to the planters there masters, and these villains as he terms them are not a bit better than a theif that robs for his bread. (126-7)

According to the spy, Wedderburn employs visceral images of heterodox liturgy – of a transubstantiation where "poor innocent Blacks" offer their blood in a harrowing parody of the

Eucharistic feast – to create a version of colonial oppression as a form of demonic sovereignty. Jamaica becomes a fraught space where spiritual belief and expression cloak economic extortion, which Wedderburn persistently inverts. By claiming that Wesleyan missionaries “pretend to preach the gospel,” he renders their work a theatrical performance, or an empty rite. While the visceral images of the speech claim that imperialism demonizes sacramental rite, Wedderburn’s overt staging of the scene is also significant. The spy’s comment that Wedderburn “invited two West Indian blacks” to the debate in order to “expose the villainy of our church and state” reveals that if missionary and state activity sent “by the Secretary of State for the Home department” *to* the Caribbean, indigenous and African-descended peoples – and their radical political practices and spiritual orientations – also migrate from colony *to* metropole. What Wedderburn renders is a radical cohort whose “blasphemous” rhetorical positionings and gestures performatively unmask the perverse core of colonial missionary activity.

If the previous spy report depicts missionary activity as a pernicious inversion of liturgical practice, another surveillance record from that same month offers a more extended sense of how Wedderburn imagined a revolutionary present transfigured by a heterodox prophetic performance that roves between multiple figures. Rather than focusing on the “blood-sucking” of Methodist missionary projects, this speech moves between three speakers – a black preacher, a radical Jew, and a British prophet – to form a political radicalism out of disparate spiritual traditions and archives across the Atlantic:

[Wedderburn] began his discourse about Blacks in Jamaica and said that a black who had a chapel at Kingston who preached to the slaves that all men were Christians ought to be free they pulled down his Chapel and put him in prison and sent to know whether he was free

his master did set him free at sixteen then they said that it was not lawful to be set free before twenty and on[c]e however he got out of prison and being determined to preach no one would allow him ground to build a Chapel upon but a Jew who did not believe in him [Christ] and said that as their Government was sanctioned by the Princes and his ministers they ought to be made way with ... for it is said in scripture that he that stealeth a man and selleth him ought to be put to death and that the missionaries dare not preach that and another sentence in Jamaica Do not own yourselves masters and that he did not think on him so much his enemy as Government who were looking at him open mouthed ready to devour him or emprison him as they did Richard Brothers who had preached for years but when he began to launch out against government they had him confined as a madman.⁴²

In this extraordinary speech, Wedderburn associates the politically charged sermon of the Caribbean preacher, that “all men were Christians ought to be freed,” with his status as a free man and to the material presence of the heterodox chapel. In this moment, both the Caribbean preacher, who speaks to and for a community, and the chapel, which formalizes a free space within a slave society, become signs illuminating the presence of spiritual attachments that point to alternative ways of living. The chapel marks a peculiarly resonant instantiation of emancipatory utterance and spiritual freedom within the social geography of Jamaica in that Wedderburn refuses to close his narrative with only the resistant speech of the Caribbean preacher. Instead, he links the condition of Jamaican slaves to that of Jewish communities in the Caribbean, suggesting he may have wished to emphasize that a cross-religious coalition could emerge in the Caribbean to carry on the work of his radical project.⁴³ The Jew in Wedderburn’s story is a revolutionary, uttering an imminent prophecy of state overthrow under a pressing sign of a juridical ethics – it “ought to be made away with.” He grounds his revolutionary claim, in

other words, within a reading of the Old Testament: “for it is said in scripture that he that stealeth a man and selleth him ought to be put to death.”⁴⁴ Sacred text performed in a cross-spiritual, cross-racial space exerts a tremendous pressure on the present, enabling the past – and spiritual traditions that spans millennia – to rupture colonial temporal sovereignties.

If the radical Jew summons the past as a temporal eruption of minority juridical ethics in the colonial spaces of the Caribbean, the continuation of the spy report takes the question of spiritually-enabled revolution directly to the metropole. Wedderburn concludes his story of the Caribbean preacher and the radical Jew by invoking the millenarian British prophet Richard Brothers, a contemporary of Wedderburn, who claimed in the second book of *A Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies & Times, Particularly of the Present Time, the Present War, and the Prophecy Now Fulfilling* (1794) that a remnant of the diasporic Jews, who have “descended of Israel,” endured in Britain.⁴⁵ Brothers, furthermore, announced the imminent ruin of British imperial rule, and the coming of a new global order: “A little time longer, and England will be so much entangled as not to be able to go forward without feeling the pains of the *Colonial Conquest* which is to be the cause of her death; nor to retire, without falling under that foreign blow, which will break the Empire in pieces” (22; emphasis original). Brother’s *Revealed Knowledge* emphasizes what Mary Favret calls the “embattled present” of his prophetic work, where Brothers’s “a little time longer,” as with Wedderburn’s “time fast approaching,” reads the present of colonial time as inescapably ensnared, trapped by the pressing financial and military commitments of transcontinental and transatlantic war (88). Indeed, Wedderburn and Brothers’s prophetic denunciations of colonial time suggest that the roots of what Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt call the “time of empire” emerging in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are already emergent in early nineteenth-century Caribbean temporal arrangements. Although Negri

and Hardt argue that empire seeks to eschatologically imagine itself as remaining “outside of history or at the end of history,” Brothers’s account of colonial time understands it as caught in a temporal morass, as a history “entangled” and unable to proceed towards a sustainable future (xv). Through the mediation of the spy report, Wedderburn localizes Brothers’s account of colonial time within the space of this demolished Jamaican chapel. His allusion to Brothers’s ministry might have recalled for his listeners Brothers’s exhortation to rethink one’s spiritual relationship to nation and land in order to recognize the spiritually-illuminated remnant who will inherit the future. Wedderburn’s heterodox polyvocality of the Caribbean preacher, the radical Jew, and the British prophet in the spy report mediates a Caribbean performance archive with revolutionary political potential. In these roles, however, the three figures do not rest comfortably together: Brothers’s spiritual epiphany appropriates and elides historical Jewish culture but is itself overshadowed by the presence of the Jewish revolutionary in the narrative. What a deep reading of surveillance records would suggest, nevertheless, is that the prophetic registers of Wedderburn’s heterodox discourse, when inflected by the migrant spiritualities and performance archives of the Caribbean, are central to his project for imagining the “time fast approaching” of revolutionary transformation.

Wedderburn ultimately pulled together the threads of migrant peoples, texts, and spiritual practices (noted across so many of the surveillance records reporting his radical movements), as well as his sense of the imminent end of empire, in precise moments in the *Axe Laid to the Root*. In any early issue of the periodical, for instance, he warned his readers:

The free Mulattoes are reading Cobbett’s Register, and talking about St. Domingo: a great many of the Spaniards fled here, you must know, and brought their favourite slaves with them from St. Domingo, and the young men of Jamaica go amongst them, so they know

the cause of their masters' coming to Jamaica. The slaves begin to talk that if their masters were Christians they would not hold them in slavery any longer than seven years, for that is the extent of the law of Moses. The planters' look frightened the slaves know what it is about, they dare not speak, nor smile, for they would be hung for suspected conspiracy.

(108)

Wedderburn emphatically reads the time of empire's end in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. For Wedderburn, empires end because the very temporal-spatial arrangements of imperialism, particularly its networks of ideas, texts, and peoples, can also be used by the oppressed to circulate insurgency.⁴⁶ Wedderburn not only refers to both William Cobbett's *Political Register*, a polemical and often radical periodical, and to European refugees and slaves fleeing from Haiti to Jamaica, but he also invokes egalitarian spiritual imperatives, such as the Levitical Jubilee, as catalysts for a messianic revolutionary momentum, underscored in Wedderburn's terse account of the slaves' growing radical awareness: "The slaves *begin* to talk" (108). Wedderburn ends with an emphasis on the affective and embodied reserves of slaves who practice a waiting game, who live in a suspended present that anticipates the widespread advent of a revolution that has not yet begun. This suspended present is still a conspiratorial "now" witnessed in the shadowed events of their whispered communication and communion. For now, for the present, in order to evade the spectacular sovereign punishments of a paranoid and "frightened" plantocracy, triggered by the barest hints of "suspected conspiracy" in the facial expressions and language of slaves and "free Mulattoes," Wedderburn teaches his correspondents how to live – how to survive – by pretending that the time of the colony is not about to end. Wedderburn, a veteran by this point of radical activism in the underworld of London, thus recognizes two contingent but interconnected "beginnings" that will inaugurate a

revolutionary present: the everyday circulations of radical expression (pragmatically concealed by a performance of pretense), and the outbreak of widespread, cataclysmic insurrection.

The Future Remnant

If Wedderburn's account of a colonial present prompts a surplus of prophetic performance practices, where he roves between voicing a Caribbean preacher, and Jewish radical, and a British prophet, once he turns to a horizon of future revolution, he focuses on the spiritual and political resources needed to enact an antiracist and anticolonial order. In *The Axe Laid to the Root*, for instance, Wedderburn encourages his readers to practice fidelity to the event of the Haitian Revolution, and provides his clearest assertion that the work of the Haitian Revolution remains incomplete as a global possibility because Haiti as a nation itself is threatened by European imperial expansion: "You will have need of all your strength to defend yourself against those men, who are now scheming in Europe against the blacks of St. Domingo" (90). Against present "schemes" to retake Haiti, Wedderburn turns to Caribbean social practices – Obeah, marronage, and fugitivity – to offer spiritual and political resources for contesting colonialism in local, everyday sites of resistance. More importantly, he primarily depicts women performing these social practices, particularly his female kin, including Talkee Amy and his half-sister, Miss Campbell. In this way, Wedderburn queers the precarious possibilities of the Haitian Revolution, and focuses on the intimately local contours of "the present time of the colony" through these female speakers. On the one hand, Wedderburn's gendered performances emerge from his profound conviction that freedom arrives when severely wounded bodies who, in the singularity of their local conditions, maintain fidelity to a communal and collaborative earthly tenancy. On

the other hand, Wedderburn's unflinching awareness that the extensive contingencies of internecine bloodshed and war, or age and illness, or poverty and starvation, or sexual violence and assault in the Caribbean will brutally diminish the communities awaiting or actively struggling for a new future, culminates in a tacit textual acknowledgement that only an endangered remnant (and certainly not the meek) will finally survive to inherit the earth.

Wedderburn explores the tensions between spiritual fortitude and fugitive performance practices against the landscape of Atlantic practices of punishment in *The Horrors of Slavery*. These passages work as a way to ground ethical justifications for widespread revolutionary vengeance against the everyday terrors of slavery. To do so, he relates some of the history of his grandmother and primary caretaker, Talkee Amy. He spends the most time on one incident in her history when she was "flogged for a witch by her master" – a brutal penalty Wedderburn witnessed as a child (49).⁴⁷ Wedderburn relates that Talkee Amy's master, "an old and avaricious merchant" named Joseph Payne, was "concerned in the smuggling trade" in Kingston, moving goods throughout the Caribbean and Central America (49). In one particular episode, Payne outfitted a vessel captained by a Welshman named Lloyd and operated by slaves to trade for mahogany in Honduras. According to Wedderburn, Payne suspected Lloyd of cheating him and accompanied Lloyd on the trip to Honduras. The ship was captured by Spanish privateers, who confiscated the slaves and the cargo, and sentenced Payne "to carry stones at Fort Homea, in the bay of Honduras, for a year and a day" (49). Payne, by then in his seventies, survived the imprisonment and forced labor, but "on his way home he died," and, as Wedderburn tersely recognizes as an Atlantic equivalent to earthly burial, "was tossed overboard to make food for fishes" (49). As the history unfolds, Wedderburn emphasizes that his grandmother's beating occurs within a slave culture that only conditionally tolerates Afro-Caribbean spiritual

attachments when convenient, and responds with spectacular rage when those practices are perceived to threaten social and economic order. He recalls that Payne's nephew, who inherited the business at his uncle's death, was persuaded:

that the ill-success of old Payne's adventures was owing to my grandmother's having bewitched the vessel. The old miser had liberated five of his slaves before he set out on his unlucky expedition; and my grandmother's new master being a believer in the doctrine of Witchcraft, conceived that my grandmother had bewitched the vessel out of revenge for her not being liberated also. To punish her, therefore, he tied up the poor old woman of seventy years and flogged her to that degree, that she would have died, but for the interference of a neighbour. Now, what aggravated the affair was, that my grandmother had brought up this young villain from eight years of age, and, till now, he had treated her as a mother. (49)

Wedderburn reads the event as a conflict between competing ethics of care. By framing Payne's capture and death as an "unlucky expedition," for instance, Wedderburn implicitly defends his grandmother from the charge of occult revenge, no doubt well aware that Obeah was most often practiced for healing and protection.⁴⁸ While Wedderburn scorns Payne's superstitious reading of Obeah as "witchcraft," the passage lingers on the human relationships disrupted by Payne and his nephew's avidity, cruelty, and paranoia. Wedderburn is particularly derisive of the nephew's disregard for the care Wedderburn's grandmother showed him as a child, situating his failure to reciprocate compassion within institutions of slavery that, as Saidiya Hartman reminds us in *Scenes of Subjection* (1996), used attachment to entrench "the terror of the mundane and quotidian" into everyday affective relations (4).⁴⁹

If this story renders his grandmother's punishment as a conflict between competing spiritual authorities and attitudes towards care, then Wedderburn's repeated insistence that revenge is an appropriate ethical response to the violences of slavery also deeply informs his sense of the resources necessary for an active prophetic of resistance. As the narrative ends, the spiritual registers shift between Obeah and Christianity as Wedderburn layers opposing sacred mandates for revenge and forgiveness in order to test their limits for relationships forged under the shadow of terror. He relates that his grandmother "could never forget the whipping," followed by his own responsive ethics to her punishment, where he fuses a Shylockian protest that the humanity of African-descended slaves be recognized to a refusal to accommodate himself to a horizon of forgiveness: "Hath not a slave feelings? If you starve them, will they not die? If you wrong them, will they not revenge?" (47-48). Here, Wedderburn echoes a prophetic jeremiad he earlier expressed in a scathing passage from the *Axe Laid to the Root*: "My heart glows with revenge, and cannot forgive. Repent ye christians, for flogging my aged grandmother before my face, when she was accused of witchcraft by a silly European" (86). While Wedderburn's depiction of Obeah (particularly the emphasis on cursing and revenge) traffics in British stereotypes of the spiritual practice, it resists representing Obeah as an object of scorn and ridicule, which Alan Richardson argues underscores most representations of Obeah after 1809 (186). Wedderburn draws on previous associations of Obeah in British Romantic writing, where Obeah often represented "political power," especially that of "slave rebellions and the incursions and revolts of West Indian Maroons" (173). By representing his grandmother's experiences as a conflict between spiritual authorities, Wedderburn explicitly disavows Christian penitential frameworks, where contrition should rouse clemency. Through his authority as a prophet of revolution

Wedderburn calls on “christians” to atone for colonial violence, while warning that mercy will not be offered in return.⁵⁰

Alongside his grandmother’s fugitive spiritual authority, Wedderburn also turns to Miss Campbell to imagine an anticolonial future announced by a woman. According to the *Axe Laid to the Root*, Miss Campbell is Wedderburn’s half-sister (possibly the child of his mother and her last owner, a Mr. Campbell) and the inheritor of a Jamaican plantation, even though one might imagine her gender and biracial heritage would in itself constitute a radical choice to manage a sugar plantation.⁵¹ Wedderburn, however, repeatedly depicts her as having Maroon ancestry, and argues that this heritage inspired her to emancipate the plantation. In this way, he closely ties her to Caribbean practices of fugitivity and to the Haitian Revolution, given that many, as Kamau Brathwaite reminds us, would have read the Haitian Revolution as “the greatest and most successful Maroon polity of them all” (231).⁵² Although a historical personage named Miss Campbell likely existed, Wedderburn probably ghost-wrote her letters in the *Axe Laid to the Root*. His act of narrative polyvocality might indicate that he wished to render his prophetic persona as a collaborative project formed by speakers from a range of subjectivities. Miss Campbell’s gender, race, and ancestry would by any measure have precluded her from having much of a presence in archived testimonies of resistance and revolt, and yet her role as a slaveowner may offer a coded response to this. Wedderburn’s prophetic vocalization of Miss Campbell recognizes that *as* a slaveowner her testimony is more likely to be preserved. In Wedderburn’s descriptions of Miss Campbell, then, he not only offers a script for “how to live,” but also for “how to *use*” unstable performance practices to enact a revolutionary opening for a restored future.

Wedderburn grounds his sense of Miss Campbell's fidelity to such vulnerable counter-archives within descriptions of an intimate ethic of care among African-descended households, an incitement for revolution that complements the vengeful momentum he summons when describing his grandmother's treatment by white slaveowners, and deeply connected to his sense of a rebellious inheritance passed through family lines. Wedderburn opens the fourth installment of the *Axe Laid to the Root* by reporting that Miss Campbell nursed their mother in her old age and freed their half-brother, John (96). Wedderburn sees in these local acts of devotion to kinship a revolutionary ethics of freedom that is "beyond the power of princes to imitate" (96). Indeed, by detailing Miss Campbell's efforts to serve her family and emancipate the plantation, Wedderburn credits her with inspiring him in his prophetic office:

Oh, Miss Campbell, the greatness of the deed has inspired me with a zeal to extend freedom beyond present conception: Yes, the slaves shall be free, for a multiplied combination of ideas, which amount to prophetic inspiration and the greatness of the work that I am to perform has influenced my mind with an enthusiasm, I cannot support: I must give vent. (96)

Wedderburn opens the possibilities of revolution with these seemingly small and local acts, where Miss Campbell's familial ethic of care inspires a global expansion of "freedom beyond present conception." He thus creates a prophetic image of emancipation that exceeds the boundaries of both contemporary political and legal practice and current philosophical frameworks for announcing freedom, which, as in the case of the Haitian Revolution, "entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened," as Michel-Rolph Trouillot has argued (73). By imagining Miss Campbell's actions as a version of revolution beyond "present conception," he renders her fidelity to familial care and local

emancipation a potentially just as “unthinkable,” if more intimate, resource for inciting revolutionary beginning.

In writing about an everyday “freedom beyond present conception,” furthermore, Wedderburn looks to models of fugitivity practiced throughout the Caribbean and the New World. He frequently speaks of Jamaican Maroon colonies in the *Axe Laid to the Root*, and connects these escapes from slavery to spiritual resources that prophetically enable counter political collectivities to materialize. Traditionally, historians and anthropologists have understood marronage to take two forms in the New World: *petite marronage*, a strategy of resistance where slaves temporarily fled the plantation, and *grand marronage*, an insurrectionary act where slaves left the plantation permanently. In the case of Jamaica and St. Domingue, slaves engaging in *grand marronage* often organized separate and self-contained colonies in the mountainous hinterlands (Campbell 34). Marronage not only constituted an alternative lived reality along the Atlantic littoral, but offered conceptual frameworks for imagining a new political order – especially under the auspice of revolutionary upheaval. Neil Roberts, for instance, in *Freedom as Marronage* (2015) contends that freedom emerges in the liminal and transitional space of fugitive flight. He identifies revolutionary longing and insurgency as forms of marronage that represent resistance to European codes of slavery, and, implicitly, conceptions of freedom that refuse to include African and African-descended peoples (12). Roberts, moreover, argues that the Haitian Revolution provides the emblematic historical instance of revolution *as* marronage (114-16).⁵³

Miss Campbell, through her capacity as a sovereign lawgiver within the plantation order, initially enables fugitive political arrangements to emerge and develop. In the sixth and final extant installment of the *Axe Laid to the Root*, Wedderburn directly voices Miss Campbell,

creating through this act of narrative polyvocality a revolutionary counter-archive for Caribbean resistance. A letter from her to Wedderburn encompasses the entire periodical installment, and manages to cover a range of familiar topics – references to Thomas Spence’s agrarian communalism, practices of Maroon fugitivity, and accounts of revolutionary beginnings. Miss Campbell – unsurprisingly, given Wedderburn’s authorship of the letter – initially registers her astonishment that powerful and seemingly well-informed British leaders have never heard or read Thomas Spence: “I was quite surprised to find that the good people of England were so much against the Spenceans” (107). As her letter unfolds, she resituates Spence’s radical agrarianism within a fugitive Caribbean archive, and argues that she understands Spencean doctrine *because* of her Maroon ancestry: “I, who am a weak woman, of the Marroon [sic] tribe, understood the Spencean doctrine directly: I heard of it, and obey, and the slaves felt the force directly” (107). Because of her gender and ancestry, Miss Campbell has a “direct” insight into Spence’s tenets, and reads his radical agrarian commitment as merely another form of fugitive practice, one that she is already intimately and instinctively familiar with. Miss Campbell continues by noting that her own insight emerges as a kind of affective knowledge that encompasses the enslaved community, who also “[feel] the force directly” (107). Wedderburn suggests that Spence’s earthly politics emerges as a radical framework that rehearses Caribbean marronage, and thus offers an alternative script for the origins of European radical agrarianism. Spence is, unknowingly, a Caribbean political theorist *par excellence*.

If Wedderburn employs the voice of Miss Campbell to root the teachings of Spence in the colonies, he uses her actions to continue his subtle critique of Spence, whose radical philosophy encounters certain limits when situated in the terrain of Caribbean plantocracies. In doing so, Wedderburn’s Miss Campbell relocates the mandate for his heterodox prophetics within

particular hermeneutic practices. Wedderburn initially frames Miss Campbell as an engaged and sympathetic reader of Spence, determined to enact (and critically revise) his central maxim, “the earth was given to the children of men” (and, we might add, women) within what he imagines as the fugitive spaces of the plantation itself: “I have been tempted to purchase you as slaves, by the example of the white men, who are sanctioned by the English government, being void of shame. I am now instructed by a child of nature, to resign to you your natural right in the soil on which you stand, agreeable to Spence’s plan” (98). Here, Miss Campbell reads “natural right” as a chthonic embodiment. Through a relationship to soil, even (or perhaps especially) the soil of the plantation, the “child of nature” affirms an earthly sanction for communal sovereignty. Miss Campbell, nevertheless, always subsumes the “natural” under divine mandates for emancipation. In the fourth installment of the *Axe Laid to the Root*, Wedderburn rehearses the speech Miss Campbell gave when emancipating the slaves on the plantation:

Miss Campbell then cried, the land is yours, not because Wedderburn, the Spencean says so, for I have read the word of God, and it says, the Lord gave the earth to the children of men. You are the children of men as well as others. I can show no title deeds that are just. Those who sold it to me murdered them who lived on it before. (99)

Miss Campbell appeals to competing archives – both scriptural justification for agrarian communalism and the (absent) legal documents that nevertheless bolster colonial property-making in the Caribbean. Wedderburn grounds practices of Jamaican marronage – and its “directly” felt knowledge that “the earth was given to the children of men” – within a fugitive paradigm of Biblical hermeneutics. Miss Campbell therefore brings experiential histories of New World dispossession to bear on interpreting sacred text, revealing a spiritual resource that locates the brutal realities of the colony’s present deep within Old Testament political theologies.

In the sixth and final extant installment of the *Axe Laid to the Root*, Wedderburn directly voices Miss Campbell, creating through this act of narrative polyvocality a revolutionary counter-archive for Caribbean resistance. In a letter from her to Wedderburn that encompasses the entire periodical installment, Wedderburn, however, chooses not to render freedom as an outcome of revolutionary self-emancipation by slaves, as we might expect, but as an act that originates in the voice of the plantation owner. When Wedderburn depicts the moment Miss Campbell speaks freedom to the slaves on her plantation, he dwells on an aging slave who perishes, overwhelmed by her words:

You are no longer slaves my conscience is free from guilt, but the blood of my ancestors, who fell for freedom's cause will be required at the hands of the white men, who against knowledge, refuse obedience to nature's law, The unexpected sounds, you are no longer slaves, deprived them of speech; some fainted with joy, the rest were amazed, an old man, whose head was white as snow, cried out, Lord help us! Missy, Missy, you sall sit on de same seat wid de Virgin Mary; may God make dee his servant. I will go to toder country in peace. He then dropped, like Palmer, on the stage: by this time, the rest of the slaves recovered from their stupor, four young men with solemn respect, bore the corpse away.

(98)

In some ways, it is a bewildering narrative and political decision. Although Wedderburn begins the passage by having Miss Campbell utter an expected demand for vengeance for the “blood of her” enslaved and Maroon “ancestors,” he appeals to the ethical capabilities of a slaveowner, rather than the spiritual fortitude of slave insurgency, as a channel for revolutionary renewal. Miss Campbell, through her dual and contradictory heritage as a descendent of Maroons *and* a slaveowner, troubles any vindicationist account that would read anticolonial insurgency as solely

the result of prophetic resistance. With the death of this newly freed slave, I want to suggest that Wedderburn here confronts the worldly limits of a revolutionary performance practices for self-emancipation that, even if it is supported by heterodox spiritual resources, remains constrained by bodily finitude.

Indeed, what Wedderburn offers as a framework for imagining the telos of a revolutionary trajectory is a script. He situates the freedman's death in British performance histories, referring in particular to actor John Palmer's sudden on-stage death in 1798 in the second act of August von Kotzebue's tragedy, *The Stranger* (an English translation of his play, *Misanthropy and Repentance* – you might also recognize Kotzebue as the playwright who wrote *Lover's Vows*, which caused so much interpersonal drama in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*). Palmer's untimely death on stage, an eruption of the real in a theatrical space, accrued its own peculiar legend. Performance histories and periodicals reported that he died after speaking the line, "There is another and a better world."⁵⁴ Wedderburn was probably aware of this performance apocrypha, given his revision of "There is another and a better world" into "I will go toder country in peace." As an evocative rehearsal of Palmer's on-stage demise, we might read the death of the freedman as a reinscription of real events as political theater. But this might read it as a performance of resignation or quietism, where heaven, rather than a revolutionary utopia, constitutes a "better world." However, the freedman's words also performatively reframe Miss Campbell as the Virgin Mary, a holy mother for the New World. In this sense, she might give birth to a new revolutionary collectivity, one that the freedman prophetically announces at the moment of death. The freedman's final words thus summon a conflicted and equivocal spiritual repertoire where emancipating actions like Miss Campbell's *could* gesture toward the naissance

of a new anticolonial order, but in doing so, remain inextricably entangled in colonial performances and the drama of Catholic theology.

By scripting the freedman's death as a Caribbean rehearsal of Palmer's on-stage death, Wedderburn offers both a commitment to revolutionary longing and a recognition its limits that anticipates David Scott's *Conscripts of Modernity* (2005). Scott reads C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938; 1963), a seminal account of the Haitian Revolution, as a work that maneuvers between two historiographical possibilities for understanding the pasts of colonial resistance in our own neocolonial present: Scott argues that postcolonial resistance is framed as either Romantic vindication or (less often) as tragedy.⁵⁵ For Scott, vindicationist narratives of anticolonial opposition summon "a triumphant and seamlessly progressive" historical teleology that "have animated our hopes for a world without dissatisfaction, injustice, and unhappiness" (12, 13). Against such a position, which he argues no longer inspires postcolonial political contestations, he turns to tragedy. Tragedy, for Scott, attends to the contingencies of anticolonial political engagement, reading that engagement not as a failure to embody and enact an aspirational ideal, but as utterly vulnerable to the hubris of a historicist approach that encompasses a longing for *total* revolution (12-4). By closely attending to revisions James made in the 1963 edition of *The Black Jacobins*, Scott argues that James re-emplots Toussaint L'Ouverture not as a heroic figure who overthrows slavery in St. Domingue, but as a conscript of modernity, restricted by the contingencies of modern arrangements of subject-formation: "[He] was constrained to imagine and make the revolution he imagined within the conceptual and institutional terrain of modernity" (129). Scott proposes that what James offers us is a particular orientation towards postcolonial history and its performance archives, one that refuses the revolutionary demand that "our pasts can be left behind and new futures leaped into" (185). Scott

maintains instead that critical endeavors to create *new* archives of resistance provide only a diminished resource for conceiving postcolonial futures. Drawing from the German theorist of history Reinhart Koselleck, Scott calls the attenuated promise of anticolonial revolution a “superseded future,” or one of postcolonialism’s “futures pasts.”⁵⁶ His reconfiguration of James’s *The Black Jacobins* as an elusive theory of colonial tragedy opens up a reading of the *Axe Laid to the Root* as a text that imbeds the aspirations of revolutionary marronage within the vulnerable, intimate limits of a local plantation’s struggle for freedom.

The freedman’s death confronts the radical reader of the *Axe Laid to the Root* with an ending to the project of freedom, and reveals, in Scott’s words, a “mortal vulnerability” within the fugitive spaces Miss Campbell struggles to enact within the plantation (182). Moreover, Wedderburn’s rendering of the elderly freedman’s death encloses his messianic expectation of a revolutionary present within a horizon of an ongoing and everyday eschatological collapse, where death constitutes an end of the world, or what Jacques Derrida has described in *Sovereignties in Question* as a singular apocalypticism: “[Each] time, and each time singularly, each time irreplaceably, each time infinitely, death is nothing less than the end of the world” (140). Derrida’s meditation offers a stark period to the revolutionary script the freedman speaks before he dies, and the “toder country” he prophetically announces. In the *Axe Laid to the Root*, the slave’s eschatological shattering of the scene of emancipation challenges us with Wedderburn’s recognition of Miss Campbell’s (and, because he is voicing her, his own) failure to prophetically speak the “nonetheless” that could then open up an “impossible future” (81). Wedderburn instead ends with an assemblage of other freedmen who, with “solemn respect,” silently carry the body of their dead friend. Indeed, their first act under the auspice of freedom for the remnant who remain is to prepare his body for burial. That we as Wedderburn’s readers

are not able to follow the corpse's passage from the scene of death to his funeral and memorialization marks a final incomplete performance in the *Axe Laid to the Root*. This last image of the freedman's body remains on the move. For Wedderburn, the freedman demands fidelity to the event of his death, while recognizing that such a mandate pulls the grounds out from beneath the revolutionary promise of reanimated Caribbean histories. The carrying away of his corpse constrains what Miss Campbell hopes will be a passage to an emancipated future for all within the boundaries of the plantation, a tragic eschatological closing of a full anticolonial and antiracist future. In this way, this freedman's death calls into question the very idea of total revolution, and implicitly ruptures Wedderburn's prophetic announcement of a redeemed world through the textual office of the *Axe Laid to the Root*.

A Suspended Now

Such a rupture, in the end, is represented within the formal history of the periodical. The final installment of *The Axe Laid to the Root* almost exclusively narrates Miss Campbell's confrontations with a suspicious and paranoid plantocracy, who read her efforts to popularize Spencean doctrine and emancipate her slaves as "madness": "Miss Campbell should be considered as a lunatic, and be treated as such; for, if this assembly was to countenance such a degree of madness, as to tolerate, by law, any individual giving liberty to their slaves, and a right to the soil, we should then become actual Spenceans" (109). They express horror at such a revolutionary transformation of plantocrats into embodied and "actual" Spenceans. Miss Campbell, however, courageously responds, "It is vain for you to inflict death on the slaves for preaching, or exhorting their fellow slaves to embrace various new doctrines" (109). Crucially,

she contends that not even the specter of death can contain the spread of radicalism, urging that an emancipatory future will arrive no matter the devastating reprisals of colonial governments. Nevertheless, her words also implicitly recognize that the violent conflict between plantocratic punishment and slave insurgency means that not all will live to see this new future. Indeed, the material history of *Axe Laid to the Root* ultimately supports Miss Campbell's coded admission that death, either the result of colonial brutality or revolutionary contingency, limits the horizon of an anticolonial future. Ominously, the periodical ends mid-sentence with a list of repressive measures to be enacted by the Jamaican Assembly against Miss Campbell and the spread of radical doctrine. One white accuser demands, for instance, that Miss Campbell be removed from her plantation and placed in a madhouse, and her land and slaves "taken care of" by colonial authorities (110). He cautions, furthermore, against engaging African servants because their proximity to white owners (and the printed materials that circulate in such spaces, as Wedderburn is profoundly aware of) introduce them to radical discourses and practices of resistance. "The wild notion of liberty, and an equal right to the soil," he argues, "has a tendency to destroy that faithfulness and attachment towards us" (110).

The accuser concludes with a description of British colonial duplicity against Maroons as a political template for dealing with African radicals:

You will recollect, we have broken the treaty with the Marroons [sic], by punishing one of their tribes without trial by their own judge and jury, for which they went against us, and were it not for the bloodhounds we got from Cuba, and their magazine being discovered, we do not know what would have been the consequence; besides we transported the whole of that tribe into a cold climate, which destroyed the chief part of them. (110)

The accuser follows with, “Now, gentle –,” followed by a “*To be continued*” that never subsequently materialized (110). We could read this textual disruption as a sign of British repressions of the radical press, as evidence that the *Axe Laid to the Root* could not continue because the necessary equipment and materials for publication were destroyed or dispersed.⁵⁷ We might also understand this mid-sentence interruption as an elusive textual signal that the revolution has already begun – that Miss Campbell’s accuser cannot complete his sentence because he has, in this moment, been cut down by the surging forces of a Jamaican-led slave revolution. The “*To be continued*” concisely marks that experience of messianic expectation that Wedderburn so often prophetically registers. It compels its reader to continue surviving in a stalled archive, in a suspended “now” until the time of revolution begins. Wedderburn’s performance script for “how to live” in a reclaimed future is here marked by the impossibility of knowing “how to use” this archive. The periodical’s “*To be continued*” may narrate, then, Wedderburn’s experiential sense of a “time fast approaching,” announcing that the long-awaited anticolonial future has arrived. Because its ending is shadowed by suggestive, but ultimately ambiguous, possibilities, the *Axe Laid to the Root* is itself an archival fragment, a textual remnant of a Caribbean insurgency that remains suspended and not yet complete.

The performative fugitivity Wedderburn envisions throughout *The Horrors of Slavery* and the *Axe Laid to the Root* – which is repeatedly framed in relationship to precarious formations of the prophetic archives – are all grounded in his and his family’s experiential relations to slavery. Wedderburn’s prophetic project developed as a way to both instigate diasporic political collectivities after the Haitian Revolution and to imagine what the earth might look like without slavery – and the economic, legal, political, and spiritual systems undergirding it. By any material rubric, then, his prophetic vision failed. In the final years of his life, no “universal

fermentation” ignited to carry on the promise of the Haitian Revolution. Although slavery was abolished throughout the British dominion a few years before Wedderburn’s death, the British Empire itself lived on, supported by infrastructures of property-ownership deeply antithetical to his radical agrarian communalism. Wedderburn infused his works with a recognition of human precarity and vulnerability, and imagined material limits to any working of total revolution, while nevertheless modeling unstable and roving performance practices and spiritual resources that could potentially disrupt – and even undo – the static sovereignty of colonial time. His personas ask: Who will speak next, in the future of the “to be continued,” in the future of the “time fast approaching”? Will it be Wedderburn? Or Miss Campbell? Or a prophet not yet known?

Wedderburn’s prophetic depiction of an everyday mortal limit to the uses of revolutionary histories urges a peculiarly pressing set of questions: How might we use Caribbean revolutionary histories and radical communitarianism to redeem an endangered present (both his present and our own)? And yet, how might the spiritual resources Wedderburn attends to throughout his radical career foreclose the redemptive possibilities of a reclaimed black futurity? Put simply, can we use the legacy of Wedderburn’s visionary alternative for inhabiting a messianic futurity, for belonging to an earthbound, non-sovereign, and collective tenancy? Can “the earth was given to the children of men” become a mobilizing reserve against the ruin of late capitalist collapse, ecological wreckage and resource exhaustion, and authoritarian forms of surveillance and terror? Can we afford *not* to let something like Wedderburn’s earthly demand inspire revolutionary frameworks for surviving the devastations of the present? Or have the possibilities of Wedderburn’s wandering prophetic personas only become one of the many “superseded futures,”

the “futures past” that David Scott believes have only attenuated promise for a neocolonial present?

The earthly repertoires enacted by Wedderburn’s revolutionary vision linger in a temporal double bind. Haunted by familial, genealogical, and communal losses, and the reproductive and patrilineal logics that constrain forms of belonging and expressions of grief, the future frequently seems to be already lost to settler colonial violences. And yet – and yet – Wedderburn (and others) respond with belated praxes of inheritance that remain rooted in the earth, and that improvise narratological and performance scripts attentive to the liturgically inassimilable – the linguistic surpluses, bodily remnants, and temporal remainders – that define forms of life lived in the ruins of settler colonial regimes of social death. Some speakers and writers of color strove in their earth-bound practices to performatively reclaim the commons through practices enacted at sites of burial and through litanies voiced over the dead. Other speakers like Wedderburn direct our attention to the myths of origin that ground an array of political, social, economic, affective, and familial attachments across the terrain of transatlantic experiments in settler colonialism and empire. For all of them, earthly repertoires, more importantly, summon conceptual and methodological orientations that remind us of all that our own critical practices have inherited, of all the political myths and legal fictions that continue to mediate and sustain our contemporary forms of belonging and our enduring connections to the dead. To that end, they presciently speak to the precarity of political and environmental challenges of late liberalism, and to the urgent work of imagining antiracist and anticolonial arrangements of collectivity and freedom in our own endangered present.

Introduction Endnotes

¹ Although I do not often address the “gift” economy imagined by “the earth was given to men,” it is worth noting that the verse was interpreted by writers and speakers of color to offer a spiritually sanctioned theory of collectivity that echoes social and philosophical accounts of gift exchange (most famously in the work of Marcel Mauss, but also in the philosophical treatments of George Bataille, Jean Baudrillard, and Jacques Derrida). Mauss, for instance, in *The Gift* (1925) argues that gift-giving as a foundational mode of exchange that attaches members of a community to a collective whole, contesting the individualist, competitive, and utilitarian accounts of human interaction at the heart of many Enlightenment paradigms of social and economic interaction. The verse reads God as the source of the original gift, an exchange that is then collectively inherited and held by “the children of men.” For a discussion of the long history of theories of gift-giving, and their historical function in many New World indigenous social practices, see David Murray’s *Indian Giving* (2000; 15-47).

² For a fascinating counter-narrative of Locke’s conception of religion and the public sphere, see Elizabeth Pritchard’s *Religion in Public* (2014). She argues that Locke’s political writings assert that human rights are sacred insofar as humans are the creatures, and thus, the property of God. If collective ownership of the earth is a divine gift from God, then it serves as the counter-weight to Locke’s insistence that God already possesses a prior property relationship to humankind.

³ The enclosure of the commons, which began in the fifteenth century, accelerated in the eighteenth. It initiated new arrangements of ownership, who held exclusive use of the enclosed land, and coincided, with primitive accumulation, with the birth of capitalism, as Karl Marx argues: “The forcible usurpation of [the commons] generally accompanied by turning arable into pasture land, begins at the end of the fifteenth century and extends into the sixteenth . . . The advance made by the eighteenth century shows itself in this, that the law now becomes the instrument by which the people’s land is stolen . . . the Parliamentary form of the robbery is that of ‘Bills for Inclosure of Commons,’ in other words decrees by which landowners grant themselves the people’s land as private property, decrees of expropriation of the people” (885). While we could trace a deep genealogy of the materialist connections between capitalism and primitive accumulation, and dispossession back to the work of historians, such as Eric William’s *Capitalism and Slavery* (1944) or Walter Rodney’s *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972), important and recent interdisciplinary work on the subject specific to the eighteenth and nineteenth-century transatlantic world would include Silvia Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch* (2004; 8-17 and 21-60), Ian Baucom’s *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005; 36, 80-112, and 149-51), Paula Chakravarty and Denise Ferreira de Silva’s “Accumulation, Dispossession, and Debt: The Racial Logic of Global Capitalism: An Introduction” in *American Quarterly* 64.3 (2012; 361-385). David Harvey’s *The New Imperialism* (especially chapter four) and *The Spaces of Global Capitalism* (2006; pgs. 44-64 and 75-116), furthermore, substantially revises and extends Marx’s notion of primitive accumulation as a process that endures into the present through procedures of what he calls “accumulation by dispossession.”

⁴ Working from Margaret Canovan’s claim that a liberal politics works itself out through myths – of its origins and its relationship to a “dark” world: the “liberal state depends crucially for its public virtues (equality, tolerance, liberty) on political myth – that is, on origin narratives that provide a foundation for its political values and a coherent framework for its public and private morality” (56). Asad pays particular attention to the metaphors Canovan utilizes in writing about the notion of the “world” called into being by liberal politics. Asad seems to be particularly concerned with the ways secular discourses conceal violence in liberal politics. As he concludes, “In fact liberal democracy here expresses the two secular myths that are, notoriously, at odds with each other: the Enlightenment myth of politics as a discourse of public reason whose bond with *knowledge* enables the elite to direct the education of mankind, and the revolutionary myth of universal suffrage, a politics of large numbers in which the representation of ‘collective will’ is sought by quantifying the *opinion* and *fantasy* of individual citizen-electors. The secular theory of state toleration is based on these contradictory foundations: on the one hand elite liberal clarity seeks to contain religious passion, on the other hand democratic numbers allow majorities to dominate minorities even if both are religiously informed” (61).

⁵ Jonathan Elmer in *On Lingered and Being Last* (2008) suggests that Western arrangements of sovereignty all have their origins in fictions, on a racialized logic of first visible in New World colonial projects. In the writings of Hobbes, Locke, and Grotius, Western models of sovereign autonomy were based on theories of personification, which enabled states to be personified as singular bodies, bodies imagined as a politic, and individual persons as miniature states. Elmer argues that these contradictions became fully evident in literatures of the New World, from Aphra Behn, to Equiano, to Thomas Jefferson. For an account of conflicted contemporary

formations of Native American sovereignties, see Kevin Bruyneel's *The Third Space of Sovereignty* (2007; introduction).

⁶ For accounts of radical millenarianism in post-war London, see Iain McCalman's *Radical Underworld* (1988), David Worrall's *Radical Culture* (1992), and John Barrell's *Imagining the King's Death* (2000). For critical investigations of millenarianism in Romantic literature and culture, see J.F.C. Harrison's *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850* (1979), Jon Mee's *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (1992) and *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation* (2005), Tim Fulford's *Romanticism and Millenarianism* (editor, 2002), Saree Makdisi's *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (2002), Susan Juster's *Doomsayers* (2003), and Jeffrey N. Cox's *Romanticism in the Shadow of War* (2014).

⁷ In *The Racial Contract* (1997), Charles Mills draws our attention to the ways racial power imbalances, or contracts, remain the invisible norm for Western political theory, as well as its devastating historical reality. He examines the famous figures of Enlightenment political theory – the “noble savage” of Rousseau and Locke’s “wild Indian,” arguing: “Europeans ... were ‘civilized,’ and this condition was manifested in the character of the spaces they inhabited. Non-Europeans were ‘savages,’ and this manifested in the character of the spaces *they* inhabited ... This habitation is captured in the etymology of ‘savage’ itself, which derives from the Latin ‘silva’ or ‘wood,’ so that the savage is the ... man into whose being wildness, wilderness, has so deeply penetrated that the door to civilization, to the political, is barred” (42-3).

⁸ As Jimmy Casas Klausen has argued in *Fugitive Rousseau* (2014), Rousseau offers fragile and “fugitive” models of freedom based on his context in the world of growing Atlantic slavery, as well as his reading in Roman imperial philosophy. Klausen rereads Rousseau, who has often been interpreted as preoccupied with primitive and silent about the African slave trade, as profoundly interested in traditions of marronage and fugitivity (for his reading of Rousseau’s commons and collective inheritance of the earth, see 53-86). See also Jane Anna Gordon’s *Creolizing Political Theory: Reading Rousseau through Fanon* (2014; 47-52, 77-90, and 110-111).

⁹ Recently, “dispossession” has emerged as a significant critical term, especially for thinking through neoliberal economic practices. See, for instance, Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou’s *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2014). In it, they theorize two forms of dispossession initiated by modernity: the first “signifies an inaugural submission of the subject-to-be to norms of intelligibility ... It thus resonates with the psychic foreclosures that determine which ‘passionate attachments’ are possible and plausible for ‘one’ to become a subject” (5). The modern condition is thus imagined as a kind of mutual dispossession: I come into being, am made intelligible, by recognition of another, and vice versa. The second form of dispossession gathers this ethics of intimate, interpersonal encounter into global systems of dispossession, enacted by state power and macroeconomic arrangements, what they call “the processes and ideologies by which persons are disowned and abjected by normative and normalizing powers that define cultural intelligibility and that regulate the distribution of vulnerability” (5). Butler and Athanasiou’s record of dispossession is thus doubly restrictive in the way it channels intersubjective affective realms and larger politico-economic structures through the global machinery of neoliberal systems. Despite what appears to be a bleak vision of the challenges posed by dispossession as a theoretical tool, Butler and Athanasiou attempt to retrieve forms of political expression and activism – embodied performances – from within abject communities characterized by the loss of land, citizenship, and (through these material losses) collective identities that are important interventions for my own project. The term has also been taken to prior historical arenas, especially in the 2014 special issue of *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation*, organized around dispossession; see especially Jordana Rosenberg and Chi-ming Yang’s opening article, “The Dispossessed Eighteenth Century” (137-152) and Siraj Ahmed’s “Dispossession and Civil Society: The Ambivalence of Enlightenment Political Philosophy” (153-174).

¹⁰ I am persuaded by Siraj Ahmed’s recent essay “Dispossession and Civil Society: The Ambivalence of Enlightenment Political Philosophy,” which argues that tropes of colonial degeneration in major works of political philosophy of the eighteenth century “reflects the Enlightenment’s profound ambivalence toward the origins of private property, of civil society, and hence of European modernity itself” (153). While Ahmed focuses on canonical eighteenth-century political theorists, I would like to extend this reading of ambivalence to African American, Caribbean, and indigenous writers of the period.

¹¹ I use the phrase “speakers and writers of color” to recognize how contested sites of authorship were for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century African and indigenous peoples, many of whom spoke their narrative to white editors or amanuensis, such as in publication of Ukawsaw Gronniosaw and Mary Prince’s narratives, or whose words were bracketed by the apparatus of “authentication,” as is the case for Wheatley’s poetry. Robert Wedderburn, furthermore, was only minimally literate, and many of his publications were edited by other members of the London radical underclass. Nicole Aljoe in *Creole Testimonies* (2012) has argued that such mediations are central to the formation of Caribbean slave narratives. Even figures, like William Apress, who had more control over

the composition and circulation of their writings, contended with narrative frameworks, print markets, and reading practices defined by white evangelicalism, abolitionism or proslavery sentiment, and settler colonialism.

¹² In addressing how African, Caribbean, and indigenous writers narrate exercises in freedom and collectivity, my aim is not to erase histories of inter-ethnic conflict, especially since conflicted, and even violent, encounters between African and Native American peoples appear in many of the narratives I study (we might recall, for instance, David George's enslavement by the Creek chief, Blue Salt, or Equiano's menacing sermon to the Central American "Mesquito" tribe in the *Interesting Narrative*), but to triangulate *why* a return to political theologies of a finite earth appear in so many of their texts, and *how* this recursive lingering informs political praxes. For examinations of inter-ethnic encounter, slavery, and contestation between African American and indigenous peoples, see Tiya Miles and Sharon P. Holland's edited collection *Crossing Waters, Crossing Worlds* (2006), Jodi Byrd's *The Transit of Empire* (2011; chapter four), and Barbara Krauthamer's *Black Slaves, Indians Masters* (2013).

¹³ Much of what we have on Robert Wedderburn's political activism, for instance, is a result of surveillance and spy reports. See Iain McCalman's *Radical Underworld* (1988; 52-70) and David Worrall's *Radical Culture* (1997; 129-46). For a reading of colonial surveillance, repressive policies, and legal codes, see also James Epstein's *The Scandal of Colonial Rule* (2012; 160-70).

¹⁴ "[M]odernity's racial imagination," Carter writes, "has its genesis in the theological problem of Christianity's quest to sever itself from its Jewish roots" (4). Carter reads the problem of race as a peculiarly fraught *theological* one, where Christian theology, "inattentive to its authentic character, falls into a theology of race" (Walker 276). Other accounts of theology and race, see also Colin Kidd's *The Forging of Races* (2006; 19-53 and 79-120), Mark Noll's *God and Race in American Politics* (2008; 13-59), and David Theo Goldberg's *The Threat of Race* (2009; 245-326).

¹⁵ This is not to say that only speakers and writers of color were invoking common possession of the earth in the face of capitalist expansion, enclosure of the commons, and primitive accumulation. London radicals like Thomas Spence, for instance, and literary artists and writers like William Blake, for another, also protested these political and economic structural shifts. The difference in considering African-descended and indigenous writers of the period comes out of a particular autobiographical and experiential testimony to the legal thefts, of lands, persons, and sovereignty of settler colonial regimes of social death and life.

¹⁶ See Orlando Patterson's *Slavery and Social Death* (1982; 35-76), a comparative study of slavery in classical and modern colonial practices, as well as Vincent Brown's important reformulation in "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery" in *American Historical Review* (2009; 1231-49).

¹⁷ As I discuss in more detail in chapter four, Wedderburn's *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824) is, in many ways, an exposé of his conflicted relationship with his father, James Wedderburn, and his white half-brother, Andrew Colville.

¹⁸ See especially Saidiya Hartman's meditation on *kosanba*, or spirit child who moves back and forth between the human and the spirit world, in *Lose Your Mother* (2007; 84-100).

¹⁹ See my discussion in the section, "A Most Violent Inheritance," in chapter four, "The Futures Past of Robert Wedderburn's Messianic Prophecies."

²⁰ Jeremy Black in *Eighteenth-Century Britain* observes that "thirty-eight percent of the children born in the town of Penrith between 1650 and 1700 died before reaching the age of six. Very high child mortality rates continued to be recorded across Britain throughout the eighteenth century," before noting that infant and maternal mortality rates fell in the second half of the eighteenth century (15). For infant mortality rates in North American settlements in the eighteenth century, see Dorothy May's *Women in Early America* (2004; 66-70). For examinations fetal, neo-natal, and infant mortality rates in the British Caribbean, which remained quite a bit higher, see Franklin W. Knight's *General History of the Caribbean* (1997; vol. 3, 91-3), and Kenneth Morgan's *Slavery and the British Empire* (2007; 90-5), which estimate that forty percent of the children of slaves died before the age of five (94). Although less concerned with infant mortality per se, Anna Mae Duane's *Suffering Childhood in Early America* (2010) examines how tropes of infanticide, child suffering, and the infantilization of motherhood, when read within the specific historical pressures of eighteenth-century settler colonial movement and frontier expansion, worked to "build the affective foundation for the decimation and dispossession of the native population" (60; see especially chapter four, "The Revolutionary Child: Slavery, Affective Contracts, and the Future Imperfect").

²¹ See Hortense Spillers's "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book" in *Black, White, and in Color* (2003, 203-229; especially 203-9), as well as Spillers's 2016 lectures at Yale University as part of Henry Louis Gates, Jr. lecture series, "Shades of Intimacy: What the Eighteenth Century Teaches Us" (April 27, 2016) and at the Futures of American Studies Institute, "Afro-Pessimism and the Elders: Report from Part 2" (June 25, 2016), and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's conference talk entitled "Sororal Assemblage and the Performative

Commons: Caribbean Connections,” given at the 2017 Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference in Tulsa (March 4, 2017).

²² I follow Mark Rifkin’s *Settler Common Sense* in identifying and tracing in narratives by speakers and writers of color “queer critiques of the state,” which he defines as a refusal of bourgeois home-making through narrative practices “that open room for thinking other possibilities for inhabitation and association, developing notions of personhood and placemaking askew with respect to an emergent heteronormative imaginary” (xviii). While Rifkin primarily focuses here on the writings of Melville, Hawthorne, and Thoreau, in other critical examinations – such as *When Did Indians Become Straight?* (2011) and *The Erotics of Sovereignty* (2012) – he addresses indigenous literatures and performances as exercises in a queer imaginary. In the former, he argues that considering how “native peoples” are inserted into European and American “discourses of sexuality” enables “a kind of queer analysis that extends beyond discussion of the policing of homoeroticism and gender expression . . . can aid in developing an immanent critique of the dimensions and effects of imperial superintendence” (3).

²³ I am thus using queer theory less as a conceptual framework for reading same-sex desire or erotics in these texts. I am using queer theory to mark how non- and anti-patriarchal and patrilineal forms of relation transgress settler colonial standard practices in their political, legal, and spiritual manifestations.

²⁴ For a reading on African temporalities and futurities, see Nahum Chandler’s *Toward an African Future: Of the Limit of the World* (2013), which reads theorists of African American culture and literature, especially the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, using Africa as a model for a radical account of universal humanity.

²⁵ As I discuss more extensively in chapter four, I am borrowing the term “superseded” futures from David Scott’s *Conscripts of Modernity* (2004; 210).

²⁶ In this instance, rather than functioning as a spiritual paradigm of the commons, (where the cemetery is the exemplary site of hospitality, as Kant suggested in his opening to *On Perpetual Peace*), the church’s graveyard functions as a kind of private property. Through the theological and doctrinal justifications for precluding some burials in its graveyard, it becomes a gatekeeper for religious conformity.

²⁷ Literary critics of slave narratives have been attentive to the function of mediation, including the role of white editors, amanuenses, printers, and supplementary attestation materials (including witness lists or statements that attested to the veracity of the narrative). For early accounts of American slave narratives, see, for instance, John Blassingame’s *Slave Testimony* (1977), Angelo Constanzo’s *Surprising Narrative* (1987), William Andrews’s *To Tell a Free Story* (1988), Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s *The Signifying Monkey* (1989), Francis Smith Foster’s *Witnessing Slavery* (1979) and *Written by Herself* (1993), and Rafia Zafar’s *We Wear the Mask* (1997). For readings of the slave narrative in British and Caribbean literature, see Keith Sandiford’s *Measuring the Moment* (1988), Paul Edwards’s “Unreconciled Strivings and Ironic Strategies: Three Afro-British Authors of the Late Georgian Period (Sancho, Equiano, Wedderburn)” in *Africans in Britain* (1994; 28-48), Helena Woodard’s *African-British Writings in the Eighteenth Century* (1999), Helen Thomas’s *Romanticism and Slave Narratives* (2000), C.L. Innes’s *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain* (2008), and Nicole Aljoe’s *Creole Testimonies* (2012).

²⁸ For critically examining narratives by speakers and writers of color within structures of witnessing and affect, I have been influenced by Saidiya Hartman’s *Scenes of Subjection* (1997) within the American context, and Lynn Festa’s essay “Humanity Without Feathers” in *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* (2010; 3-27), Ramesh Mallipeddi’s *Spectacular Suffering* (2016), and Stefan Wheelock’s *Barbaric Culture and Black Critique* (2015) within the British context.

²⁹ Historian Kathleen Chater, for instance, has extensively studied church and municipal records in Britain and Wales, as well as eighteenth-century autobiographies by writers of color, in *Untold Histories*, her account of Black life in the period (2009). Based on this research, she observes, “Black people were baptised and buried in the same churches as the white population: there was no segregation. Inquests were as carefully carried out on them, as on the white population, and eighteenth-century newspaper reports mentioned their involvement in events without any racialised comments on their colour or ethnicity” (1). While her claim bears the weight of an immense sifting of the historical record, I remain nevertheless interested in the ways narratological decisions by writers of color express kinds of mourning perhaps *not* legible in the kinds of documents Chater examines. There is something to be said for the ways narrative by speakers and writers of color preserve affective and imagined dimensions of everyday survival under the shadow of colonial regimes of social death. They do so with narratological practices that expose the fictional core of eighteenth-century theories of property, territoriality, and public order.

³⁰ It is important to remember that much of Enlightenment political theory remained defined by metaphors of slavery and freedom at the very moment the economic and legal enslavement of African peoples developed and dramatically expanded. As Susan Buck-Morss observes in *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History*: “By the eighteenth century, slavery had become the root metaphor of Western political philosophy, containing everything that was evil

about power relations. Freedom, its conceptual antithesis, was considered by Enlightenment thinkers as the highest and universal political value” (21).

³¹ Talal Asad in *Formations of the Secular* (2003) defines secularism as a shift in modes of mediation as a process for naming “modern” and “non-modern” peoples: “Modernity is not primarily a matter of recognizing the real but of living-in-the-world. Since this is true of every epoch, what is distinctive about modernity *as a historical epoch* includes modernity as a political-economic project. What interests me particularly is the attempt to construct categories of the secular and the religious in terms of which modern living is required to take place, and nonmodern peoples are invited to assess their adequacy. For representations of ‘the secular’ and ‘the religious’ in modern and modernizing states mediate people’s identities, help shape their sensibilities, and guarantee their experiences” (14). Asad links these emerging, contingent, and varied discourses to the instantiation of a Western versions of secular liberal politics.

³² I would like to thank Scott Juengel, who in an early conversation offered a description of this project’s critical aims and methodology rooted – indeed, “grounded” – in the earth.

³³ In thinking through the lateral temporal attachments formed out of engagements with the temporalities of global capitalism, I am drawing on recent theorizations of late liberal technologies of time in the work of Lauren Berlant (“ongoingness,” “belatedness,” and the “suspended now” in *Cruel Optimism*) and Elizabeth Povinelli (the “past perfect” and “future anterior” in *Economies of Abandonment*). Berlant and Povinelli are primarily concerned with the ways in which affect (in Berlant) and alternative economies (in Povinelli) become chronotypes of the present, or the conditions through which relations are constructed in space and time. While Berlant and Povinelli are invested in tracing these temporalities as they appear in late liberalism, I want to suggest that recursive representations of time undergird the temporal commitments of earthly repertoires assembled by speakers and writers of color. Like the figures in Berlant and Povinelli’s work, the restricted, restrictive, and violent temporal economies depicted in eighteenth and nineteenth-century indigenous and slave narratives parallel the deferred closures explored by Povinelli in indigenous social projects and Povinelli in literatures that expose the precarity of liberal models of the “good life.”

³⁴ See, for instance, the reflections on sovereignty, violence, and the exception in Carl Schmitt’s *Political Theology* (1922; 5-35), Walter Benjamin’s “Theologico-Political Fragment” (1921; 312-13), *Critique of Violence* (1921; 277-300), and *The Origins of German Tragic Drama* (1928), Hannah Arendt’s *On Violence* (1970), Giorgio Agamben’s *Homo Sacer* (1997; 15-29) and *State of Exception* (2003; 31-6 and 47-59), and Jacques Derrida’s lecture series, *Beast and the Sovereign* (especially Vol. 1, 2001-2002; especially the last two sessions, 305-49).

³⁵ Paul Hirst in “Schmitt’s Decisionism” reads Schmitt’s formulation of the exception as fundamentally outside the law: “Sovereignty is *outside* the law, since the actions of the sovereign in the state of exception cannot be bound by laws” (11). He notes, however, “To claim that this is anti-legal is to ignore the fact that all laws have outside, that they exist because of a substantial claim on the part of some agency to be the dominant source of binding rules within a territory” (11-12). Many considerations of Schmitt’s decisionism have returned to him via Walter Benjamin’s evocative mediations on sovereignty and violence in *The Origins of German Tragic Drama* and *On Violence*. See, for instance, Marc de Wilde’s “Violence in the State of Exception: Reflections on Theologico-Political Motifs in Benjamin and Schmitt” (188-200) and Judith Butler’s “Critique, Coercion, and Sacred Life in Benjamin’s ‘Critique of Violence’” (201-19) in *Political Theologies* (2006), as well as Beatrice Hanssen’s *Critique of Violence* (2000; 16-23, 97-8, and 145-7).

³⁶ In rendering God as the power forestalling the revolution, Wedderburn presents a heterodox figure of the *katechon*, one that Carl Schmitt also frequently invoked. As early as *Political Theology* (1922), Schmitt’s guiding politico-theological insight, “Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception,” becomes a secular exemplar of the New Testament *katechon*, or as Schmitt names it, “the historical power [restraining] the appearance of ... the end of the present eon” (*Nomos* 60). The *katechon*, first considered by the apostle Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians (II. *Thess.* 2:6-7), emerges in history as the force or figure delaying the second arrival of the Messiah, but is often understood in Schmitt’s political theory as the juridical institutions scaffolding political stability and foreclosing the eruption of anarchy. For Julia Hell in her extensive examination of Schmitt’s notion of the *katechon* in *Land and Sea* (1942) and other wartime writings, Schmitt’s *katechon* summons what she calls a “scopic scenario,” an imperial imaginary that “translates eschatological time into the time of empire” (285). According to Hell, if the imperial sovereign forestalls the catastrophic end by pronouncing a decision during a state of emergency, he is nonetheless haunted by a coming rupture in the political order, by a future where the decision will not and cannot hold back the end: “Schmitt’s *katechon* invites his contemporaries to imagine the end of empire, to imagine ruins and ruination as that which will be – sometime in the future, not now, not yet” (284). Although the scopic scenario may invite us to think of the *katechon* as a distant observer of empire’s end, the colonial history Schmitt explicitly draws on suggests otherwise.

³⁷ Explorations of political theology often summon what Victorian Kahn in *The Future of Illusion* (2014) has named, with reservation, “the persistent haunting of liberal modernity by something in excess of the law,” by state practices of governmentality unintelligible within its own avowed secular logic (4). It should be noted that Kahn resists this trend towards theorizing “permanence” in political theology, especially in the late work of Derrida and Agamben, as well as Michael Gillespie’s *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (2009), proposing that rather than identifying an enduring theological imaginary at work in modernity, we ought to reconceive early modern political theologies as inextricably linked to the Renaissance understanding of *poesis*, the notion that “we can only know what we make ourselves” (3). I find it interesting that in describing political theologies of “permanence,” she has recourse to what is a profoundly *ephemeral* experience: haunting. While using Kahn’s reading of political theology as a point of departure for engaging with narratives by speakers and writers of color may appear a bit perverse, her decision to render that critical move as an occasion for *spectrality* opens up interesting possibilities for engaging with their emphasis on the materiality of bodily remains and on the eschatological horizons of enslaved and indigenous death.

³⁸ Even Schmitt early gestured towards a kind of earthly collectivity in *Land and Sea* (1942), his “world-historical meditation” on land and sea power, when he recognized that the finite earth constituted the phenomenological ground for frameworks of perception, temporality, and historicity: “The human is a land-being, a land-dweller. He stands and walks and moves upon the firmly grounded earth. This is his standpoint and his soil; through it he receives his viewpoint and it defines his impressions and his way of seeing the world” (1-2). Schmitt’s deployment of the earth here becomes a hermeneutic that he uses to contrast British and German imperial identities severed from their historical roots in colonial violence enacted upon non-European populations (as well as internal populations, such as the Jews, coded as non-European).

³⁹ The recent outpouring of criticism on political theology can be linked to a set of crises engulfing late liberalism in its own dramas of sovereign power, the decision, and the quasi-theological legitimation of those decisions. Giorgio Agamben, for instance, in *State of Exception* (2005) has read Schmitt’s state of exception as the new norm for American politics and foreign policy under George W. Bush and the War on Terror (3-5; 22-25). See also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s *Empire* (2000; xi-xvii and 179-82), and Bruce Lincoln’s “Bush’s God Talk” in *Political Theologies* (2006; 269-77).

⁴⁰ For Foucault on biopolitics and biopower, see his lecture series “*Society Must be Defended*” (1975-1976), *Security, Territory, and Population* (1977-1978), and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978-1979). As he famously laid out in the final lecture of “*Society Must be Defended*” (lecture eleven, March 17, 1976), biopower concerns “the power to ‘make’ life and ‘let’ die. The right of sovereignty was the right to take life or let live. And then this new right is established: the right to make life and let die” (241). For an important refutation of Foucauldian biopolitics, see Elizabeth Povinelli’s *Geontologies* (2016; 1-20, 49-52, and 97-8).

⁴¹ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon offers an important reformulation of bare life as “bare labor” in *New World Drama* as “a life stripped of official access to forms of social life, identity, and belonging” (2014; 27).

⁴² In one of Agamben’s only references to imperial and colonial histories, he notes that concentration camps first emerged in a colonial context, but then retreats from discussing the significance of these spaces: “Historians debate whether the first camps to appear were the *campos de concentraciones* created by the Spanish in Cuba in 1896 to suppress the popular insurrection of the colony, or the ‘concentration camps’ into which the English herded the Boers toward the start of the century. What matters here is that in both cases, a state of emergency linked to a colonial war is extended to an entire civil population” (165). For another discussion of Agamben’s disinclination to include these histories in his account, see Ian Baucom’s *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005; 179-189 and 314-321).

⁴³ In chapter two in particular, I attend to William Apress’s writings as testimonial texts that reframe the aporias offered by Giorgio Agamben in *Remnants of Auschwitz* (2002) and other critics of Holocaust testimony, as constitutive of witnessing. Throughout the work, Agamben meditates on the inexpressible and unfathomable lacunae that are so central to Holocaust testimonies, given that the “‘true’ witnesses, the ‘complete witnesses,’ are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are . . . the drowned” (34). They are those who did not survive. The earthly repertoires summoned by speakers and writers of color take seriously alternative arrangements of witnessing, where testimony remains embedded in material territories, bodies, or performance archives circulating at cross-currents to liberal or evangelical print world public spheres.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Elizabeth Povinelli’s *Economies of Abandonment* (2011) and *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (2016), Kelly Oliver’s *Earth and World* (2015), and Anna Tsing’s *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015). Each in different ways considers economic ethics, political arrangements, and aesthetic frameworks accountable to limited resources, adjustment, and finitude, and to environmental practices improvised against the wastes and ruins of colonial and neocolonial economies. They prompt us to question the viability of

liberal affirmations of freedom, always already embedded as they are in ecological waste of the plantation economies, or the neocolonial geographies of global capitalism.

⁴⁵ See Nersessian's *Utopia, Limited* (2015), Guyer's *Reading with John Clare* (2015), and Allewaert's *Ariel's Ecology* (2013). See also Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert's "Bagasse: Caribbean Art and the Debris of the Sugar Plantation" in *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities* (2014; 73-94).

⁴⁶ According to Agamben's *Homo Sacer* (1998), the inscription of bare life onto modern citizenship is revealed through the focus of human rights discourse on birthplace, which establishes a legal relationship out of the spaces between kinship, citizenship, and nationhood. This relationship is illustrated by the 1789 *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, which opens: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only on the general good." Agamben implies that this shift in discursive registers constitutes a crucial transformation to the theologico-political categories of civil society: "Declarations of rights ... must be viewed as the place in which the passage from divinely authorized royal sovereignty to national sovereignty is accomplished. The fact that in this process the 'subject' is ... transformed into a 'citizen' means that birth – which is to say, bare natural life as such – here for the first time becomes ... the immediate bearer of sovereignty" (128). Citizens of liberal democracies have inscribed onto their bodies the signs of both bare life and natural right – in instrumental terms, at the very moment a person becomes a free democratic subject he is subjected to the disciplinary apparatus of the liberal state. In *Homo Sacer*, this is a de-racialized zone of indistinction, inattentive to the ways minorities, by the very nature of their displacement and dispossession, were excluded. See also David Kazanjian's *The Colonizing Trick* (2003; introduction), and Andy Doolen's *Fugitive Empire* (2005; introduction).

⁴⁷ In a few instances, the emphasis on limited space and resources that I am tracking in eighteenth-century political theory and anticolonial literature fails to map onto every narrative by a writer of color. In the final chapter of Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, for instance, he proposes that the slave trade be abolished in favor of trade with the African continent. The imagery he draws on envisions Africa as a bottomless – an "inexhaustible" – source of raw materials for European trade and manufacture: "A commercial intercourse with Africa opens an inexhaustible source of wealth to the manufacturing interests of Great Britain, and to all which the slave trade is an objection ... Population, the bowels and surface of Africa, abound in valuable and useful returns; the hidden treasures of centuries will be brought to light and into circulation. Industry, enterprize, and mining, will have their full scope, proportionally as they civilize. In a word, it lays open an endless field of commerce to the British manufactures and merchant adventurer" (177). While Equiano appears complicit with the very forces of the emerging capitalist-imperialist global economy Cugoano excoriates, I am struck by one detail buried in the middle of this passage: Equiano's insistence that "the hidden treasures of centuries will be brought to light and into circulation." Alongside Equiano's capitulation to a version of "inexhaustible" African wealth ripe for European expansion (and exploitation) is an apparent acknowledgement of a rich arts and crafts industry centuries old – waiting for aesthetic and economic appreciation within Western networks of circulation. Although the proposal to substitute trade in raw materials for trade in slaves appears to reify the colonial-imperialist system, his invocation "hidden treasures" may allow us to read Equiano as both participating in European economic systems while recognizing his gestures towards alternative economies.

⁴⁸ For this reading of Kant's attentiveness to the stranger, I am indebted to Eugenia Zuroski and her talk "The Strange World of Thomas de Quincey: Towards a Politics of Restlessness," delivered November 14, 2014 at Vanderbilt University.

⁴⁹ It is interesting that at the moment philosophers such as Kant and Arendt turn to the earth as an epistemological framework, they often do so by invoking aliens, extraterrestrials, or space travel. See especially David S. Clark's "Kant's Aliens: The Anthropology and Its Others" in *New Centennial Review* (2001; 201-89), and Kelly Oliver's *Earth and World* (2015; 11-5, 34-8, and 67-8). Given this reflexive turn away from the earth, I remain all the more interested in reiterative appeals to the ground – to the material groundscapes of the New World – in eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century texts by speakers and writers of color.

⁵⁰ Arendt argues, for instance, the public can provide a common habitat that enables human connections disrupted by the new alienating work practices of automation and the proliferation of artificial commodities, or "things," in the contemporary age: "The term 'public' signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place within it. This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related to the human artifice, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it" (52).

⁵¹ For a comprehensive reading of Lockean models of possessive individualism (and eighteenth-century contractarian theories more generally), see C.B. MacPherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism:*

Hobbes to Locke (1962; reprint 2011). For a reading of possessive individualism and its racial logic, see David J. Carlson's *Sovereign Selves* (2006). As Carlson puts it: "Though it is debatable whether Locke himself would have condoned violent displacement, the legal and moral justification for dispossession characteristic of 'discovery' could clearly be grounded further in the norms of contractarian subjectivity. Both rendered the Indian knowable, but only as a kind of prehistorical vestige of the state of nature" (30).

⁵² In *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt echoes Aimé Césaire's argument in *Discourse on Colonialism* that the devastations of nationalism, antisemitism, and Nazism had their origins in European experiments in colonialism. Césaire begins his critique of European values and intellectual traditions with Hitler, and argues for the absolute necessity of situating Hitler within a genealogy of Western conceptual frameworks regarding racial inequality. If genocide enacted against colonized peoples throughout the world emerged as philosophically defensible and a historical reality, then the systematic slaughter of an ethnic group, or European Jews, within Europe belongs to this same tradition: "I have talked a good deal about Hitler. Because he deserves it: he makes it possible to see things on a large scale and to grasp the fact that capitalist society, at its present stage, is incapable of establishing a concept of the rights of all men, just as it has proved incapable of establishing a system of individual ethics" (37). By connecting the Holocaust to the systematic genocides of the "discovery" of the New World, slavery and the slave trade, and colonial encounters in all parts of the globe, Césaire takes the tenets of neoliberalism and capitalism and subjects them to the scrutiny of an "insider's" perspective on colonialism and imperialism.

⁵³ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon has recently argued for conceptual frameworks that consider forms of belonging and attachment beyond that of national origin or the nation state (*New World Drama* 14-15).

⁵⁴ Eve Tavor Bannet and Susan Manning in the introduction to their edited collection *Transatlantic Literary Studies* (2012) offer a transatlantic methodology centered on genre: "The organizing principle of the collection of essays in this collection is genre because – like people and with them – genres travel" (3). See also Eve Tavor Bannet's discussion of transatlantic reading methodologies, especially those anchored in print culture, in *Transatlantic Stories and a History of Reading* (2011; 2-12). In this project, I am suggesting a way of reading transatlantically organized within a nexus of performance practices centered in political theologies of finitude.

⁵⁵ Here, as I discuss more extensively in chapter one, I am drawing on Joseph Roach's definitions of performance in *Cities of the Dead* (1996), where he suggests that "the paradox" of performance "resides in the phenomenon of repetition itself: no action or sequence of actions may be performed exactly the same way twice; they must be reinvented or recreated at each appearance" (30).

⁵⁶ See Vincent Lloyd's *Black Natural Law* (2016), where he explores appeals to a theologically-rich natural law in nineteenth and early twentieth-century African American political theory and theology. Lloyd argues that such invocations of natural law by African American writers do not seek to implement divine law on earth, but work to mobilize communities towards active democratic engagement (see chapter 1 on Frederick Douglass, 11-54).

⁵⁷ Gauri Viswanathan in *Outside the Fold* (1998) reads the conversion experience, especially in colonial, imperial, or cross-cultural contact settings, as an exemplary political event, rather than solely spiritual: "If dissent expresses itself most powerfully as conversion, particularly to minority religions, the reasons are not hard to understand. By undoing the concept of fixed, unalterable identities, conversion unsettles the boundaries by which selfhood, citizenship, nationhood, and community are defined, exposing these as permeable borders" (16). He concludes: "Conversion is not limited to the function of either preserving or erasing identity but, in a far more complex ways, is associated with a deconstructive activity central to modernity itself" (76).

⁵⁸ In a 1769 letter, Ignatius Sancho, for instance, jests, "I am for my sins turned Methodist," while in a 1770 letter, he even more evocatively calls himself "half a Methodist" (34, 42). Such an ambivalent, halfway affiliations with evangelical Methodism on the one hand, demonstrate the extent to which Methodist "enthusiasm" became an object of ridicule in eighteenth-century Britain, as Misty G. Anderson has extensively examined. Sancho's equivocation, on the other hand, may also indicate a deeper conflict in identifying as evangelical for speakers and writers of color, given evangelicalism's often conflicted stances on British experiments in slavery and colonialism. See Mark Noll's *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (2003; 173-77, 230-4, and 253-79), John Wolffe's *The Expansion of Evangelicalism* (2007; 193-227), and Stefan Wheelock's *Barbaric Culture and Black Critique* (2015; 66-8).

⁵⁹ Selena Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon, was an important patroness of Methodism and founded numerous Methodist chapels, and had a particularly deep influence on eighteenth-century black authors. Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects* (1773) and Gronniosaw's *Remarkable Particulars* (1770?) are both dedicated to Hastings, and the Rev. Walter Shirley, a cousin of the Countess and a Methodist minister, provided the preface to Gronniosaw's *Remarkable Particulars*. John Marrant, finally, was ordained a Methodist minister in Hastings's Bath chapel in 1785, before he returned to Nova Scotia to preach to Loyalists who had settled there after the American Revolution. For accounts of Hastings's chapels in the Methodist "Connexion," see Boyd Stanley Schlenker's *Queen of the Methodists* (1997) and Alan Harding's *The Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion* (2003).

⁶⁰ For work on the intersections between colonial evangelicalism, race, and spiritual life writing, see also Angelo Costanzo's *Surprising Narrative* (1987; introduction), Keith Sandiford's *Measuring the Moment* (1988; 23-60); Eileen Razzari Elrod's *Piety and Dissent* (2008; 1-20), Jon Sensbach's *A Separate Canaan* (1998; 111-13) and *Rebecca's Revival* (2009; 43 and 62-65), and Vera B. Palmer's "The Devil in the Details: Converting an American Indian Conversion Narrative" in *Theorizing Native Studies* (2014; 266-96).

⁶¹ For scholarship on the religious basis for early Atlantic oppositional discourses of race, see Roxann Wheeler's *The Complexion of Race* (2000; 49-89), Joanna Brooks's *American Lazarus* (2003; 21-50), Kristina Bross's *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons* (2004; 28-51), Cedric May's *Evangelicalism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic* (2008; 2-23), Caleb Smith's *The Oracle and the Curse* (2013, especially chapter two), Katy Chiles's *Transformable Race* (2014; 13-37), Stefan M. Wheelock's *Barbaric Culture and Black Critique* (2016; introduction), and Jared Hickman's *Black Prometheus* (2017; 1-30).

⁶² For historical and critical accounts of evangelicalism in eighteenth-century Britain, Henry Rack's *Reasonable Enthusiast* (2002), Mark A. Noll's *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (2002), David Hempton's and *Methodism and Politics in British Society* (1984) and *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (2005), and Phyllis Mack's *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment* (2008). For accounts of evangelical religious encounter and race in the Americas, see Marilyn J. Westerkamp's *Women and Religion in Early America* (1999; 68-75), Susan Juster's *Doomsayers* (2010; 9-16) and Linda Gregerson and Susan Juster's *Empires of God* (2013; 70-86 and 123-42).

⁶³ Evangelical evental models of conversion contrast to more liturgical traditions where salvation is a process – for instance, on that is first enabled by infant baptism, then confirmation, and maintained through the sacraments of the Eucharist, confession, and (at the end of life) extreme unction.

⁶⁴ This is not to say that evangelical preachers or leaders framed evangelicalism in quite these terms (George Whitefield and Selena Hastings, for instance, were not in any sense abolitionists), or that evangelical theology itself necessarily made such distinctions between spiritual and secular identity categories (J. Cameron Carter and others have argued that a theology of race emerged in the eighteenth century). My aim is to untangle the spiritual commitments voiced in narratives by speakers and writers of color – to identify what elements of evangelical theology or practice contributed to varieties of faiths formed *in extremis*, as well as to mark where those spiritual expressions encounter hard limits based on minority communicants' experiences of racism, slavery, genocide, or displacement. Tracing where evangelicalism morphs into "something else" – radical millenarianism, for one, or a hedge for alternative and polyvocal religious fidelities, for another – remains one of my primary critical goals throughout this project.

⁶⁵ For discussions of conversion as the defining event of eighteenth-century evangelicalism, see David Hempton's *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (2005; 24-6, and 50-67).

⁶⁶ Michael Warner's essay "The Preacher's Footing" in William Warner and Clifford Siskin's *This is Enlightenment* (2010) uncovers within eighteenth-century evangelical discourse the condition of belief as a transportable embodied practice by returning to Ervin Goffman's notion of "footing." He argues that evangelicalism offered layers of embodied discourse and gesture mediated by traveling technologies of oral and print circulations. Warner's insight draws attention to the ways we can be attentive to how evangelical spiritual practices become embedded and then shared in embodied gestures, as well as in discrete, disembodied texts, which then circulated and migrate across the transatlantic world. For investigations of evangelical performance, theatricality, and race, see Nancy Ruttenburg's article "George Whitefield, Spectacular Conversion, and the Rise of Democratic Personality" in *American Literary History* (1993; 429-453), later included in *Democratic Personality* (1998; 31-82), Sandra Gustafson's *Eloquence is Power* (2000; 12-18, 40-50, and chapters two and three), and Misty G. Anderson's *Imagining Methodism* (2012; chapter four). For evangelical print worlds and the public sphere, see Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1971; 11, 62-8, and 90-1), Michael Warner's *The Letters of the Republic* (1992; 1-6, 19-35, and 56-8), Candy Gunther Brown's *The Word in the World* (2004; chapter 1), David Paul Nord's *Faith in Reading* (2006; 3-12), and Jennifer Snead's "Print, Predestination, and the Public Sphere: Transatlantic Evangelical Periodicals, 1740-1745" in *Early American Literature* (2010; 93-118).

⁶⁷ Stephen Best in *The Fugitive's Properties* (2004) examines the interconnection between fugitive slave codes, modern intellectual property rights, and what he calls an "aesthetics of legal representation," or a poetics of intangible, personified property out of abstract theories of personhood (14). Because churches (and their attendant liturgical and spiritual performances) often served as sites of redress, resistance, or surveillance in settler colonial orders, I want to reconsider how the performative habits and gestures of evangelical (or West African, Caribbean, and indigenous) spiritualities summoned models of individual and communal personhood that remained a portable possession for speakers and writers of color on the move.

⁶⁸ After settling in Nova Scotia with other black and white loyalists after the American Revolution, George fostered Baptist congregations within and on the outskirts of migrant settlements. The central concern of the

narrative focuses on George's spiritual pilgrimage towards Christian conversion and the congregations he then works to build as a Baptist preacher, but through a particular emphasis on the spaces available for black worship. In one narrative, he relates: "In my absence the Meeting house was occupied by a tavern-keeper, who said, 'The old Negro wanted to make a heaven of this place, but I'll make a hell of it.' Then I preached in it as before, and as my house was pulled down, lived in it also" (657). George's representation of the endangered church building imagines how sites of discourse are located in contested architectures of spiritual meaning and personal security and sanctuary to acts of violence. That the tavern keeper frames his destruction of George's home (and George's subsequent use of the church building as sanctuary) through the imagery of heaven and hell suggests how evangelical cosmic spatial categories are materialized through an audience's responses to the black preacher's voice.

⁶⁹ In thinking through the relationship between itinerancy, mourning, and spiritual performances for racial strangers, I am indebted to the work of April C. Langley's *Black Aesthetic Unbound* (2008). Langley analyzes the dilemmas encoded within eighteenth-century texts by African writers, such as Wheatley and Equiano, on mooring themselves to and mourning an African heritage lost during the Middle Passage (23). What I would like to analyze in addition to or alongside Langley's compelling portrait of the dilemmas of mourning are the ways in which mourning becomes re-moored to other spaces – such as the garden behind Gronniosaw's house – and thus locate a potential for alternative expressions of spiritual longing. See also David Kazanjian and David L. Eng's edited collection *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (2003; 1-28), especially Fred Moten's essay "Black Mo'nin'" (59-76), Dana Luciano's *Arranging Grief* (2007; 69-118 and 169-114), and Vincent Brown's *The Reaper's Garden* (2008; 61-63 and 86-90).

⁷⁰ See also Dana Nelson's recent *Commons Democracy* (2016), which takes up competing ideals of democratic participation narrated in early American literature, and argues that "everyday" political engagements foreground the vitality of "common" democratic spaces and practices (see especially 84-104 and 133-74).

⁷¹ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon in *New World Drama* has coined the term "aliterate" or "aliteracy" to account for speakers of color barred from participation in print world public spheres: "[T]he print public sphere is decisively limited by literacy in such a way that often renders this limitation largely outside the field of political and cultural vision and analysis. Individuals who do not read and writing in English in the eighteenth-century Anglo-Atlantic world tend to disappear from view in accounts of the print public sphere; more significantly, the a-literate are erased from the scene of cultural analysis as if access to literacy were a preexisting, structural constraint rather than a contingent, political division among diverse peoples" (14; see also discussion on 19-20). See also Robert Gunn's brilliant rendering of linguistic encounter (with a particular emphasis on non-print forms of communication, such as sign language) in *Ethnology and Empire* (2015; especially chapter two).

⁷² For scholarship that take up questions of race and performance in the colonial New World, specifically with regard to mourning, loss, and collectivity, Roach and Dillon are indispensable. For other studies of race, colonial performance cultures, and religion, see Sandra Gustafson's *Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (2000), Diana Taylor's *The Archive and the Repertoire* (2003; 134-57), Daphne Brooks's *Bodies in Dissent* (2006), and Joshua David Bellin and Laura L. Mielke's edited collection of essays *Native Acts: Indian Performance, 1603-1832* (2012).

⁷³ For more on Donatism, see Richard Miles's edited collection of essays *The Donatist Schism* (2016).

⁷⁴ See Misty G. Anderson's *Imagining Methodism* (2012; chapter four) for a reading of Methodist evangelical preaching and theatricality. She argues that the space of Methodist preaching constituted, borrowing from Joseph Roach, a "theater of the real," or a performative encounter between actor (preacher) and audience (congregation) where "something happens": "Methodism came to fruition at a time in theater history when the formal strategies of Quintilian were giving way to the new Garrick school of acting, which was at once natural and mechanical. Within that space, Methodism unsettled the boundary between actor and role, as well as the space between actor and audience in sermons that left congregants deeply moved, even changed, by this theater of the real ... [C]ritics of Methodists theatricality registered the powerful intersection of presence and performance in the Methodist meeting, and found themselves, through parodic imitation, in dialogue with Methodism's theatrical deep play" (131). Equiano seems, on the one hand, aware of the performative potential of an evangelical "theater of the real" to enact real spiritual effects on the audience, and yet, on the other hand, his practical facility in "playing the part" of the parson suggests an ambivalent skepticism over those possibilities.

⁷⁵ In one of the only sustained discussions of British abolitionism in Wedderburn's early writings, he opens his autobiographical *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824) by noting that famed abolitionist William Wilberforce visited him in prison and gave him two books (44). He relates that he received "ghostly consolation" from Wilberforce's visit, but his language quickly diverged from the meliorist and gradualist positions often supported by white antislavery advocates. Alan Rice argues in "Ghostly and Vernacular Presences in the Black Atlantic" (2012) that the "ghostly consolation" Wedderburn received from Wilberforce's visit and books inspired an anarchist and

millenarian vision that refused to fit within respectable abolitionist discourses, and suggests that the task of the critic is to construct more flexible historical narratives to account for these voices: “A full understanding of African-Atlantic writers and history in this period will require wider reference than the slave narrative which has been sanctioned by the makers of the black canon. A comprehensive reckoning of black Atlantic and abolitionist cultures in the eighteenth century must also pay as much attention to the still ghostly, female, and vernacular presences, and to complex figures who worked within the slave system, as to Wilberforce to the canon’s favored sons” (166). See also George Bouloukos’s *The Grateful Slave* (2008; 144 and 201-240).

⁷⁶ For a further consideration of Obeah, Jamaican spirituality, and practices of mourning and interment, see Vincent Brown’s *The Reaper’s Garden* (2008; 144-50 and 210-14).

⁷⁷ Despite the overt Christian language in the passage, the imperative to forgive becomes a peculiarly fraught ethical injunction. His grandmother forcefully distinguishes forgetting and forgiveness, and Wedderburn foregoes forgiveness entirely.

⁷⁸ In some ways then, the corrosive environments depicted in Prince’s narrative contests the kinds of agency and forms of resistance addressed by Monique Allewaert in *Ariel’s Ecology* (2013). Allewaert contends that Africans and indigenous persons in the Caribbean “exploit[ed] the conceptual ambiguity in colonial scientific, political, and legal categories” and improvised forms of belief, knowledge, and resistance out of African (Yoruba, Dahomey, and Congolese) and indigenous (Arawak) cosmologies and syncretic spiritualities (Santeria, Obeah, and Vodou) (6-7). Such “subaltern persons’ relations with the colonial natural world could result in incipiently political alliances” (7).

⁷⁹ I am then suggesting that the field of transatlantic studies, when rooted in appeals to earth’s limits by speakers and writers of color, necessarily also invokes a methodology of flesh. Such a methodology reads both the precarity and persistence of racial flesh (as bodily remains, as phenotype in racial and sexual discourses, as “blood” in scientific racism) in transatlantic literature and culture, and has been practiced by critics of African American literature (by, for instance, Hortense Spillers, especially in *Black, White, and in Color*), theologians and scholars of religion (such as M. Shawn Copeland in *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*), and philosophers (Jacques Rancière’s *The Flesh of Words* is but one example). Each, in different ways, brings critical and philosophical investigations of embodiment to a reading of literary and theological production.

⁸⁰ See, for instance, Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh’s *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2000), Marcus Rediker’s *The Slave Ship* (2008), and Stephanie Smallwood’s *Saltwater Slavery* (2009). See also the first volume of *Atlantic Studies* (2004) for productive discussions on the current state of oceanic models of critical inquiry, especially William Boelhower in “I’ll teach you how to flow’: On Figuring out Atlantic Studies” (28-48) and Jean-Philippe Mathy’s “The Atlantic as Metaphor” (107-117).

⁸¹ See, for example, Andrew Lipman’s *The Saltwater Frontier* (2015). In the field of indigeneity and British literary studies, oceanic methodological and critical frameworks have taken some amount of precedence. See, for instance, Tim Fulford’s *Romantic Indians: Native Americans, British Literature, and Transatlantic Culture* (2006), and Tim Fulford and Kevin Hutchings edited collection *Native Americans and Anglo-American Culture, 1750-1850: The Indian Atlantic* (2009).

⁸² I remain especially mindful of Colin Dayan’s critique of Paul Gilroy’s *Black Atlantic* in her review of the text: “The Black Atlantic refers to, and stresses again and again, the rites of the Middle Passage ... as a kind of origin myth for later chosen tales of ocean crossings by Wright, Du Bois, Douglass, and others who make a modern journey from the Americas to Europe. Yet, there is something oddly dissembling about those sites of what Gilroy calls ‘contamination.’ For the idea of slavery, so central to his argument (and necessary to our understanding of what he calls the enlightened ‘complicity of reason and terror’) becomes nothing more than a metaphor” (7).

⁸³ See Elizabeth Povinelli’s *The Empire of Love* (2006; introduction), Lisa Lowe’s *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015; introduction), and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon’s conference talk entitled “Sororal Assemblage and the Performative Commons: Caribbean Connections,” given at the 2017 Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference in Tulsa (March 4, 2017).

⁸⁴ While providing an exhaustive bibliography of queer theory in the fields of American, African-American, and Caribbean studies would be a goal beyond the purposes of this endnote, for considerations of queer theory in early or modern American literature that remain attentive to queer kinship attachments, see Valerie Rohy’s *Impossible Women* (2000; 5-11 and 42-63) and *Lost Causes* (2014; 20-38, 53-61, and 140-62), Michael Warner’s *Publics and Counterpublics* (2005; 209-24), Lauren Berlant’s *The Female Complaint* (2008; 19-21, 45-59, and 71-7) and *Cruel Optimism* (2011; chapters three and four), Elizabeth Freeman’s *Time Binds* (2010; 14-18, 37-57, and 140-41), Mark Rifkin’s *Settler Common Sense* (2014; introduction), and Denis Flannery’s *On Sibling Love, Queer Attachment in American Writing* (2016; introduction and chapter six). For studies that examine queer attachments improvised within enslaved, minority, and indigenous frameworks, see Joanne Barker’s *Native Acts* (2011; 189-

228), and Mark Rifkin's *When Did Indians Become Straight?* (2011; 3-44), and *The Erotics of Sovereignty* (2012; introduction). For queer attachments between women and alternative kinship affiliations in nineteenth- and twentieth-century African American and Caribbean literature, see Audre Lorde's *Sister, Outsider* (1984; 72-80), Siobhan B. Somerville's *Queering the Color Line* (2000; 81-4), Roderick Ferguson's *Aberrations in Black* (2004; 1-30), Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley's *Thiefing Sugar* (2010; 1-28 and 25-34), Keja Valens's *Desire Between Women in Caribbean Literature* (2013; chapter three), Zoran Pecic's *Queer Narratives of the Caribbean Diaspora* (2013; chapter four), Nadia Ellis's *Territories of the Soul* (2015; introduction), and Thelathia Nikki Young's *Black Queer Ethics, Family, and Philosophical Imagination* (2016; introduction).

⁸⁵ For readings of the narratological frameworks, ecological resistant possibilities and wastes of plantation economies and relations, see Sylvia Wynter's "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation" in *Savacou* (1971; 95-102), Monique Allewaert's *Ariel's Ecology* (2013), and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert's "Bagasse: Caribbean Art and the Debris of the Sugar Plantation" in *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities* (2014; 73-94).

⁸⁶ For investigations of heterodox queerness, evangelicalism, or spirituality in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American religious cultures, see D. Michael Quinn's *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans* (2001), Peter Coviello's *Tomorrow's Parties* (2013; 1-28 and 104-28), and Elizabeth Freeman's lecture, "Queer Sense Methods," delivered at the 2015 Futures of American Studies Institute (June 25, 2015). Much of the most important work in this emergent field are appearing as articles. See, for instance, Jordan Stein's "American Literary History and Queer Temporalities" in *American Literary History* (2013; 855-69), as well as the special issue in *Early American Studies* (Fall 2014), "Beyond Binaries: Critical Approaches to Sex and Gender in Early America," especially Greta LaFleur's "Sex and 'Unsex': Histories of Gender Trouble in Eighteenth-Century North America" (469-99), Scott Larson's "'Indescribable Being': Theological Performances of Genderlessness in the Society of the Publick Universal Friend, 1776-1819" (576-600), and T.R. Nodding's "Consecrated Merchants and Midnight Criers: Commercial Evangelicalism and a Jazz Theory of Gender Distinctions in Nineteenth-Century America" (601-25).

⁸⁷ As David J. Carlson observes, Apess's understanding of the relationship between law, right, and property is a necessarily ambivalent improvisation formed out of his experiences of indigenous dispossession, his spiritual and tribal identities, and American traditions of jurisprudence: his "sense of Indianness is as deeply informed by Methodism and the common law as by tribal memory and oral tradition" (12). For considerations of territory, common land, and human rights discourse in Apess's writings, see Carlson's *Sovereign Selves* (2006; 91-121) and *Imagining Sovereignty* (2016; 92-95), and Lisa Brooks's *The Common Pot* (2008; 181-93).

⁸⁸ Attending to narratives composed at the end of the eighteenth century allows me to focus on a gradual shift in mourning repertoires that was occurring as the century closed.⁸⁸ Mitchell Breitwieser has argued in *American Puritanism and the Defense of Mourning* (1990) that a Puritan ethic for mourning dominated early American mourning cultures until the middle of the eighteenth-century. As he describes, this Puritan ethic emphasized a "Christian stoicism that measures grief, that is, confines or limits grief to a defined interval and a well-bounded area in the terrain of resolve" (59). In turning to the nineteenth century, Dana Luciano's *Arranging Grief* (2007) contends that organizations of temporality as progressive and linear summoned new arrangements of sorrow that encourage mourners to alter or suspend time: "Grief constituted one of the body's ways of acknowledging the objective status of linear time, which generated its occasions; yet the enticements associated with what nineteenth-century mourning manuals referred to as the 'luxury of grief' in this period offered, if not a way of stopping time, a means of altering the shape and textures of its flow" (2). While some of writers and speakers of color I address perform a version of Puritan stoicism (perhaps most clearly seen in many of Wheatley's elegies), few of the mourning repertoires represented by these figures have the "luxury" of extended and extensive exercises of sorrow. The protracted movement of grief advised in the mourning manuals Luciano explores unevenly graft onto the experiences of racial migrants, who, more often than not, face real consequences for their frequent displacement and dispossession, such as access to graveyards, or clergy willing to read the burial litany over their kin. In lingering within a historical landscape where mourning repertoires are shifting between ethics of Puritan stoicism and prolonged grief, this project focuses on how burial practices performed by African American and indigenous communities refuse to fully embody either tradition.

⁸⁹ Paul's sense of living in a contracted present is also represented as an *as if* or *as though*, translated from the Greek, *hōs mē*. Paul first describes this messianic *as if* in the first epistle to the Corinthians in a passage resonate for reading speakers and writers of color: "This is what I mean, brethren: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as if they had none, and those who mourn, as if they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as if they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as if they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as if they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away" (I. Cor. 7:29-31). Paul has sometimes been read as encouraging a kind of political quietism, implying, "Do not worry

about your station, vocation, or marital status and do not try to change it. The Lord is coming swiftly.” Yet, as Giorgio Agamben reminds us in *The Time That Remains* (2005), in this passage Paul makes a messianic distinction between performing *use* and *ownership* in a liturgically aware present: “[T]o remain in the calling in the form of the [*hōs mē*] means to not ever make the calling an object of ownership, only of use” (26).

Chapter One Endnotes

¹ The litany notes, “After they are come into the Church, shall be read one or both of these Psalms following,” with Psalm 39 and then Psalm 90 included.

² Theologians may specifically point to the theological doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which suggests that the separation of soul and body in death are merely temporary. Paul, for instance, famously describes the resurrection of the dead in 1 Corinthians 15: “The body that is sown perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (15:42-3). See also Karl Barth’s indispensable *The Resurrection of the Dead* (1933).

³ Although I do not address it fully in this chapter, it is worth asking how practices of spirituality grounded in voicing, “I am a stranger,” can also impede imagining an environmental ethic attentive to ecological collapse. In evangelical theology, the material world is framed as temporary (Revelations speaks of a “new heaven and a new earth” to come). Environmental devastation, furthermore, is read as the result of sin, as Paul wrote in the letter to the Romans, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (8:22). How might an environmental ethic attentive to climatological catastrophe coexist with these spiritual practices? By addressing questions of earthly rite, morbid futurity, and collective possession in the earth’s surface, it is my hope that my reading of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century African American and indigenous writers identifies models of thought and practice that remain subterraneously present in Christianity that can nevertheless still attend to ecological destruction and finitude.

⁴ See n.60 in the introduction for scholarship on Hastings and her significance within early Methodist evangelical ecclesiastical and print circuits.

⁵ In thinking through how models of spiritual autobiography framed and mediated the life histories of African-descended and indigenous writers, I am influenced by scholars of Puritan and early eighteenth-century spiritual autobiography, notably G.A. Starr’s *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (1965), Patricia Meyer Spacks’s *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (1976), Patricia Caldwell’s *The Puritan Conversion Narrative* (1985), and, more recently, D. Bruce Hindmarsh’s *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (2005), and well as scholars of African American and indigenous life writing, especially Joanna Brooks’s indispensable *American Lazarus* (2003).

⁶ See David Paul Nord’s *Faith in Reading* (2006), which explores the theological, technological, and institutional formations of mass media in the United States from 1800-1840. Nord argues that early evangelical print organizations, such as the Philadelphia Bible Society, the American Tract Society, the American Bible Society, the American Sunday School Union, form the genesis of the modern non-profit or not-for-profit organization. He thus carefully investigates the organizational elements of non-profit work – bureaucratic organization, funding practices, debates surrounding the question of the “free rider,” etc. – and links these debates to the discursive and theological commitments of evangelical communities. In what I found to be the most fascinating move of the book, Nord uses these investigations as an entry point for discussing reading practices and interpretive communities in the early United States, particularly in the expanding West. He close reads colporteurs’ (agents selling the Bibles and tracts) reports as a means for uncovering both resistance to evangelical reading practices and vestiges of older veneration of books, even for the non-literate.

⁷ In *Imagining Methodism in 18th Century Britain* (2012), Misty G. Anderson analyzes representations of Methodist enthusiastic excess and radical conversion within Methodist writings and within the broader print culture in which Methodism was criticized and satirized. She argues that these early features of Methodist spirituality and practice provoked anxiety over emerging models of the self in the eighteenth century, and contends that representations of Methodist affect problematize the lucidity of Enlightenment formulations of the autonomous, self-conscious self: “Methodism became a flashpoint for eighteenth-century conceptions of modernity because it captured both the anxiety about whether a self could be autonomous and cognitively coherent, and the longing for intimate connection with the other in a material world of cognitive isolation” (3). This feature of Methodist self-articulation becomes crucial when read along racial boundaries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When the

question of intimate connection is figured through bodies marked by difference, Methodism gains a potentially radical transformative social energy, but also exhibits anxiety over the very terms of that energy. Thus, alongside more visible Methodist circles, such as John Wesley's preaching circuit or George Whitefield and Selena Hastings's Connexion, Methodism proved to be a highly malleable evangelical movement, and often manifested along a wide spectrum of what would be considered orthodox or heterodox according to Anglican Christianity.

⁸ In analyzing the varied forms that publics take, Warner extends and modifies Habermas's account of the rise of the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth century. Warner argues: "A stronger modification of Habermas's analysis – one in which he has shown little interest, though it is clearly of major significance in the critical analysis of gender and sexuality – is that some publics are defined by their tension with a larger public. Their participants are marked off from persons or citizens in general. Discussion within such a public is understood to contravene the rules obtaining in the world at large, being structured by alternative dispositions or protocols, making different assumptions about what can be said or what goes without saying. This kind of public is, in effect, a counterpublic: it maintains at some level, conscious or not, an awareness of its subordinate status ... A counterpublic in this sense is usually related to a subculture, but there are important differences between these concepts. A counterpublic, against the background of the public sphere, enables a horizon of opinions and exchange; its exchanges remain distinct from authority and can have a critical relation to power; its extent is in principle indefinite, because it is not based on a precise demography but mediated by print, theater, diffuse networks of talk, commerce, and the like" (56-57). I would argue, however, that Warner's argument in *Publics and Counterpublics* remains – with one exception – reticent on matters of race (see chapter four, "A Soliloquy 'Lately Spoken at the African Theatre': Race and the Public Sphere in New York City, 1821, which, to my mind, examines the historical context of the "Soliloquy, without undertaking to theorize it extensively). More broadly, Warner's notion of "subaltern counterpublics" is still useful for holistically addressing racial counterpublics, especially for the spaces where performance, rituals and practices, and oral traditions might be significant factors in forming counterpublics by writers and speakers of color.

⁹ For other treatments of early African American print culture, see Meredith McGill's *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting* (2003), Frances Smith Foster's "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Development of African American Print Culture" in *American Literary History* (2005; 714-40), Jeannine DeLombard's *Slavery on Trial* (2007), Michael Drexler and Ed White's edited collection *Beyond Douglass* (2008), Leon Jackson's "The Talking Book and the Talking Book Historian: African American Cultures of Print – the State of the Discipline" in *Book History* (2010; 251-308), Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Stein's edited collection *Early African American Print Culture* (2014).

¹⁰ Occom and Wheatley corresponded with each other, although Occom's letters are no longer extant (see *Complete Writings* 152). We know Wheatley was also aware of Gronniosaw's narrative. In a letter to Hastings, Wheatley writes of the *Remarkable Particulars*: "It gives me very great satisfaction to hear of an African so worth to be honour'd with your Ladship's appropriation & Friendship as him whom you call your Brother. I rejoice with your Ladship in that Fund of Mental Felicity which you cannot but be possessed of, in the consideration of your exceeding great reward. My great opinion of your Ladship's goodness, leads to believe, I have an interest in your most happy hours of communion, with your most indulgent Father and our great and common Benefactor" (145).

¹¹ See especially Pratt's discussion of forms of evangelical strangerhood and the fugitive slave narrative (53-4).

¹² By addressing the interconnectedness of mourning performances and spirituality, I see this chapter as an eighteenth-century, early American preamble to Dana Luciano's *Arranging Grief* (2007).

¹³ Gronniosaw represents Whitefield as a patron and situates him within a network of Christian charity and hospitality. When he first arrives in England, Gronniosaw's naiveté and his inability to properly calculate money advertises him as an easy mark for unscrupulous swindlers. He thus reaches out to Whitefield primarily for financial reasons: "I thought the best method that I could take now, was to go to *London*, and find out Mr. *Whitefield*, who was the only living soul I knew in *England*, and get him to direct me to some way or other to procure a living without being troublesome to any person" (46-7). Gronniosaw concludes his description of Whitefield by invoking his hospitality: "Mr. *Whitefield* received me very friendly, was heartily glad to see me, and directed me to a proper place to board and lodge in Petticoat-lane, till he could think of some way to settle me in, and paid for my lodging, and all my expenses" (47).

¹⁴ For an in-depth examination of Gronniosaw's incorporation into a network of Calvinist (through either Hastings's Connexion or Baptist and Congregationalist variants), see Ryan Hanley's "Calvinism, Proslavery, and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw" (2015; 366-69 and 371-75). See Joanna Brooks's *American Lazarus* (2003; 93-94) for a short account of the Connexion's split from Wesleyan Methodism. See also David Ceri Jones, Boyd

Stanley Schlenker, and Eryn Mant White's *The Elect Methodists* for a full history of Calvinist Methodism (2012; 154-194).

¹⁵ The publication date for Gronniosaw's *Remarkable Particulars* is sometimes given as 1770 and sometimes 1772. Its publication history is especially complicated and difficult to trace. As Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr note, the publication history is "made ever more difficult by inconsistent records in key references" (24). Because, "some of the 'editions' may represent confluents or multiple copies of one issue," they provide a list, in chronological order, for the different imprints and editions identified as Gronniosaw's narrative (25).

¹⁶ Helena Woodard and Ryan Hanley have both argued that Gronniosaw's *Remarkable Particulars* is (in Woodard's words) "subdued" on the topic of slavery (35). Hanley has argued that Gronniosaw's position in the text approximates that of Selena Hastings and George Whitefield, who took proslavery positions (373). Stephen Stein, addressing Whitefield's proslavery position, argues: "In the middle of the eighteenth century as he traveled up and down the American seaboard electrifying the English colonies with his preaching, Whitefield showed a special concern for the plight of slaves in America. Despite this concern, a nagging fear of insurgency by the blacks gripped him and shaped his reflections about the institution of slavery" (243). Stein further suggests that Whitefield was the probable author of *A Letter to the Negroes Lately Converted to Christ in the Americas* (1743), a "theological apology for slavery which also emphasized the necessity of Christian evangelism among the blacks (243). Keith Sandiford, on the other hand, contends that Whitefield's motives for supporting slavery were far from altruistic: "Yet Whitefield stopped short of urging full cessation of the slave trade. In fact, he convinced himself that hot regions could only be cultivated by slave labor, and he was instrumental in forcing the repeal of Oglethorpe's original edict against slavery in Georgia. He rejoiced at the opportunity to own slaves and to instruct them in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord.' Whitefield's overall attitude, therefore, was a mixture of the selfish interests of the property holder and the benevolent paternalism of the missionary" (53). The Countess of Huntingdon was in a similar position. She owned property in America, and, according to Cedric May, "had never given high priority to Christianizing her slaves or any other slaves" (74-5). Sandiford nevertheless recognizes that Methodism, and Evangelicalism more broadly, offered an egalitarian religious position which deeply appealed to African-descended peoples: "The Methodist Revival was calculated to espouse the cause of freedom for the slaves. Methodists were committed to the relief of suffering and their charitable ministry extended to all manner of poor and destitute people" (52).

¹⁷ By naming Gronniosaw a "dissenter," a term which encompasses a wide range of denominations, liturgical practices, ecclesiastical organization, and theological differences in the eighteenth-century, I hope to acknowledge that Gronniosaw had contact with multiple manifestations of Protestant evangelicalism. His master, Theodorus Frelinghuysen, was a Dutch Reformed minister, and apparently had a profound impact on Gronniosaw's religious orientation. Gronniosaw also apparently had contact with nascent Methodism (not technically a separate denomination yet when the narrative was published), and mentions his acquaintance with George Whitefield. Gronniosaw never self-identifies as a particular observer of any denomination in the *Remarkable Particulars*, although he and his wife Betty eventually joined a Baptist church, and had connections to Quakers, Dutch Calvinists, and Congregationalists in England. Kathleen Chater calls Gronniosaw a "Baptist" in *Untold Histories* (21), and the fact that Gronniosaw's young daughter was unbaptized when she died suggests that he and his wife initially did not practice infant baptism (although, as Hanley points out, later records show that they baptized their other children).

¹⁸ Kathleen Chater in *Untold Histories* explains: "Stillborn children and unbaptised people, as well as suicides and those who had been excommunicated, were interred either in unconsecrated ground or in a segregated part of the churchyard, usually the north side. A burial service would not be read over such people" (21). Given that Gronniosaw's daughter was not baptized, it is not surprising that she would not have had the burial service read over her. Chater, furthermore, in her exhaustive historical research into the period has argued that segregation and race prejudice similar to that encountered in nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries communities in the United States was not present in eighteenth-century Britain: "Black people were baptised and buried in the same churches as the white population: there was no segregation. Inquests were as carefully carried out on them, as on the white population, and eighteenth-century newspaper reports mentioned their involvement in events without any racialised comments on their colour or ethnicity" (1).

¹⁹ For criticism on Gronniosaw, see Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *The Signifying Monkey* (1988; 132-44). Helena Woodard's *African British Writing in the 18th Century* (1999; 31-66), Christine Levecq's *Slavery and Sentiment* (2008; 49-52), and Eve Tavor Bannet's *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading* (2011; 140-57). See also Michael J.C. Echeruo's "Theologizing 'Underneath the Tree': An African 'Topos' in Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, William Blake, and William Cole" in *Research in African Literatures* (1992; 51-8), Jennifer Harris's "Seeing the Light: Re-Reading James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw" in *English Language Notes* (2005; 44-57), Tom

Wickman's "Arithmetic and Afro-Atlantic Pastoral Protest: The Place of (In)Numeracy in Gronniosaw and Equiano" in *Atlantic Studies* (2011; 182-212), Andrew M Pisano's "Reforming the Literary Black Atlantic: Worshipful Resistance in the Transatlantic World" in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (2015; 81-100), and Ryan Hanley's "Calvinism, Proslavery, and James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw" in *Slavery and Abolition* (2015; 360-81).

²⁰ The role Islam played in enslaved religious experience across the Americas remains an important way to discover what parts of a prior African heritage may have been retained by slaves once they arrived in the New World. For studies on Islam among the slaves, see Allan D. Austin's *African Muslims in Antebellum America* (1997), Sylviane Diouf's *Servants of Allah* (1998), and Michael A. Gomez's *Black Crescent* (2005; chapters 1-5). For studies of Islam and the institution of slavery on the African continent, see Humphrey J. Fisher's *Slavery in the History of Black Muslim Africa* (2001), Ronald Segal's *Islam's Black Slaves* (2002), and William Gervase Clarence-Smith's *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (2006). For a biography of Abdul Rhaman Sori, an African prince (like Gronniosaw) enslaved in the American South, see Terry Alford's *Prince Among Slaves* (1986). For readings on representations of and negotiations with Islam in the Anglo-American transatlantic, see Humberto Garcia in *Islam and the English Enlightenment* (2011), which has recently argued that Western Christianity, particularly in the eighteenth century, often understood itself against representations of Islam. For a specific example of this dialect playing out, see also Gerald R. McDermott's *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods* (2000; 166-175).

²¹ Harris specifically addresses remnants of Islamic practice that are described or evaded in Gronniosaw's *Remarkable Particulars*. One practice that he seems to describe is the salah, or morning prayers (43-4). She also attends to questions of Gronniosaw's literacy, reading his famous "talking book" section as an instance of his "willful elision" of prior Islamic fidelity, since as a Muslim, "in no way could he have been unfamiliar with the written word as he claimed" (48-9).

²² See especially Fatwa 6496 (<http://islamqa.info/en/ref/6496>).

²³ One tradition, for instance, reports that as the funeral progression of a Jew passed before Prophet Muhammad, as a sign of respect he stood up. In doing this, he shared in the feeling of sorrow with Jewish family and community. "Why did you stand up for a Jewish funeral?" Muhammed was asked, and the Prophet replied: "Is it not a human soul?" (see Sahih Bukhari, Tradition Number 1311).

²⁴ As Maulana Muhammad Ali's edition of *The Muslim Prayer Book* (1998) notes, "The service may be held anywhere, in a mosque or in an open space or even in a graveyard if sufficient ground is available there" (37).

²⁵ This gesture is common in forms of life writing that draw from the narrative frameworks of slave and conversion narratives. In a generic sense, these texts often juxtapose spiritual idioms of salvation and freedom from the bondage of sin with civil and legal forms of freedom from slavery.

²⁶ Equiano, for instance, also had recourse to an interesting spiritual idiom when describing his manumission: "All within my breast was tumult, wildness, and delirium! My feet scarcely touched the ground, for they were winged with joy, and, like Elijah, as he rose to Heaven, they 'were with lightning sped as I went on'" (105).

²⁷ Eve Tavor Bannet in *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading* (2011), contends, "There is fairly widespread agreement among scholars that Occom's Christianity was syncretic. Occom tells us himself that he acted both as a spiritual guide and as a medicine man or healer, thus more in the manner of a traditional shaman or powwow than of a Western clergyman" (175).

²⁸ On Occom's education, see Lisa Brooks's *The Common Pot* (2008; 884-99), and Hilary Wyss's *Writing Indians* (2000; 123-56) and *English Letters and Indian Literacies* (2012; 11-14, 24-30, and 56-79).

²⁹ For further analyses of Occom's autobiographical and religious writings, see Hilary Wyss's *Writing Indians* (2000; 123-160), David J. Carlson's *Sovereign Selves* (2005; 74-83), Joanna Brooks's *American Lazarus* (2007; 51-86), Eileen Razzari Elrod's *Piety and Dissent* (2008; 21-37), and Eve Tavor Bannet's *Transatlantic Stories and the History of Reading* (2011; 163-175).

³⁰ Although few of Occom's writings appeared in print during his lifetime, he was a prolific writer in multiple forms and genres, including sermons, hymns, autobiography, letters, medical writings on herbs and roots, and treaties and other kinds of political writing. "A Short Narrative of My Life" (1764), *A Sermon Preached at the Execution of Moses Paul* (1772), and *A Choice Collection of Hymns and Spiritual Songs* (1774) all appeared in print or were widely circulated in manuscript in his lifetime, while fuller collections of his writings have only appeared more recently, notably in Joanna Brooks's *The Collected Writings of Samson Occom, Mohegan* (2006).

³¹ For more on the Stockton and Brotherton communities, see David J. Silverman's *Red Brethren* (2010), and Drew Lopenzina's *Red Ink* (2012; chapter 5).

³² Olaudah Equiano's description of Whitefield in the *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789) functions in important ways to rethink the relationship between spiritual exertion and slave labor. When

Equiano pushes through the crowd enough to actually *see* Whitefield, what follows is not a description of his words, but of Whitefield's laboring body: "When I got into the church I saw this pious man exhorting the people with the greatest fervour and earnestness, and sweating as much as I ever did while in slave on Montserrat beach. I was very much struck and impressed with this; I thought it strange I had never seen divines exert themselves in this manner before, and I was no longer at a loss to account for the thin congregations they preached to" (102). Equiano's analogy – that Whitefield is sweating as much as Equiano ever did as a slave – elevates physical exertion to the level of religious ecstasy. By comparing Whitefield's preaching to the exertion expended by slaves, and then contrasting that effort with the indifference he sees from most ministers, Equiano charges the clergy he has seen with a spiritual apathy differing sharply with the effects of forced labor. The slave's body becomes the measuring rod by which to quantify Whitefield's sincerity. Whitefield's laboring body then becomes part of a larger Atlantic economy as Equiano moves on to narrate his travels between the slave societies of the Americas and the Caribbean. It is significant, therefore, that despite the "proof" Equiano has of Whitefield's religious enthusiasm and sincerity, Whitefield's words do not initiate his own conversion. Equiano's actual moment of conversion, his "uncommon commotions within, such as few can tell ought about," takes place much later in the *Interesting Narrative* and is not framed as a result of hearing Whitefield preach (145). Whitefield therefore figures only briefly in Equiano's narrative. Equiano uses his presence to make a point about slavery and to critique the church, rather than to describe the impact of Whitefield's words on the psyche of the penitent.

³³ Adam Potkay and Sandra Burr explain: "Whitefield himself – as a preacher and as a man – is a crucial presence in early black Atlantic autobiography. All but Cugoano heard or professed to have heard Whitefield's eloquence and testified to its power to captivate and convert an audience" (8).

³⁴ See also Joanna Brooks's analysis of the dream in her edition of Occom's works (8, 244-47). See also Jessica M. Parr's discussion of *Inventing George Whitefield* (2015; 103-104).

³⁵ For the spiritual significance of interpretation of dreams in Mohegan culture, see William Scranton Simmons's *The Spirit of the New England Tribes* (1986; 163, 249-50).

³⁶ See also Michael Warner's essay "The Preacher's Footing" from William Warner and Clifford Siskin's *This is Enlightenment* (2010; 368-83). Regarding Whitefield, Warner pays particular attention to debates surrounding extempore preaching in the eighteenth century, and Whitefield's persistent use of it. As Warner notes, extempore preaching offered a range of questions to critics about religious subjectivity, theologies of salvation, and human response to the Gospel: "What was the objection to Whitefield's extemporizing? It was not, as modern critics have been tempted to think, the demotic appeal of something now called 'orality'; in fact ... testimony complains extensively of Whitefield's use of print, and in particular, his published journal. Extempore preaching, they thought, weakened the necessity of a clerical office set apart through learning and intramural communication. The preference for learned, composed, and memorized sermons encoded a thick set of norms about preacherly speech and the relationships that constituted it. Extempore preaching ... also reinforced another Whitefield departure, the doctrine of an 'inner assurance' of salvation ... The subjectivity at stake in hearing sermons was ... perceived to be at issue" (372).

³⁷ Nancy Ruttenberg argues in "George Whitefield, Spectacular Conversion, and the Rise of Democratic Personality" (1993) that Whitefield's preaching style and religious persona enabled a reconfiguration of the relationship of power between lay congregants and pastors in early America and Britain: "Both the vocal, if inarticulate and even hysterical, 'enthusiasm' of the revivalists' congregations (the seemingly irrepressible 'roarings, agonies, screamings, tremblings, drop-ping-down, ravings' [Whitefield, Works 4: 160]) as well as the emergence of lay exhorters initiated the debate we normally associate with the Revolution concerning the people's voice – its provenance and the scope and nature of its representativeness" (431). Ruttenberg is particularly interested in the potential for political democracy inherent in Whitefield's negotiation of "empowerment through meekness," which allowed for the balance of power to shift from ministers to congregations – spiritual practices that were peculiarly ripe targets for caricature and satire by anti-Methodist press: "The deference traditionally accorded the Puritan clergy gave way to a spirit of popular criticism while the respectful silence customarily observed in Puritan churches was broken by the cries and groans of the congregation" (429).

³⁸ For folklore on dogs barking in anticipation of death, see Josepha Sherman's *Storytelling: An Encyclopedia of Mythology and Folklore* (2008; 120-1).

³⁹ Taylor draws on Derrida's formulation of "hauntology" in *Specters of Marx*, where he reads a host of spectral presences within the political and economic aspirations of debt relations and global capitalism. His meditation on the temporal arrangements of the specter near the opening of *Specters of Marx*, where he muses on the ghosts of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, is crucial for understanding both Taylor's engagement with bodies and temporalities in *The Archive and the Repertoire*, and Occom's interactions with Whitefield's ghost: "Repetition and

first time: this is perhaps the question of the ghost ... Repetition *and* first time, but also repetition *and* last time, since the singularity of any *first time*, makes of it also a *last time*. Each time it is the event itself, a first time is a last time. Altogether other. Staging for the end of history. Let us call it a *hauntology* ... It would comprehend within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves” (10).

⁴⁰ For critical assessments of Wheatley’s classicism, see Paula Bennett’s “Phillis Wheatley’s Vocation and the Paradox of the ‘African Muse’” (1998; 64-76), Lucy K. Hayden’s “Classical Tidings from the Afric Muse: Phillis Wheatley’s Use of Greek and Roman Mythology” (1992; 432-47), Carla Willard’s “Wheatley’s Turns of Praise: Heroic Entrapment and the Paradox of Revolution” (1995; 233-55), and John C Shields’s “Phillis Wheatley’s Use of Classicism” (1980; 97-111) and “Phillis Wheatley’s Subversive Pastoral” (1993-4; 631-47), as well as the essays collected in *New Essays on Phillis Wheatley* (ed. John C. Shields, 2011) and Shields’s *The American Aeneas: Classical Origins of the American Self* (2001).

⁴¹ See n.96.

⁴² Wheatley’s dedication to Hastings reads:

“DEDICATION
To the Right Honorable the
COUNTESS OF HUNTINGDON,
THE FOLLOWING
POEMS
Are most respectfully
Inscribed,
By her much obliged,
Very humble,
And devoted Servant,
Phillis Wheatley,
Boston, June 12, 1773” (3).

⁴³ According to John Shields’s *Phillis Wheatley and the Romantics* (2010), Wheatley’s poems were excerpted in multiple texts by European male writers, including Thomas Clarkson’s *Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species* (1787), Gilbert Imlay’s *Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America* (1793), and John Gabriel Stedman’s *Narrative of a Five Years’ Expedition against the Revolted Negroes of Suriname* (1796). On the continent, excerpts and translations of Wheatley’s poetry appeared in the works of Johann Blumenbach and Henri Grégoire. John C. Shields in *Phillis Wheatley and the Romantics* (2010) traces these excerpts and argues that members of the British and European Romantic movements possibly encountered Wheatley as a proto-Romantic poet, especially given that the poems excerpted were often from what Shields calls her “long poem,” or “Thoughts on Providence,” “On Recollection,” and “On Imagination” (55-66). Vincent Carretta, furthermore, addresses John Wesley’s republications of variant versions Wheatley’s poems (*Genius in Bondage*, 188-89), and Jennifer Rene Young analyzes references to Wheatley and her poetry in the American antebellum press in “Marketing a Sable Muse: Phillis Wheatley and the Antebellum Press” (2011; 209-46). Anna Brickhouse, finally, investigates French translations of Wheatley’s poetry in the Francophone Caribbean in the nineteenth-century in *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (2009; 100-115). Joseph Rezek takes as his point of departure in “The Print Atlantic: Phillis Wheatley, Ignatius Sancho, and the Cultural Significance of the Book” Ignatius Sancho’s response to Wheatley’s book of poetry, and suggests: “The appearance of the first books by black writers forced readers in the Anglophone world to decide if they agreed with Sancho that there was a necessary irony in the enslavement of an author” (21). Rezek, furthermore, foregrounds “the role that materiality could play in influencing” the reception of a work by a black author, and argues, “Eighteenth-century print culture, and specifically the meanings readers assigned to the printed book as a class of material texts, helped determine the way writers like Wheatley and Sancho were received and how their work influenced debates about slavery” (21).

⁴⁴ John Shields has argued that Wheatley’s classicism was readily and totally absorbed within her Christianity (*Collected Works*, 250).

⁴⁵ For critical readings of Wheatley’s elegies, especially their religious contexts, see Paula Bennett’s “Phillis Wheatley’s Vocation and the Paradox of the ‘Afric Muse’” in *PMLA* (1998; 64-76), Gordon Thompson’s “Methodism and the Consolation of Heavenly Bliss in Phillis Wheatley’s Funeral Elegies” in *CLA* (2004; 34-50), and Jennifer Thomas’s “Phillis Wheatley’s Ghosts: The Racial Melancholy of New England Protestants” in *Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* (2009; 73-99).

⁴⁶ In Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1782), as Jennifer Thorn reminds us, "Jefferson denigrates Wheatley by name, saying that though "religion" can produce a poet like her, blacks are incapable of true poetry because they grieve only fleetingly" (248).

⁴⁷ I wish particularly to thank Nicole A. Spigner, who first brought this poem to my attention, and to whose dissertation and subsequent work on Wheatley I am much indebted, especially her dissertation project, *Niobe Repeating: Black New Women Rewrite Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Vanderbilt University, 2014; see pgs. 44-87).

⁴⁸ In the fragments of Aeschylus's drama *Niobe* that survive, Niobe apparently sits for the first part of the drama on stage, veiled and silent. See A.D. Fitton Brown's "Niobe" in *The Classical Quarterly* (1954; 175-180).

⁴⁹ Wheatley's praise of Wilson anticipates another poem that would appear near the end of *Poems on Various Subjects*. In a poem dedicated to a fellow African artist, Scipio Moorhead. "To S.M. a young African painter, on seeing his Works," Wheatley begins by affirming Moorhead's possession of a creative faculty that establishes lines of affective reciprocity between the artist, the work, and the perceiver of the final creative product:

To show the lab'ring bosom's deep intent,
And thought in living characters to paint,
When first thy pencil did those beauties give,
And breathing figures learn from thee to live,
How did those prospects give my soul delight,
A new creation rushing on my sight? (1-6).

In these beginnings lines, Wheatley draws a line between Moorhead's skill in creating the painting – he teaches "breathing figures to live" – and her own encounter with work of art – the "new creation rushing on my sight," which ends by giving her "soul delight." Wheatley deftly pairs Moorhead's artistic labor with her own response, representing then for the (predominantly white) reader of her poem an encounter between two black artists, an encounter which produces a specific and highly significant affective response – delight – from the "new creation rushing on my sight."

⁵⁰ According to Nicole A. Spigner, the collection *Poems of Phillis Wheatley: A Native African and a Slave*, published in 1838, is the earliest publication she could identify that included the added stanza (76). The question of who composed the stanza remains unanswered.

⁵¹ For reading ethnography as a question of everyday small plots, I am influenced by Ruth Mack's 2016 ASECS presentation, "Equiano's Maritime Ethnography" (April 2, 2016).

⁵² See especially Occom's *Herbs and Roots* (1754; 44-6).

Chapter Two Endnotes

¹ See *Mashpee Tribe v. New Seabury Corp.*, 427 F.Supp. 89 (District Court, Massachusetts, February 28, 1977) and *Mashpee v. New Seabury Corp.*, 592 F.2d 575 (First Circuit, February 13, 1979). The Mashpee at this time were also pursuing official recognition through the Department of the Interior and other legislative channels.

² For critical accounts of the 1834-35 Mashpee struggle, see Maureen Konkle's *Writing Indian Nations* (2004; 119-131), and Jean M. O'Brien's *Firsting and Lasting* (2010; 178-191, 201-205). For an early reading of cultural authenticity and assimilation in the 1977-79 Mashpee trials, see James Clifford's "Identity at Mashpee" in *The Predicament of Culture* (1988; 277-348). In it, he argues that the court's decision was rooted in an inflexible standard of cultural authenticity. Laura Donaldson's reading of the Mashpee trials in "Making a Joyful Noise: William Apess and the Search for Postcolonial Method(ism)" (2003) focuses on how conversion to Christianity figured in the trials as a sign of the Mashpee's abandonment of Indian culture (29-30). More recently, David J. Carlson in *Sovereign Selves* (2006; 120-121) has examined the Mashpee trials at the intersection of a broad *nomos* of U.S. legal discourse and local Indian culture, historiography, and autobiography. See also Paul Brodeur's *Restitution* (1985; 25-67), Russell M. Peter's *The Wampanoags of Mashpee* (1987; 49-57), Jack Campisi's "The Trade and Intercourse Acts: Land Claims on the Eastern Seaboard" in *Irredeemable America* (1985; 337-362) and *The Mashpee Indians* (1991; 9-58).

³ Drew Lopenzina in *Red Ink* (2012) addresses the complex interaction of historical fiction and colonial meaning-making at work in Apess's writings, arguing, "Apess saw that where one might hope to find a rich historical record of Native engagements and observances in the time of contact, we find instead a counter-presence,

a canard, a complex fiction of Indian identity that, in various ways, fulfilled a multifaceted colonial agenda” (4; for full discussion on Apess, see 1-6). For further assessments of historical writing and colonialism, see Arnold Krupat’s *All That Remains* (2009; 74-99), Maureen Konkle’s *Writing Indian Nations* (2004; 114-168), and Jean M. O’Brien’s *Firsting and Lasting* (2010; 178-191). For analyses investigating Apess’s work in the context of U.S. history, national imperialism, and land reclamation, see Cheryl Walker’s *Indian Nation* (1997; 41-59 and 164-181), Andy Doolen’s *Fugitive Empire* (2005; 147-174), David J. Carlson’s *Sovereign Selves* (2006; 66-121), Lisa Brooks’s *The Common Pot* (2008; 163-218), and Mark Rifkin’s *Settler Common Sense* (2014; 14-17, 127-130).

⁴ Apess added the “s” to the family’s last name, and preferred that spelling in his own publications, although accounts of Apess in the American press sometimes used the former spelling (see O’Connell xxvii-xxviii).

⁵ For more on Apess’s experiences during the War of 1812, see Drew Lopenzina’s *Through an Indian’s Looking-Glass* (2017; 77-109).

⁶ Apess draws much of his thinking and evidence regarding the Jewish origins of Native peoples from Elias Boudinot, whose *A Star in the West; or, a Humble Attempt to Discover the Long Lost Ten Tribes of Israel, Preparatory to Their Return to Their Beloved City, Jerusalem*, first appeared in 1816. Apess explicitly references Boudinot’s work throughout his oeuvre (see *A Son of the Forest* 53-56, for example). For critical readings of this mythology of American Indian origins in Apess, see Sandra Gustafsen’s “Nations of Israelites: Prophecy and Cultural Autonomy in the Writings of William Apess” in *Religion and Literature* 26.1 (1994:31-53), Stuart Kirsch’s “Lost Tribes: Indigenous People and the Social Imaginary” in *Anthropological Quarterly* 70.2 (1997; 58-67, especially 59), and Meghan C.L. Howey’s “The Question Which Has Puzzled, and Still Puzzles’: How American Indian Authors Challenged Dominant Discourse about Native American Origins in the Nineteenth Century” in *American Indian Quarterly* 34.4 (2010; 453-474, especially 440-42). For readings of this myths of origins more generally, see William H. Stiebing’s *Uncovering the Past* (1994; 174-76), Colin Kidd’s *The Forging of Races* (2006; 205-210), and Kristina Bross’s *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons* (2004; 12-13 and 28-39).

⁷ Jean M. O’Brien’s *Firsting and Lasting* (2010) argues that white settlers constructed the spiritualization of the “last” Native American in order to naturalize the ongoing colonial genocide (105-144). Nevertheless, readings of indigenous peoples as ghosts or as figures haunting the American landscape in some form have remained productive. See, for example, Renée L. Bergland’s *The National Uncanny: Indians Ghosts and American Subjects* (2000), Ann Laura Stoler’s edited collection of essays *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacies in North American History* (2006), and Colleen E. Boyd and Coll Thrush’s edited collection *Phantom Past, Indigenous Presence: Native Ghosts in North American Culture and History* (2011).

⁸ In deploying “flesh” as a crucial concept in Apess’s juridical theology, I am influenced by recent turns to flesh in politico-theological hermeneutics, especially Jacques Rancière’s *The Flesh of Words* (2004), which explores how the theological conversion, “the word became flesh,” constitutes a *telos* towards which texts strive to arrive. My own reading of Apess attempts to extend the word-flesh dialectic in the other direction: to explore how flesh becomes text, becomes history.

⁹ For readings of Apess’s religious affiliations, see Bernd Peyer’s *The Tutor’d Mind* (1997; 117-165), Robert Warrior’s “William Apess: A Pequot and a Methodist Under the Sign of Modernity,” *Liberation Theologies, Postmodernity, and the Americas* (1997; 188-202), Laura Donaldson’s “Making a Joyful Noise: William Apess and the Search for Postcolonial Method(ism),” *Messy Beginnings: Postcoloniality and Early American Studies* (2003; 29-44), Eileen Razzari Elrod’s *Piety and Dissent* (2008; 146-170), and Mark J. Miller’s “‘Mouth for God’: Temperate Labor, Race, and Methodist Reform in William Apess’s *A Son of the Forest*,” *Journal of the Early Republic*. 30.2 (2010; 225-251).

¹⁰ Elizabeth Maddock Dillon in *New World Drama* (2014) argues, “Schmitt’s account of sovereignty is useful in connecting the Wesphalian interstate European order and the notion of territorial sovereignty articulated therein through the new spatial order that emerged with the European encounter with a colonization of the New World” (73). Dillon links Schmitt’s insight to a host of legal regulations and decisions undergirding British imperialism from Cromwell on (72-74). See also Jonathan Elmer’s discussion in *On Lingering and Being Last* (12-13, 100-106).

¹¹ Much early work on political theology involved investigating the theoretical scaffolding undergirding modern statecraft, a critical method Schmitt characterized as a “a sociology of concepts,” which “aims to discover the basic, radically systematic structure” transcending immediate “practical interests” (45). While this has produced some compelling readings of the theologico-political architectures of modernity in the work, I have been more interested in the recent turn to addressing what Eric Gregory has called “concrete social practices,” or providing “micro-histor[ies]” of “habits, dispositions, and movements” informing political expression (101). See also Vincent Lloyd’s *The Problem with Grace: Reconfiguring Political Theology* (2010; 1-4).

¹² Vincent Lloyd contends that political theology could do more to account for race and racial difference. In his introduction as editor to *Race and Political Theology* (2012), Lloyd reads the conflicted religious imaginary undergirding Caribbean critiques of Western colonial practice alongside Carl Schmitt's formulations of juridical theories within Nazi racist politics, and suggests: "That race disappears when political theology expands from a narrow to a broad sense is troubling" (7). Lloyd's *Race and Political Theology* and *The Problem with Grace* (2011), J. Kameron Carter's *Race: A Theological Account* (2008), and David Theo Goldberg's *The Threat of Race* (2009) have each undertaken to fill this critical gap.

¹³ By emphasizing the significance of the material remainders of indigenous bodies, we might turn to the work of anthropologist William Scramton Simmons's *Spirit of the New England Tribes: Indian History and Folklore, 1620-1984* (1984), which gathers Mashpee customary encounters with the dead, specifically the *tcipai* or ghosts who interact with the living (254). Simmons explores how "the living kept in touch with the dead in a tangible way through memorials or shrines" (251). These shrines, also known as sacrifice rocks, wishing rocks, or "taverns," were usually small holes or mounds of stones or sticks used as markers, and material gifts of food or alcohol were often left for the dead. Simmons argues that these customs enabled New England indigenous peoples to physically "[touch] their past" (256). These haptic encounters suggest that Apess's focus on the materialities of embodiment may have as much to do with traditional Mashpee understandings of the visceral presence of the dead in the temporal present of these memorial spaces as it might with Christian spiritual practices.

¹⁴ In stressing the role of flesh in Apess's writings, I am also influenced by Hershini Bhana Young's *Haunting Capital: Memory, Text, and the Black Diasporic Body* (2006), which in the context of the African diaspora reconfigures haunting as a "flesh and blood" persistence of racial injury within "dense structures of memory" (2).

¹⁵ Apess's juridical theologies anticipate the complicated mourning registers of Derrida's hauntologies. In theorizing the witness as an enfleshed presence within American settler colonial political theologies, acknowledged and rendered within an indigenous juridico-theological account of the past, it may be useful to return to Derrida's reading of a host of spectral presences within the political and economic aspirations of debt relations and global capitalism. More specifically, Derrida's hauntology urges that we identify and locate the remains of the dead, and considers the social effects of mass death, when the remains of the dead cannot be fully identified or properly interred. As M. NourbeSe Philip puts it in *Zong!*, Derrida's work of mourning demands clarity – it demands that "we know who the deceased is; whose grave it is; where the grave is and that the body or bodies 'remain there'" (202). Apess repeatedly returns to dismembered bodies, to graves alienated from communities, to bodies without known graves. He reveals how a racially sensitive hauntology encounters seemingly insurmountable obstacles within the context of indigenous histories.

¹⁶ One significant arena in debates on assimilation involve religious conversion, and, in the Mashpee case, adoption of Christianity by many members of the tribe played a crucial role in determining the court's impression of its voluntary assimilation. The Mashpee trials complicate how conversion is often read as a form of voluntary assimilation. Criticism on William Apess has been part of a move to complicate models of spiritual contact and integration in indigenous communities, what Jace Weaver has called "religious dimorphism," which he defines by invoking the work of anthropologist Joseph Epes Brown: "The historical phenomenon" of Native adaptation to Christianity "is thus not conversion as understood in the exclusivistic manner by the bearers of Christianity, but rather a continuation of the people's ancient and traditional facility for what may be termed nonexclusive cumulative adhesion" (qtd. Weaver 177). Joanna Brooks's *American Lazarus* (2003), furthermore, argues: "Early African-American and Native American literatures demand that we grapple not only with race but also with the value of religion to early communities of color" and "of religion as a venue for creative and political agency" (17, 18).

¹⁷ It is interesting that the court makes this distinction between public and private forms of assimilation and coercion given forms of interaction invoked during the trial. Not only was Christian conversion read as evidence of voluntary assimilation, but interracial marriage was also denominated a form of assimilation. As Tiffany M. McKinney explains, "At various times during the trial, the defense counsel attempted to discredit anthropological evidence offered by the petitioners demonstrating the group was Indian by referring to the Mashpee as an *African American* community" (73; emphasis original). See also Campisi's discussion (26-27).

¹⁸ See 180 U.S. 261, 266, 45 L. Ed. 521, 21 S. Ct. 358 (1901).

¹⁹ See 94 U.S. 614, 24 L. Ed. 295 (1876).

²⁰ Kevin Bruyneel argues that this double bind is a false choice, contending that between assimilation and recognition lies another possibility, a "third space of sovereignty," what he designates as procedures for working within and against U.S. spatial and temporal boundaries to claim rights and resources from the settler state while still resisting the imposition of colonial government on indigenous communities (2-6). Important to my reading of the Mashpee trials is Bruyneel's point that the third space of sovereignty "is a location inassimilable to the liberal democratic settler-state" (21). See also Elizabeth Povinelli's *The Cunning of Recognition* (2002; introduction).

²¹ It is, as Elizabeth Povinelli reminds us, not an endurance to take for granted. In *Economies of Abandonment*, her account of how late liberal imaginaries of tense, eventfulness, and ethical substance constitute indigenous alternative social worlds to sustain life. Speaking of endurance more specifically, she suggests: “What we witness in all these alternative social projects seeking to develop a new ethical substance ... is an entwinement of endurance and exhaustion. We can think of the exhaustion of both flesh and material from two perspectives: the exhaustions produced by and then reabsorbed into the system ... and the exhaustions produced when trying to create alternative ethical substances” (125). While it might seem that Apess’s spiritually-inflected alternative social world is far from the contemporary indigenous and environmental social worlds addressed by Povinelli, it is worth thinking through how Apess’s texts, and the political resistance they inspired, mediate an alternative vision of social, political, and economic organization later designated a “failure” by the U.S. courts.

²² Jack Campisi in *The Mashpee Indians* (1991) notes how Boston’s urban growth in the 1960s and 70s impacted Mashpee tribal life and organization. He addresses how changes in demographics, patterns of travel and transportation, city planning and urban development, and lifestyle transformations precipitated by Mashpee becoming more and more a suburb of Boston provided an important context precipitating the 1970s legal disputes (9-12). The Mashpee community was confronted by a host of social, political, and economic shifts in the 1960s and 70s that provoked contestations just as it did during the struggles of the 1830s and 40s.

²³ For more on Apess’s early life, see *A Son of the Forest* (3-26). See also O’Connell’s introduction to Apess’s collected writings (xxvii-xxxiii) and Maureen Konkle’s *Writing Indian Nations* (2004; 106-111).

²⁴ In exploring Apess’s configuration of the land as a repository for indigenous ancestors, indeed as an extension of indigenous bodies, we do not have to look for other examples in Native American literature for similar models of communal/environmental embodiment. Mark Rifkin, for instance, in *Manifesting America* (2009) describes a response Black Hawk makes to the treaty between the U.S. and Sauks in 1816, only slightly prior to Apess’s career. Black Hawk asks, “What do we know of the manner of the laws and customs of the white people? They might buy our bodies for dissection, and we would touch the goose quill to confirm it, without knowing what we are doing. This was the case with myself and people in touching the goose quill for the first time” (qtd. Rifkin 86). Rifkin argues that Black Hawk’s retort imagines the buying of Sauk land as “the acquisition of cadavers” and “implies that the commodification of territory as alienable units is comparable to a rending of Sauk bodies, emphasizing the violence immanent within treaty-making by casting it as uninformed consent to mutilation” (86). If Black Hawk compares U.S.-Native treaties with the dissection of indigenous bodies, Apess’s skin-books attempt to reverse this legal mutilation.

²⁵ In *Settler Common Sense* (2014), Mark Rifkin situates Apess (and others) within nineteenth-century American queer imaginings of place and personhood, suggesting the extent to which contemporary queer ethics and politics take ongoing colonial frameworks in fashioning accounts of justice and freedom. In reading Apess’s notions of kinship as both a queer refusal of settler family arrangements and an everyday engagement, he extends Jean O’Brien’s observation that nineteenth-century New England local histories fail to account for these realities: “[T]hey refused to understand the persistence of Indian kinship and mobility on the landscape, not to mention their ongoing measured separateness as political entities (O’Brien 117-18; qtd. Rifkin 124).

²⁶ Dana Luciano’s *Arranging Grief* (2007) elegantly reads white American mourning as rituals that re-temporalize indigenous death by situating Native cultures within a past that cannot meaningfully progress into a modern present and by rendering the mortal costs of colonialism within the distant past (8-12, 50-55). Although she does not engage with Apess’s early writings in the way I will do so in a moment, she includes an extensive readings of Apess’s *Eulogy on King Philip*, and reads it as, in many ways, a refusal to extend to his white audience space to grieve Metacom’s death: “Apess keeps the grief of Native Americans in view, maintaining its legitimacy without directly inviting his white audience to participate in it” (55).

²⁷ In categorizing this moment as a refusal of identification, Apess’s narrative invites comparison with Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1752), who, in his discussion of sympathy, has recourse to the corpse: “We sympathize even with the dead, and overlooking what is of real importance in their situation, that awful futurity which awaits them, we are chiefly affected by those circumstances which strike our senses, but can have no influence on their happiness. It is miserable, we think, to be deprived of the light of the sun; to be shut out from life and conversation; to be laid in the cold grave, a prey to corruption and the reptiles of the earth; to be no more thought of in this world, but to be obliterated” (17). The corpse represents the very limits of sympathetic identification for Smith, who can only describe the “imagined change of position” by locating the live body within the space of the coffin (12).

²⁸ Andy Doolen argues in *Fugitive Empire* (2005), “[T]he ‘tale of blood’ receives more emphasis than any other event in his childhood because it gives *A Son of the Forest* its structure of racial awakening. After relating the

tale, Apess interrupts the narrative with a critical digression that will become the basis of his later efforts both to contest Indian removal and to disprove imperial histories that depict American Indians as mindless killers” (153). Most critics have been more interested in Apess’s discussion beforehand claiming the name of “Native” but not “Indian,” because “Native” emphasizes indigenous claims for priority on the land. As important as these discussions have been, I want to further contextualize them by returning to what seems to me to be Apess’s equally significant efforts to account for indigenous deaths.

²⁹ These moments of encounter (or the refusal to encounter) in Apess – encounters with the dead, with cemeteries, with imagined Native Americans – not only indicate the saturation of certain narrative forms and strategies of meaning-making, but constitute what Matt Cohen and Jeffrey Glover term a “mediascape,” an analytic lens to focus “on power and the social embodiment of media practices and moves us beyond the paradigm of writing into an analytic that encourages us to consider colonial relations as they are constituted across media” (5).

³⁰ Apess’s account of transactional redemption and racialized Christology interestingly anticipates political theologies explored by J. Cameron Carter in *Race: A Theological Account* (2008). Carter argues that the emergence of a pseudo-theological Christology, which elided Jesus’s Jewish ethnicity as a meaningful feature of religious identity, “made possible the emergence of [modern] racial imagination” (35).³⁰ Although Carter is principally concerned with African American writers, such as Britton Hammon, Jarena Lee, and Frederick Douglass, it is worth noting that these figures were all contemporaries or near contemporaries of Apess, suggesting that Apess is participating in a wider movement among indigenous and African-descended writers to reconstruct an anticolonial account of Christian salvation, where “racial flesh is transformed into covenantal flesh” by “claiming relationship with the covenantal people of Israel through the mediation of Jesus of Nazareth” (Carter 256).

³¹ By conceiving Christ primarily through the role as mediator or advocate, Apess draws from New Testament (specifically Johannine) understandings of Christ’s role in the work of salvation. John writes in his first epistle, “My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (I. John 2:1). Crucially, Apess extends John’s formulation of Christ as the advocate to the Father in the matter of individual sin to questions of social injury.

³² In claiming that indigenous peoples were descendants of ancient Hebrews, Apess draws from a long tradition in Biblical historicism, extending back as far as Puritan thought in the 1630s and 40s (Bross 12-13 and 28-39). Apess’s writings also mirror the early Mormon writings of Joseph Smith. In 1830, Joseph Smith, a rough contemporary of Apess, also proposed a Jewish origin for Native Americans, and proposed in the *Book of Mormon* (1830) that American Indians were descendants of the Israelites, although not the ten lost tribes specifically.

³³ For the Biblical narratives on the Assyrian captivity, see II Kings chapters 15-18, and II Chronicles 15-16. For prophetic accounts, see Isaiah chapters 8-10, and 30-37 and Hosea 8-11.

³⁴ On the question of cultural survival and erasure in William Apess’s writings, see Arnold Krupat’s “William Apess: Storier of Survivance” in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence* edited by Gerald Vizenor (2008; 103-121). In the context of King Philip’s war, to look at a related example, scholars have noted that Apess rarely had access to white historiography on the conflict, as David J. Carlson’s reminds us, “Without even raising obvious questions about the accuracy of his sources, one can make the point that Apess relied heavily on colonial writing for access to his Indian past, a fact with autobiographical implications he no doubt recognized” (94). In eliding traditional kinship affiliations by invoking the Hebrews, Apess deploys a rhetorical strategy familiar to a white American reader, but the choice of analogy nevertheless carries within it an implied threat to the white reader.

³⁵ For Apess a juridical theology of witnessing belongs in large part to affective arrangements of rage, mourning, and revenge, and forcefully anticipates what Glen Coulthard, in his exploration in *Red Skin, White Masks* (2014) of the fundamental importance of resentment in indigenous activism, has called “a politicized expression of Indigenous anger and outrage directed at a structural and symbolic violence that still structures our lives, our relations with others, and relationship with land” (109). Although it primarily engages with twentieth-century models of recognition in Canada, Coulthard elegantly enables a productive engagement with historical precursors to full-scale contemporary modes of recognition politics (25-50). Significant to my reading of how American political theologies produce a state of terror populated by the ghosts of indigenous violence, Coulthard suggests that even in our present moment, “[I]nstead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the ideal of *reciprocity* or *mutual* recognition, the politics of recognition in its contemporary legal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (3). Apess is quite attentive to the recursive nature of American indigenous policy, repeatedly exploring how legal frameworks constitute Native existence. In his discussion of resentment, in particular, Coulthard is primarily in dialogue with Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* and Friedrich Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morals* and *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Following the work of Thomas Brudholm, Coulthard describes how Nietzsche’s formulation of *resentiment* as “irredeemably vengeful, reactionary, and

backward-looking,” as fundamentally outside the framework of modernity, has influenced recent frameworks of “transitional justice,” most often institutionalized through truth and reconciliation commissions (106-108). Couched as psychologically unhealthy and socially retrograde, resentment in these models disrupts communal healing and keeps indigenous peoples from “getting over” colonial pasts (111). Coulthard suggests that for Fanon, by contrast, in the context of a psychology of internalized colonialism, “it would appear that the emergence of reactive emotions like anger and resentment can indicate a breakdown of colonial subjection and thus open up the possibility of developing alternative subjectivities and anticolonial practices” (115). Coulthard concludes that “Indigenous peoples’ individual and collective expressions of anger and resentment,” far from being a “largely disempowering and unhealthy affliction,” can, under certain conditions, “prompt the very forms of self-affirmative praxis that generate rehabilitated Indigenous subjectivities and decolonized forms of life in ways that the combined politics of recognition and reconciliation has so far proven itself incapable of doing” (109).

³⁶ For readings of Apess’s conversion, see Arnold Krupat’s *The Voice in the Margin* (1989; 96-131), where he reads Apess’s conversion as a sign of assimilation into the colonizer’s culture. For reconsiderations of Apess’s conversion, see Robert Warrior’s “William Apess, A Pequot and a Methodist, Under the Sign of Modernity” (1997; 188-197), Laura Donaldson’s “Making a Joyful Noise: William Apess and the Search for Postcolonial Method[ism]” (2003; 29-35), and David J. Carlson’s *Sovereign Selves* (2006; 83-87, 91-93).

³⁷ For extended readings of Methodist expansion and evangelism in early America, see David Hempton’s *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (2005; 131-150 and 160-177), and Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt’s *The Methodist Experience in America* Vol. I (2010; 85-90, and 141-174).

³⁸ As David J. Carlson suggests, “Apess’s comments [on the ‘noisy Methodists’] here clearly suggest that he saw his assertion of religious liberty as directly related to his opposition to colonial restrictions on his property rights. His right to free religion exists on the same continuum as his unrecognized right to liberty in his property (both his own property in himself and his rightful share in the land of which his people had been defrauded). Apess’s challenge of Hillhouses’s and Williams’s legal authority to inhibit his spiritual development is therefore based on precisely the same contractarian ideology he felt was being ignored in their abuse of his property rights” (105). I would add that Apess’s articulation of an Indian rights ideology only emerges in *A Son of the Forest* out of collective worship experiences.

³⁹ For details on the Mashpee struggle, especially debates over timber rights, see Maureen Konkle’s *Writing Indian Nation* (2004; 119-131), David J. Carlson’s *Sovereign Selves* (2006; 111-117), and Jean M. O’Brien’s *Firsting and Lasting* (2010; 178-91, 201-205).

⁴⁰ Maureen Konkle notes that Apess was speaking and writing in Boston not only during the crises of Indian Removal, but also during crucial antislavery debates: “The connections between Apess and African Americans – specifically, the writers and writings readily available on Boston in the early 1830s – are ... political, epistemological, and strategic. Many activists – white, African American, and Native alike – observed at the time that that the similarity between plans to colonize African Americans and to remove Indians from the East was obvious and that the supporters of removal and colonization justified both plans in the same way: African Americans and Native peoples were ontologically different from whites and therefore must be ‘removed’” (115). For other readings of Apess’s intersections with African American writers and activists, see also Andy Doolen’s *Fugitive Empire* (2005; 148-174), Arnold Krupat’s *All that Remains* (2009; 78-87), and Jean M. O’Brien’s *Firsting and Lasting* (2010; 180-181).

⁴¹ Apess’s *Eulogy on King Philip* (1836) pointedly reverses the civilizational rhetoric deployed by Puritans during King Philip’s War (1675-77). Metacomb’s dismembered and unburied body, rather than testifying to Puritan spiritual and political power, bears witness to New England colonial “savagery” (302-03). See also Lisa Brooks’s discussion of Apess’s invocation of Puritans in *The Common Pot* (2008; 200-217).

⁴² For readings of Apess’s *Eulogy*, see Cheryl Walker’s *Indian Nation* (1997; 164-181), Maureen Konkle’s *Writing Indian Nations* (2004; 131-156), Andy Doolen’s *Fugitive Empire* (2005; 168-175), David J. Carlson’s *Sovereign Selves* (2006; 93-96), Dana Luciano’s *Arranging Grief* (2007; 53-56), Arnold Krupat’s *All that Remains* (2009; 86-99), Jean M. O’Brien’s *Firsting and Lasting* (2010; 183-186), and Desirée Henderson’s *Grief and Genre in American Literature, 1790-1870* (2011; 47-50).

⁴³ For histories of King Philip’s War, see Jill Lepore’s *The Name of War* (1998), Eric B. Schultz and Michael J. Tougas’s *King Philip’s War* (2000), and James D. Drake’s *King Philip’s War* (2000). For first-hand accounts, see also Richard Slotkin and James K. Folsom’s anthology *So Dreadfull a Judgment: Puritan Responses to King Philip’s War, 1676-1677* (1978).

⁴⁴ I want to suggest that in this allusion to the Eucharist, Apess is drawing from Methodist theologies of the sacrament. Unlike other Protestant evangelicals, Methodists refused to confine the Eucharist sacrament to merely “commemoration” or “representation,” retaining a traditional sense of the bread and wine embodying Christ’s body

and blood also expressed in Catholicism and Lutheranism. As Misty G. Anderson notes in *Imagining Methodism in 18th Century Britain* (2012), “The Methodist definition of communion as more than ‘mere memorial’ underscored the mystery of embodiment at the heart of Christianity. Their Eucharistic theology refused to define the event as representation and so underscored communion itself as an event, an ethically troubling mystical moment that breaks from the linear temporality of modernity” (126).

⁴⁵ Indigenous Christians sometimes link the brown and black bodies consumed by colonial expansion to the liturgical practice of consuming the body and blood of a re-racialized Christ, which Graham Ward suggests revalues the bodies that do no matter by permitting Christ to share in the displacements of migrant communities: “The bread *is* also the body of Jesus. That ontological scandal is the epicentre for the shock-waves which follow. For it is actually the translocationality that is surprising – as if place and space itself are being redefined such that one can be a body here and also there, one can be this kind of body here and that kind of body there” (“Displaced,” 168). Christ’s body overturns the lethal infrastructures of dispossession in minoritarian narratives through what Ward calls the “ontological scandal” of Eucharistic possession: “The body is always in transit, it is always being transferred. It is never there, a commodity I can lay claim to or possess as mine” (“Transcorporeality,” 298). Christ’s body – and the accompanying script, “This is my body ... this is my blood” – thus becomes the locus for a migrant ethics of earthly dwelling, one attentive to the deadly consumption of bodies and lands in colonial domains and offering an alternative account of sovereignty and right for nineteenth-century writers of color.

⁴⁶ Michael Naas has suggested in *The End of the World and Other Teachable Moments* (2015) that Derrida’s formulation of the other as the corpse reconfigures the entirety of contemporary French philosophy: “No longer simply the one for whom I have an infinite responsibility, the one who makes claims on me, the other would be first and foremost the one into whose hands I will be delivered by death ... Derrida thus displaces the site of decision, of responsibility, and of sovereignty when he defines the other as the one who will have to decide what to do with my body, my corpse and my corpus” (68-69).

⁴⁷ For a reading of the meanings of Algonquian traditional dismemberment of enemies, see Andrew Lipman’s “‘A Meanes to Knitt Them Together’: The Exchange of Body Parts in the Pequot War” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 65.1 (2008; 3-28). I will be discussing Lipman’s essay more fully in the final section of this chapter, “Histories Made Flesh.”

⁴⁸ Metacom’s dismemberment anticipates what will become a common fate for indigenous and African-descended characters within New World narratives. Aphra Behn’s *Oroonoko* (1688), for instance, ends with the mutilation of the eponymous character, an African prince sold into New World slavery: “He had learned to take tobacco, and when he was assured he should die, he desire they would give him a pipe in his mouth, ready lighted, and they did, and the executioner came, and first cut off his members, and threw them into the fire. After that, with an ill-favoured knife, they cut his ears, and his nose, and burned them; he still smoked on, as if nothing had touched him. Then they hacked off one of his arms, and still he bore up, and held his pipe. But at the cutting of his other arm, his head sunk, and his pipe dropped, and he gave up the ghost, without groan or a reproach” (140). In his reading of American logics of sovereignty in *Oroonoko*, Jonathan Elmer’s *On Lingering and Being Last* (2008) argues that Oroonoko’s body lingers in the zone of indistinction that is Suriname: “[T]he land’s power to keep alive is better described as a power to *cause to linger* in a zone that not quite living and not quite dead” (46). The states of exception explore or invoked in Apess return the reader to scenes of extended death, to histories of bodily mutilation lingering in the state of exception (105).

⁴⁹ Apess’s father of Kennebunk finds himself caught up within a political order explored by Falguni A. Sheth’s *Toward a Political Philosophy of Race* (2009). Sheth posits that racial prejudice is fostered by liberalism and liberal societies, rather than occurring as anomalies or accidents within those political structures. From this claim, Sheth carefully lays out the procedures by which “race” (used by Sheth to indicate more than biological characteristics) becomes a “technology” (borrowing from Michel Foucault) for discrimination within the social, legal, and political structures of liberalism. Sheth argues that race functions as a technology that “produce[s] certain outcomes” within “collective populations that are to be managed and maintained through sovereign power” (23, 24). By choosing to mourn for his child, Apess’s father of Kennebunk refuses these technologies of racial sovereignty.

⁵⁰ By having the father carry the child’s corpse, Apess also reverse nineteenth-century American sentimental tropes, which often route grief through the mother. Dana Luciano argues, for instance, “As the developing nation moved farther away from the topography of the ‘pristine realm’ (to be replaced ... by the fantasy of affective national heritage condensed in the melancholy figure of the vanishing Indian), the image of the American mother, ensconced in the domestic sphere and absorbed in the affairs of the family, also came to suggest a kind of affective heritage, the natural prehistory not of America but of Americans” (120). Of course, Luciano is speaking of images of white maternity, but Apess’s choice suggests that he refuses to participate in any aspect of

this sentimental economy, while the conspicuous absence of the child's mother also suggests that the devastations of colonialism extend beyond the dead child to families and communities.

⁵¹ Jacques Derrida's "The Poetics and Politics of Witnessing" reads the paradoxes of witnessing through accounts of the Shoah, of bodies destroyed and lingering only as ash, a figuration Apess anticipates in his *Eulogy on King Philip* as earth or dirt. Derrida argues, "Ash, this is also the name of what annihilates or threatens to destroy even the possibility of bearing witness to annihilation. Ash is the figure of annihilation without remainder, without memory, or without a readable or decipherable archive. Perhaps this would lead us to think of this fearful possibility: the *possibility* of annihilation, the *virtual* disappearance of the witness, but also of the capacity to bear witness. Such would be the only condition for bearing witness, its only condition of possibility as condition of its impossibility – paradoxical and aporetic" (68). I want to suggest that the dirt clinging to the exhumed child's corpse initiates an analogous paradox. For Apess, the child's body points to practices of everyday sovereignty – "common prejudice" – that cannot account for indigenous death. Yet, this body (and the dirt clinging to it) can travel, can potentially testify to the bodies and lives left out of the histories of violence enacted by the settler state.

⁵² The exhumed child exists as a bleak inversion to the resurrection, where Christ's empty tomb testifies to his sovereignty over death. Here, the empty grave is merely another dispossession.

⁵³ In turning to the domain of witnessing as a way to think about an embodied theory of rights in William Apess, I am conscious of Saidiya Hartman's opening series of searing questions in *Scenes of Subjection* (1997): "Are we witnesses who confirm the truth of what happened in the face of the world-destroying capacities of pain, the distortion of torture, the sheer unrepresentability of terror, and the repression of the dominant accounts? Or are we voyeurs fascinated with and repelled by exhibitions of terror and suffering? What does the exposure of the violated body yield? Proof of black sentience or the inhumanity of the 'peculiar institution'? Or does the pain of the other merely provide us with the opportunity for self-reflection?" (3-4). I think an important distinction between Apess and American abolitionists' formulation of right is that Apess does not solely or finally appeal to a shared sense of injury, but with an appeal to two broader moments in history that can ground his account of an everyday juridical theology of flesh. On the one hand, he demands that indigenous bodily devastation be read against a divine mandate to communal possession of the earth. On the other hand, he situates that scene within a particular colonial history of theft, one that can be testified to, but one which does not, finally, only display the injured indigenous body. This historical range anchors his appeal to right in both a theologically-derived ethics of common earthly possession *and* in the devastations of American settler colonialism. Apess, in other words, resists what Lynn Festa has called a sentimental form of witnessing that is a "diluted form of humanity grounded in pain and victimhood" (4). In any case, the grieving father in his *Eulogy* does not use his dead child as a plea for civic belonging, but as justification for *leaving* the settler state, and finding community elsewhere.

⁵⁴ It is worth noting that Apess's skin books participate in a much darker narrative history of skin. We might think of the use of slave skin to bind books in the antebellum South or Nazi skin-books and skin-objects constructed during the Holocaust. Apess appears to be working within a narrative tradition intent on illuminating the imperial work to which skin has been deployed. In Jonathan Swift's satirical *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), for example, Gulliver is finally compelled to leave the utopian land of Houyhnhnms, and builds a vessel out of the "Skins of *Yahoos* [humans], well stitched together, with hempen Threads of my own making. My Sail was likewise composed of the Skins of the same Animal; but I made use of the youngest I could get, the older being too tough and thick" (615). In having Gulliver construct his retreat from the island of the Houyhnhnms out of the mortal remains of yahoos, Swift lingers on the corpses of colonial fiction. By recounting Gulliver's matter-of-fact complicity in what were and would become the genocides of actual colonial projects, Swift connects Gulliver's status as a maker of fiction and his role in the novel as a maker of things to mortality – if Gulliver is a narrator and a builder, then he is also a maker of death. Gulliver's "hempen threads of my own making" thus might hold together the skin-ship, sustaining Gulliver's life in his passage to England, but can only unravel the "rational" community created by the Houyhnhnms.

⁵⁵ Ronald N. Satz in *American Indian Policy in the Jacksonian Era* (2002) notes that the status of African American and Native American witnesses was peculiarly fraught during the age of Indian Removal because debates on removal quickly became entangled with question so slavery, states' rights, and nullification (10-30, 218-30).

⁵⁶ In the aftermath of the Pequot War, colonial authorities decreed in the Treaty of Hartford: "The Pequots were then bound by COVENANT, That none should inhabit their native Country, nor should any of them be called PEQUOTS any more, but MOHEAGS [Mohegans] and NARRAGANSETTS forever" (Mason, *A Brief History of the Pequot War*, 18). Disbarred from using the name "Pequot," the Treaty of Hartford legally erased the Pequot survivors from American history. For an account of the war, see Alfred A. Cave's *The Pequot War* (1996), and for a history of Pequot survival after the war, see Laurence M. Hauptman and James D. Wherry's *The Pequots in Southern New England* (1993; 232-50).

⁵⁷ Apess repeatedly uses metaphors of enslavement when speaking of indigenous dispossession (in *Indian Nullification*, see 167, 187, 201-205, 217, and 239-40). See also Andy Doolen's *Fugitive Empire* (2005; 145-183).

⁵⁸ For readings of these accounts of skin, skin-books, and scars as evidence, see William Andrews's *To Tell a Free Story* (1986; 77-87), Dwight McBride's *Impossible Witness* (2001; 88-99), Carol E. Henderson's *Scarring the Black Body* (2002; 1-10 and 23-34), and Jennifer Putzi's *Identifying Marks* (2006; 99-120 and 130-153).

⁵⁹ In conceiving of Apess's skin-books as marking a global history of racial injustice, it may be worth taking this analysis to Pacific indigenous communities, which provide powerful examples of spiritual resistance to colonial authorities throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We could incorporate Apess's own son, William Elisha Apess, into this history. As far as historians have been able to discover, William Elisha Apess worked as a sailor and participated in a mutiny onboard the American ship *Ajax* in 1838. William Elisha and the other mutinous sailors eventually docked the ship in Port Otago, New Zealand, where he settled, married a Maori woman, and had several children (Weaver 33). It would be fascinating to explore whether Apess's Maori descendants participated in continued indigenous resistance to British sovereignty, especially as channeled through contemporary Maori spiritual expressions in Te Haahi Rātana, a religious organization and political movement based on the teachings of Prophet and healer Tahupōtiki Wiremu Rātana (1873?-1939). See also Drew Lopenzina's *Through an Indian's Looking-Glass* (2017; 147, 158).

⁶⁰ Here Agamben engages with Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*, where he recounts the impossibility of putting pen to paper on behalf of the drowned: "We who were favored by fate tried, with more or less wisdom, to recount not only our own fate but also that of the others, indeed of the drowned ... The destruction brought to an end, the job completed, was not told by anyone, just as no one ever returned to describe his own death. Even if they had paper and pen, the drowned would not have testified because their death had begun before that of their body ... We speak in their stead, by proxy" (qtd. Agamben 33-34).

⁶¹ Eighteenth and nineteenth-century racist theologies often "explained" dark skin by literalizing either the mark of Cain or the curse of Ham in flesh. Like Apess, Phillis Wheatley slyly reverses this theology in her poem, "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1772), the last four lines of which read, "Some view our sable race with a scornful eye, / 'Their colour is a diabolic die.' / Remember, *Christians, Negroes*, black as *Cain*, / May be refin'd and join the angelic train." Here Wheatley reveals the tensions within European civilizational rhetoric. Colonial economic practices like the slave trade or indigenous dispossession are often justified by expressing that Europeans "save" African peoples by introducing them to European religious values while also. Yet dark skin is also read as a sign that African or indigenous peoples are cursed, and may not be capable of salvation. Through her poetic witness, Wheatley disentangles a theology of salvation from skin color, reversing that racial logic.

Chapter Three Endnotes

¹ Salt (sodium ions) are critically important in animals tissues for maintaining electrolyte and fluid balances, the generation of nerve impulses, and in the regulation of certain metabolic functions.

² For a history of the mining and trade of salt and its use as a preservative, see especially Mark Kurlansky's *Salt: A World History* (2003).

³ I am thus arguing that the *History* anticipates in its work of mourning what Edouard Glissant calls the "right to" practice "opacity" in the *Poetics of Relation* (2010; 189). "To feel in solidarity with [the other]," he writes, "it is not necessary for me to grasp him." Glissant argues that the right to opacity means to "[a]gree not merely to the right to difference, but carrying this further, agree also to the right to opacity that is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence with an irreducible singularity" (190).

⁴ More particularly, the *History* turns to affective economies to reveal where imperial sovereignties derive their authority by denying that enslaved bodies have the capacity to feel: "Oh the Buckra people who keep slaves think that black people are like cattle, without natural affection. But my heart tells me it is far otherwise" (71).

⁵ Here, I follow Anthony Kerby, who argues that "the goal of a hermeneutic understanding" is tracing what a text "can mean to us in the present" (91). He elaborates, "Hermeneutical understanding is the result of an authentic dialogue between the past and our present, which occurs when there is a 'fusion of horizons' between the two. In the end, this is an act of self-understanding, of understanding our own historical reality and its continuity with the past" (91).

⁶ Autobiographical texts, Gillian Whitlock explains in *The Intimate Empire* (2000), "are engaged in an ongoing process of authorization to capture not its subject so much as its object: the reader ... Prince's story

foregrounds those visceral processes which determined who might speak; how, when, where, and why; and how they might engage a 'believing' reader. Prince's *History* becomes something of a limit case, from which we can read on to other, less violent passages into autobiographic writing" (9, 10).

⁷ For more on the legal cases involving Prince's narrative see Barbara Baumgartner's "The Body as Evidence: Resistance, Collaboration, and Appropriation in *The History of Mary Prince*" from *Callaloo* 24.1 (2001; 253-75), Sue Thomas's "Pringle v. Cadell and Wood v. Pringle: The Libel Cases over the History of Mary Prince" (*Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 40; 2005), and Nicole Aljoe's *Creole Testimonies* (2012; 93-118). For criticism engaged with issues of Pringle's editorship, textual mediation, and abolitionist discourses, see Moira Ferguson's critical introduction to her edition of Prince's *History* (1997; 1-51), as well as *Subject to Others* (1992; 282-98), Gillian Whitlock's *Intimate Empire* (2000; 8-37), Sara Salih's critical introduction to her edition of Prince's *History* (2004; vii-xxxiv) and essay "*The History of Mary Prince, the Black Subject, and the Black Canon*" from *Discourses of Abolition and Slavery* (2004; 123-38), and Jessica Allen's "Pringle's Pruning of Prince: *The History of Mary Prince* and the Question of Repetition" from *Callaloo* 35.2 (2012; 509-19). For scholars who situate Prince within the interstices of Caribbean literatures, see Sandra Pouchet Paquet's "The Heartbeat of a West Indian Slave: *The History of Mary Prince*" from *African American Review* 26.1 (1992; 131-46), Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo's *Black Cosmopolitanism* (2005; 157-85), Mary Jeanne Larrabee's "'I know what a slave knows': Mary Prince's Epistemology of Resistance" from *Women's Studies* 35.5 (2006; 453-73), and Sue Thomas's *Telling West Indian Lives* (2014; 119-66). For the significance of Prince's *History* within Anglo-American antislavery activism and the uses of sympathy, see Elizabeth Bohls's *Slavery and the Politics of Place* (2014; 165-83) and Ramesh Mallipeddi's *Spectacular Suffering* (2016; 74-83).

⁸ Sue Thomas, in one of the only extended investigations of Moravian spirituality in the *History*, writes, "Moravianism is a largely empty signifier in critical scholarship on Prince" (121).

⁹ Although Zinzendorf is credited with forming and leading the modern Moravian sect (known also as the Unitas Fratrum, the Church of the Brethren, or *Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine*), the Moravians were considered a "renewal" movement that revitalized and drew deeply from prior religious movements, especially from Bohemian Hussite Christians, who pre-date the Protestant Reformation. A small group of Bohemian exiles (known as the Brethren or the "hidden seed") were living in secret in Moravia under Catholic rule. Under continued persecution, they fled Moravia to Saxony, to Zinzendorf's estate of Berthelsdorf. Zinzendorf offered the group shelter, and many of them joined together to form a new village, Herrnhut, a few miles from Zinzendorf's estate.

¹⁰ For Moravian missionary activity in African-descended, African American, and Afro-Caribbean communities, see especially the work of Jon Sensbach, including *A Separate Canaan: The Making of an Afro-Moravian World in North Carolina, 1763-1840* (1998), and *Rebecca's Revival: Creating Black Christianity in the Atlantic World* (2006). See also the work of Maureen Warner-Lewis, whose careful archival work on Jamaican Moravian convert, Archibald Monteith, provides a great deal of context for understanding the complicated relationships and spiritual dynamics between Moravian missionaries and slaves.

¹¹ We may recall Christ's injunction to his listeners at the Sermon on the Mount: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under the foot of man" (Matt. 5:13).

¹² An early Victoria historian of German Moravian history, J.E. Hutton scathingly argued that "blood and wounds theology," originating with Zinzendorf, severed the connection between rational contemplation. Meditating on Christ's bodily wounds encouraged Moravian believers to "lay all the stress on physical details": "As long as Zinzendorf used his own mental powers, he was able to make his 'Blood and Wounds Theology' a power for good; but as soon as he bade goodbye to his intellect he made his doctrine a laughing-stock and a scandal. Instead of concentrating his attention on the moral and spiritual value of the cross, he now began to lay all the stress on the mere physical details" (274). For more on Moravian "blood and wounds" theology, see Craig Atwood's *Community of the Cross* (2004; 96-111, 195-237), and "Deep in the Side of Jesus: The Persistence of Zinzendorfan Piety in Colonial America," *Pious Pursuits: German Moravians in the Atlantic World* (2007; 50-64).

¹³ The gospel account of the crucifixion from John notes, "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came out blood and water" (John 19:34).

¹⁴ For readings of the somatic intensity of Moravian hymns, see Craig D. Atwood's *Community of the Cross* (2004; 97-107, 141-48, and 161-96), Aaron Fogelman's *Jesus is Female* (2007; 13, 73-93, and 141-51), Misty G. Anderson's *Imagining Methodism in 18th Century Britain* (2012; 171-99), and Paul Peucker's *A Time of Sifting* (2015; 64-74, 93-103, and 153-55).

¹⁵ See, for instance, Sara Salih's introduction to the Penguin edition of *The History of Mary Prince*, where she notes: "She goes on to describe the cool and sinister sadism of her new master whose punishments seem to have been of a sexual nature. This aspect of her treatment is diplomatically glossed over in the *History*, since Prince and

her allies at the Anti-Slavery Society were probably anxious to spare the prudish sensibilities of potential readers who may have been squeamish to face the truth about the sexual exploitation of black women by their white masters” (ix and *passim*). See also Gillian Whitlock’s *Intimate Empire* (2000; 29-32) and Ramesh Mallipeddi’s *Spectacular Suffering* (2016; 74-76).

¹⁶ Although the Moravian Church could solemnize weddings, Antiguan law did not allow slaves to legally marry, as Prince explained: “We could not be married in the English Church. English marriage is not allowed to slaves; and no free man can marry a slave woman” (84). However, under the 1798 Amelioration Acts, as Sue Thomas notes, “the marriage imposed financial obligations on the Woods and provided some protections for Prince, including the criminalization of rape of her by white men” (134; see also note 86). Offering an archival sign of the radical nature of Prince’s marriage to Daniel James, the Moravian register that recorded the marriage is now housed at the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Although the register is in good condition, the page that should notate Prince and James’s marriage has been torn out. This archival vandalism is, in some ways, a physical remnant and analogous colonial sign of the raucous laughter preserved in the court records.

¹⁷ As Pringle notes in his “Supplement” to the *History*, these appeals included Mr. Ravenscroft, a lawyer and relative of abolitionist Sergeant Stephen), Edward Moore, the London agent for the Moravian mission in Antigua, who contacted Rev. Joseph Newby, the missionary on the island, and William Allen, a Quaker, who wrote to the governor of Antigua, Sir Patrick Ross, on Pringle’s behalf (97-99).

¹⁸ The petition (reprinted in Moira Ferguson’s edition of the *History*) reads: “A Petition of Mary Prince or James, commonly called Molly Wood, was presented, and read; setting forth, That the Petitioner was born a Slave in the colony of Bermuda, and is now about forty years of age; That the Petitioner was sold some years ago for the sum of 300 dollars to Mr John Wood, by whom the Petitioner was carried to Antigua, where she has since, until lately resided as a domestic slave on his establishment; that in December 1826, the Petitioner who is connected with the Moravian Congregation, was married in a Moravian Chapel at Spring Gardens, in the parish of St. John’s, by the Moravian minister, Mr Ellesen, to a free Black of the name of Daniel James, who is a carpenter of St. John’s, in Antigua, and also a member of the same congregation; that the Petitioner and the said Daniel James have lived together ever since as man and wife; that about ten months ago the Petitioner arrived in London, with her master and mistress, in the capacity of nurse to their child; that the Petitioner’s master has offered to send her back in his brig to the West Indies, to work in the yard; that the Petitioner expressed her desire to return to the West Indies, but not as a slave, and has entreated her mast to sell her, her freedom on account of her services as a nurse to his child, but he has refused, and still does refuse; further stating the particulars of her case; and praying the House to take the same into their consideration, and to grant such relief as to them may, under the circumstances, appear right. Ordered, That the said Petition do lie upon the Table” (127-8).

¹⁹ See James Macqueen’s “The Colonial Empire of Great Britain,” *Blackwood’s Magazine* 30 (November 1831): 744-64.

²⁰ See appendix five in Moira Ferguson’s edition to the *History* (1997; 136-39).

²¹ See appendix six in Moira Ferguson’s edition to the *History* (1997; 140-49).

²² See Moira Ferguson’s introduction to her edition of *The History of Mary Prince* for more on her disappearance from the archive: “That court cases marks the last known appearance of Mary Prince, who contributed a distinguished, groundbreaking oral narrative to world history” (28).

²³ Although she does not take her work to the language and logic of sympathy, Helen Thomas’s *Romanticism and Slave Narratives* (2000) does make the case that antislavery and evangelical rhetoric and cultural practices shared similarities, especially through what she identifies as a “discourse of the spirit”: “In its provision of a free signifier, the protean quality of what I have termed the ‘discourse of the spirit’ initiated by radical dissenting Protestantism facilitated the slaves’ entry into the dominant literary order, an entry otherwise obstructed by restrictive legal and socioeconomic conditions. Establishing a process by which the slave’s identity was liberated from the conditions imposed upon it by others, the discourse of the spirit identified the role of the slave in the black diaspora as sanctioned by a spiritual entity whose power was considered both impregnable and absolute. This discourse not only denied the possibility of a straightforward literal use of language but also enabled a form of cultural exchange between Christian and African belief systems: whilst the slave-narratives were obliged to present an acceptable form of ‘x’ (evidence of the workings of the holy spirit as maintained by radical dissenting Protestantism), they simultaneously revealed ‘y’ (a raw but coherent form of self-consciousness in the diaspora). This process of literal ‘displacement’ thus presents a lucid manifestation of the predicament of eighteenth-century African/slave identity within the diaspora. Alongside the dynamics of ‘cultural’ migration and ‘hybridisation’, such anti-essentialist conceptions of identity redetermined configurations of history, language and culture as processes of becoming rather than being” (7).

²⁴ Prince further uses what Mary Jeanne Larrabee calls this “resistance epistemology,” or reversing of what counts as knowledge and truth in the culture, as a moral space from which to judge the feelings of her white masters. Larrabee defines resistance epistemology as a way to make visible theories of knowledge marginalized by a dominant culture: “Prince bent the rules of Enlightenment logic, making her invisibility itself a resistance; and she operated within a socially and individually constructed site of experience already on the ‘outside’ of Center society” (459). Feeling is not central to Larrabee’s argument, however, while I read Prince’s epistemology of resistance as unavoidably with what could be felt or known by the white Anglo-American reader.

²⁵ For other studies which triangulate theories of sympathy within a culture of sensibility and the abolition movement, see G. Barker Benfield’s *The Culture of Sensibility* (1992), Markman Ellis’s *The Politics of Sensibility* (1996), Charlotte Sussman’s *Consuming Anxieties* (2000), Marcus Wood’s *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (2002), Brycchan Carey’s *British Abolition and the Rhetoric of Sensibility* (2005), Ian Baucom’s *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005), Lynn Festa’s *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (2006), George Boulukos’s *The Grateful Slave* (2008), Christine Levecq’s *Slavery and Sentiment* (2008), Stephen Ahern’s edited collection of essays, *Affect and Abolition in the Anglo-Atlantic, 1770-1830* (2013), Ramesh Mallipeddi’s *Spectacular Suffering: Witnessing Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic* (2016), and Stefan M. Wheelock’s *Barbaric Culture and Black Critique: Black Antislavery Writers, Religion, and the Slaveholding Atlantic* (2016).

²⁶ For an important account of sympathy in eighteenth-century philosophy and ethical theory, see Jonathan Lamb’s *The Evolution of Sympathy in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2009).

²⁷ Ramesh Mallipeddi in *Spectacular Suffering* (2016), in particular, lingers with the dual category of the witness – as one observes a crime committed *or* has experienced the original violation – as a lens for exploring how narratives by the enslaved proceed both “in accordance with a set of ideological imperatives” and as an effect of personal “self-construction” (6). I will return to this dual meaning of witness in my reading of juridical theology in William Apress (see chapter two).

²⁸ According to Mallipeddi, although Nixon uses slow violence to refer “primarily to modes of environmental degradation that proceed so imperceptibly that they fail to be recognized as events, even if their effects are likely to be catastrophic in the long term,” it is nevertheless a useful schema for addressing long-term injury and disability in Prince’s *History*, for “distinguishing between the spectacular suffering evoked by the abolitionists’ representations of the institutions of slavery – representations designed specifically to elicit sympathy in the metropolis and to generate accountability – and Prince’s reminder of the incremental and quotidian sufferings that beleaguer a slave’s daily existence” (78).

²⁹ See, for example, Lynn Festa’s discussion of the complicated relationship between sympathy, feeling, and human rights in her important article, “Humanity Without Feathers” in *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 1.1 (2010: 3-27). In it she argues: “When one examines the structures of identification that characterize sentimental sympathy and analyzes what precisely it is in other people that the sentimental understands as an incitement to sympathy, however, it becomes apparent that sentimental form produces an unstable definition of humanity. The sentimental operates on an ad hoc basis, selectively exciting feelings about particularly moving examples of suffering and recognizing these subjects exclusively based on the fact of that suffering. As a result, the subject produced by sentimental antislavery is granted only a diluted form of humanity grounded in pain and victimhood, a humanity that is only as enduring (or as fleeting) as the recognition of the metropolitan subject who bestows it” (4).

³⁰ Scarry continues, “While pain is a state remarkable for being wholly without objects, the imagination is remarkable for being the only state that is wholly its objects” (162).

³¹ Pringle’s inclusion of the phrase “thankfully received” situates Prince’s narrative in an important (and repressive) convention in abolitionist and ameliorist rhetoric of the period – one grounded in the notion that slaves and freed slaves respond with proper gratitude to the compassion and mercy of white people. George Boulukos in *The Grateful Slave* (2008) argues that positions of amelioration became possible in the last quarter of the eighteenth century as planters and other pro-slavery advocates worked to occupy a humanitarian position in the face of rising abolitionist discourse. Abolitionists themselves often occupied similar positions, arguing for the gradual elimination of slavery, or for reforming the abuses of the system. The problem with this position, as Boulukos points out, is that it “denies that slavery is inherently problematic by imagining that it can be made acceptable, or that Africans can be understood as suited to it” (10).

³² Sean Gaston argues in particular that this “persistence of the untouchable” created “a discourse of impossibility and confession” which operates as a recurring motif in eighteenth-century literature (132). See “The Impossibility of Sympathy” from *The Eighteenth Century* 51.1-2 (2010: 129-51).

³³ Abolitionism in Britain found some of its earliest advocates in Quakers and evangelical Anglicans (principally those belonging to the “Clapham Sect” or “Saints,” which included William Wilberforce). Abolitionist sentiment within Quakerism emerged as early as the 1680s, when a convocation of Dutch and German Quakers signed an antislavery statement at Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1688. Throughout the following century, Quakers were often at the forefront for circulating important abolitionist texts, including Anthony Benezet’s *Some Historical Account of Guinea* (1767), which influenced Thomas Clarkson’s influential *Essay on the Traffic and Commerce of the Human Species* (1786). The yearly meeting of the Society of Friends included a petition against the slave trade in 1783, and subsequently decided to form an inter-denominational group to work towards the abolition of the slave trade. When the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade formed in 1787, nine of its twelve members were Quakers. Stephen Tompkins, moreover, describes the Clapham Sect as, “A network of friends and families in England, with William Wilberforce as its centre of gravity, who were powerfully bound together by their shared moral and spiritual values, by their religious mission and social activism” (1). The group agitated across a range of social and religious issues, including the ending of the slave trade, penal reform, the institution of Sunday schools and other literacy initiatives for growing working class and urban populations, and for the instantiation of public virtues. By the beginning of the nineteenth-century, other evangelical sects, most particularly the Methodists, were closely associated with abolitionist sentiment, certainly in the aftermath of John Wesley’s publication of *Thoughts on Slavery* (1778). Germaine de Staël wrote, for instance, “The party which impelled the abolition of the slave trade in England is that of those zealous Christians commonly called Methodists. In the interests of humanity they display energy, industry, and party spirit; and as they are numerous, they affect public opinion, and public opinion affects the government” (161).

³⁴ For studies of West African spirituality and Afro-Caribbean religious practices on Antigua and Turk’s Island, see Natalie Zacek’s *Settler Society in the English Leeward Islands* (2010; chapter three), and Babacar M’Baye’s *The Trickster Comes West* (2011; 178-205).

³⁵ Thomas Jefferson in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785), for instance, infamously argued, “Their griefs are transient. Those numberless afflictions, which render it doubtful whether heaven has given life to us in mercy or in wrath, are less felt, and sooner forgotten with them. In general, their existence appears to participate in more of sensation than reflection” (255-56). Such racist beliefs were widespread by the time Prince’s *History* was published.

³⁶ As Nicole N. Aljoe points out in *Creole Testimonies* (2011): “Like the powerful and animist West African gods, the God articulated in Mary Prince’s narrative is an active participant in human lives. He is also described as an entity coextensive with, rather than external to, humanity” (139).

³⁷ Although providentialism suggests not only that the events of one’s life are pre-ordained, but that they reflect the greater purposes of God. Such a belief is not to be confused with predestinarianism, however, or the theological doctrine that God foreordains the saved, his elect. As Helen Thomas has pointed out in *Romanticism and Slave Narratives* (2000), many African American converts were “strongly opposed to the Calvinist doctrines of predestination and election,” despite a certain fascination with George Whitefield (who appears in many of their narratives, and broke with the Methodists over the issue of election). Moreover, Thomas continues, “and most important to the dissemination of the language and ideology of radical dissenting Protestantism, these Methodists placed a vital emphasis upon their belief in the individual’s personal experience of God’s perfecting grace, a trait which was to become a major structural feature of narratives (by slaves and others) which combined polemical tactics with literary expressions of identity” (37).

³⁸ On St. John, in particular, Sue Thomas notes, “Brother Christian Frederick Richter reported that the slave congregation in St. John’s as 5,000; there were another 1,500 free black and colored members of the St. John’s congregation. Three missionaries and their wives were then based in St. John’s, sharing this heavy pastoral load with helpers” (124-5).

³⁹ Caribbean periodicals in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries were deeply invested in identifying whether evangelical missionary activity inflamed or quieted enslaved populations. One article from the Jamaican *Royal Gazette* from August 10, 1816 argued for instance: “Adverting to the subject of Missionaries, he distinguished between the Methodist and Moravian missionaries. The former, he contended, did great mischief. They mixed poison in the cup of salvation. They flattered the passions of the slaves. They kept whole districts in alarm by the nature of their doctrines. The latter were eminent for their zeal and purity. A slave, who was known to be a Moravian convert, sold for a larger price on that account” (4). There was widespread agreement that the Methodists contributed to slave unrest, with slaveowner and British novelist Matthew Lewis exclaiming in *Journal of a West Indian Proprietor* (1834): “I am myself ready to give free ingress and egress upon my several estates to the teachers of any Christian sect whatever, the Methodists always excepted” (114). Less agreement existed on the subject of Moravian missionaries, although they came under suspicion for having a hand in slave unrest in Jamaica in 1832 (see the article series on “The Disturbance” in *The Watchman* between January 11 and February 22, as well

as the follow-up on April 28, 1832). This debate is significant for reading Macqueen's attacks on Prince because he conflated Prince's Moravianism with Methodism, implying that both movements were responsible for inciting slave unrest (Thomas 135). For critical accounts of slave unrest and insurrection on Antigua, see also David Barry Gaspar's *Bondmen and Rebels* (1985), Michael Craton's *Testing the Chains* (1992; 115-24), and Natasha Lightfoot's *Troubling Freedom* (2015; especially chapters 1-3).

⁴⁰ Nwankwo defines "racially based community" as a way of engaging with geography and space by re-negotiating lines of racially-based kinship and connection: "In her emphasis on spatial language, Prince powerfully asserts her own agency, her own right to determine where and why she moves ... She reiterates that she is both a speaking subject and an oppressed subject. Through her presentations of space we can read not only her refusal to represent herself as purely a victim, and her demand to speak from/of her knowledge as a traveler, but also her sense that migration to a place she deigns unfamiliar and/or foreign creates alienation" (176, 177). See also Elizabeth Bohls's *Slavery and the Politics of Place* (2014; 165-84).

⁴¹ Prince relates that she also stayed at "Mash the shoeblack's house," where he and his wife "helped to support me for a little while," before finding domestic work with a Mrs. Forsyth and the Pringles (90-2).

⁴² Sue Thomas in *Telling West Indian Lives* (2014) notes that Prince's remark that the Methodist prayers were the "first prayers I ever understood" indicates that the "language" was "Creole and the prayers probably extempore," according to some of the rhythms and idioms of West African spiritual practices (124).

⁴³ While Prince's *History* sparked the two libel cases, imbedding her narrative within the legal cultures and institutions of the British Empire, she also became embroiled in several cases on Antigua. Prince briefly relates that she quarreled with another slave woman "about a pig." She claims that although "Justice Dyett" ruled that she was "in no fault at all," the Woods still flogged her and put her in the "Cage one night" as punishment for the dispute (80). See Pringle's "Supplement" for Joseph Phillips's account of the legal system and institutions of punishment on Antigua (110).

⁴⁴ Importantly, Prince also slyly applies these penitential practices to colonial behavior, musing late in the narrative: "Since I have been here I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame, I think, since they can see and do such things" (93). Here, Prince represents colonial behavior as a kind of beastliness resulting from a geo-theological alteration: once removed to the Caribbean, they forget "all feeling of shame," suggesting that traveling to the West Indies would only produce a refusal of God and shame.

⁴⁵ Ramesh Mallipeddi argues that in the *History*, "Suffering is not constructed around a singular event – a sale, a flogging, or a rape – but is instead presented as a routinized and habitual occurrence, one that will leave her body in a state of disrepair after her decade-long ordeal working in the salt marshes" (79).

⁴⁶ Erysipelas, according to Ramesh Mallipeddi, "which causes the skin to turn dark and culminates in death and insanity, is a deficiency disorder, occasioned by a diet heavily centered on corn (the slaves' staple food on Turk's Island)" (79).

⁴⁷ See Craig Atwood's translation of the *Litany of Wounds* in *Community of the Cross* (2005; appendix 3, 233-56).

⁴⁸ Although the *Litany of Wounds* sometimes re-genders Christ as a wounded woman or mother, it also frequently does the same for the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called the "mother of Christendom," the "Mother of all God's people," and the "mother of the Congregation" in the *Te Matrem* and the "The Church's Prayer to the Holy Spirit" liturgical portions in the *Litany* (245-6, and 247).

⁴⁹ As Sue Thomas suggests, "The 'devotional vocabulary' of the so-called 'sifting period' (that lasted in Europe from 1743-1750) and in American from 1743-51) was notably and controversially sensual, especially around the blood streaming from Jesus's body (a transfiguration of shame to redemption), and its excesses were subsequently repressed within the church, although traces of it are found in later life narratives" (127). See also Katherine M. Faull's introduction in *Moravian Women's Memoirs* (1997; xvii-xl), and Paul Peucker's *A Time of Sifting* (2015; 135-46).

⁵⁰ In his "Supplement" to the *History of Mary Prince*, Thomas Pringle elusively contests the story of Prince's connection with Captain Abbot (and Abbot's subsequent infidelity), arguing that the Woods allowed Prince to care for their family, and take charge of the household. He refuses to name the sexual crimes Prince is accused of, noting that he "omitted" them "on account of its indecency" (105). Pringle also appeals to the evidence of Joseph Phillips. Phillips argued in a letter to Pringle reprinted in Pringle's "Supplement" to the *History*: "Of the immoral conduct ascribed to Molly [Prince] by Mr. Wood, I can say nothing further than this – that I have heard she had at a former period (previous to her marriage) a connexion with a white person, a Capt. ---, which I have no doubt was broken off when she became seriously impressed with religion. But, at any rate, such connexions are so common, I might almost say universal, in our slave colonies, that except by the missionaries and a few serious persons, they are

considered, if faults at all, so very venial as scarcely to deserve that name of immorality. Mr. Wood knows this colonial estimate of such connexions as well as I do” (111).

⁵¹ Early anti-Moravian “tell all” narratives, such as Andrew Frey’s *A True and Authentic Account of Andrew Frey* (1753) and Henry Rimius’s *A Candid Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Herrnhuters, Commonly Call’d Moravians or Unitas Fratrum* (1753), offered exposes of the Moravians’ supposed sexual license, paying particular attention to practices like love feasts and the spiritual erotics of their hymnody. Although sexual scandal remained a part of anti-Moravian literature, by the end of the eighteenth-century Moravians were often noted for their sexual purity. One essay in the *Antigua Weekly Register* from September 9, 1828, for instance, facetiously notes: “With respect to the habits of the Moravian females, they may be described by negatives; they neither read novels (those effusions of disordered imagination), nor scribble poetry; they neither paint fire screens nor their faces; instead of Moore’s amatory and inflammatory songs, they chaunt hymns; and what is far worse than all, the sex is so monotonously good, that ladies of character are deprived of the luxury of commenting on those who have none” (4). See also Aaron Fogelman’s *Jesus is Female* for a discussion of sexual purity in Moravian culture (2007; 91-5).

⁵² For scholarly accounts of Salone Cuthbert, see Nicole N. Aljoe’s *Creole Testimonies* (2012; 127-29, 144) and Sue Thomas’s *Telling West Indian Lives* (2014; 129-32, 168). For investigations of Archibald Monteith, see Angelo Constanzo’s “The Narrative of Archibald Monteith, A Jamaican Slave” in *Callaloo* 13.1 (1990:115-130), and Maureen Warner-Lewis’s careful reconstruction of archival materials through which to read Monteith’s *lebensläufe*, *Archibald Monteith: Igbo, Jamaican, Moravian* (2007). See also Katherine Faull Eze’s essay, “Self-Encounters: Two Eighteenth-Century African Memoirs from Bethlehem” in *Beyond Douglass: New Perspectives on Early African American Literature*, edited by Michael Drexler and Ed White (2008; 21-53), and Jon Sensbach’s extensive exploration of African *lebensläufe* in *A Separate Canaan* (1998) and *Rebecca’s Revival* (2006).

⁵³ For more on the *Zong* and the court cases, see Ian Baucom’s *Specters of the Atlantic* (2005).

⁵⁴ In *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, Giorgio Agamben meditates on the inexpressible and unfathomable lacunae that are so central to Holocaust testimonies, given that the “‘true’ witnesses, the ‘complete witnesses,’ are those who did not bear witness and could not bear witness. They are ... the drowned” (34). They are those who did not survive (see my discussion of Agamben in chapter two).

⁵⁵ Gillian Whitlock in *The Intimate Empire* (2000) has paid particular attention to the way the marginalia (Pringle’s preface and supplemental essay, and Susanna Strickland’s ghostwriting) work to capture a specific reading public: “It is through the marginalia that we can come to read the *History* not only in terms of its referential context, its place as a document in the history of slavery and what it tells us from a subjective point of view, but also the narrative relationship and the reading context which impinge upon the text” (13).

Chapter Four Endnotes

¹ Charles de Rémusat, involved in the French antislavery movement, was one of many figures who closely attended to the post-revolutionary progress of Haiti and were interested in imaginatively figuring the Haitian Revolution in fiction. See also, for instance, John Thelwall’s *The Daughter of Adoption* (1804), which is set during the early days of the Haitian Revolution. Victor Hugo’s novel *Bug-Jargal*, published two years after Rémusat composed *The Saint-Domingue Plantation* in 1826, also imagines recent revolutionary history through the Haitian Revolution.

² As James Finley has noted, racial resilience often appeared as narratives of environmental justice in nineteenth-century antislavery jeremiads, such as David Walker’s *An Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World*. Finley argues that these African American depictions of retributive justice as ecological catastrophe revise the Exodus account of Hebrew departure from Egyptian slavery (with the emphasis on natural disasters, such as plagues, locusts, columns of fire, etc.) within the causes of American antislavery activism.

³ More specifically, the indigenous Taino-Arawak name for the island of Hispaniola was “Ayiti” or “the land of high mountains.” In the Haitian Declaration of Independence, spoken by Jean-Jacques Dessalines in January, 1804 from the city of Gonaïves, Dessalines argued that the new state must turn away from French history, laws, culture, and language, announcing an antiracist form of historical erasure: “Citizens, my countrymen, on this solemn day I have brought together those courageous soldiers who, as liberty lay dying, spilled their blood to save it; these generals who have guided your efforts against tyranny have not yet done enough for your happiness; the French name still haunts our land. Everything revives the memories of the cruelties of this barbarous people: our laws, our

habits, our towns, everything still carries the stamp of the French. Indeed! There are still French in our island, and you believe yourself free and independent of that Republic which, it is true, has fought all the nations, but which has never defeated those who wanted to be free” (Dubois and Garrigou 179).

⁴ In *The Reaper’s Garden* (2010), Vincent Brown argues that sites of struggle over mortuary practices (and he looks specifically at Jamaica during the centuries of slavery) are not merely the purview of theology, but resonate with profound material, social, and political meaning: “All during the inexorable journey to the Americas, as Africans repeatedly made and lost fragile social connections, they trailed a lengthening column of displaced souls. This was a spiritual cataclysm, perhaps the most horrifying aspect of the experience of enslavement. Embarking for America, enslaved Africans had entered into a theater of ghosts” (43). I am especially drawn to Brown’s image of a “theater of ghosts” because it profoundly complicates Timur’s apocalyptic erasure of being part of a scattered community torn from its roots, but maintaining connections to haunted landscapes and genealogies. Revolution for Timur is a ghostly concept, alluding to these losses.

⁵ By exploring the drama’s historical erasures, I am, of course, drawing on the language of Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s seminal collection of essays, *Silencing the Past* (1997). He argued that the Haitian Revolution as an event challenged nearly every epistemological framework available to Western observers, especially assumptions regarding the intellectual and political capacities of black slaves: “The Haitian Revolution ... entered history with the peculiar characteristic of being unthinkable even as it happened” (73). The transformation of Haiti into a black republic became a “non-event,” its “unthinkability” one of its defining characteristics, and “silencing” the event the habitual interpretive maneuver into the twentieth century. More recently, scholars have reinterpreted elements of Trouillot’s “unthinkability” thesis, and suggested that, while contemporary spectators struggled to narrate and to engage with the possibility of black insurgency in the Caribbean, “if there was a silencing of the Haitian Revolution,” as Jeremy D. Popkin argues in his anthology of contemporary accounts of the conflict, *Facing Racial Revolution* (2008): “It occurred only after the consolidation of black rule on the island” (3). Susan Buck-Morss, furthermore, in *Haiti, Hegel, and Universal History* (2009), has elegantly analyzed Hegel’s development of his theory of the master-slave dialectic against the backdrop of the Haitian Revolution.

⁶ For historical accounts of Haitian nation-building after the Revolution, see Laurent Dubois’s *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (2012; 52-88).

⁷ Jeremy Matthew Glick specifically turns to those early twentieth-century drama and performances that narrate and imagine the Haitian Revolution as a site for exploring the Haitian Revolution as an “unfinished” resource for articulating what he calls the “Black radical tragic” (see especially his discussions on 114-15 and 159-62).

⁸ As the play unfolds, for instance, Timur’s inability to imagine a post-revolutionary order become even clearer in a space always already imbricated in a global capitalist system and sexual economy. Late in the play, Timur shifts from his earlier narratives to imagining various and disconnected kinds of freedoms. His coherent and radical alternative begins to unravel and multiply: “Hear me out, Badia. We have not seen the end of it. What now? What do we do? Go live in the forest? We could have fled there without rebelling ... Idle our ways away on this ravaged earth? We are not in Africa, Badia. In Africa, content with nothing to do ... Here, we must work. But how? Who knows? (V.139-40). In Timur’s speech, Africa is relegated to a space seemingly without history, economies, or political structures, where Timur and H el ene are “content with nothing to do.” And yet, R emusat has enough awareness to gesture towards a prior cultural existence in Africa for Timur and H el ene by having Timur refer to H el ene by her African name, Badia. H el ene, more grounded in her African past, refers to Timur by his African name, Touko, throughout the play.

⁹ By highlighting the importance of Haiti in Wedderburn’s prophetics, I am drawing on and diverging from the emphases of recent scholarship on Wedderburn. Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic* (1995; 11-13), for instance, worked to situate Wedderburn’s works within what he famously called a “counter-culture of modernity,” a culture resonant with “hidden expressions, both residual and emergent, that attempt to be global or outer-national in nature” (16). Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh’s *The Many-Headed Hydra* (2013), on the other hand, situated Wedderburn within minoritarian and politically radical transatlantic political activism, networks that my own examination of Wedderburn’s conceptualization of a messianic politics of his prophetic office attempts to extend and modify (287-326). If this project focuses on the Caribbean – specifically the Haitian revolutionary – context of Wedderburn’s writings, I am also indebted to scholarship that situates Wedderburn within London urban radicalism and millenarianism, especially Iain McCalman’s seminal *Radical Underworld* (1988; 50-72), and David Worrall’s *Radical Culture* (1992; 129-146). Finally, in addressing Wedderburn’s persistent antiracist and anticolonial registers, I am influenced by Paul Edwards’s “Unreconciled Strivings and Ironic Strategies: Three Afro-British Authors of the Late Georgian Period (Sancho, Equiano, Wedderburn)” in David Killingray’s *Africans in Britain* (1994; 28-48), Helen Thomas’s *Romanticism and Slave Narratives* (2000; 255-270), Marcus Wood’s *Slavery*,

Empathy, and Pornography (2003; 141-180), and Alan Rice's "Ghostly and Vernacular Presences in the Black Atlantic" (*Transatlantic Literary Studies, 1660-1830*, 2012; 154-168), and Elizabeth Bohls's *Romantic Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (2013; 74-8), although my own work attempts to integrate Wedderburn's critiques of the slave system within a radical agrarian communalism that links slave economies of Atlantic colonialism to the coming devastations of the Anthropocene.

¹⁰ In his formulation of a post-Haitian Revolution futurity, Wedderburn is participating in what Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo in *Black Cosmopolitanism* (2014) calls "black cosmopolitanism," or a particular form of citizenship where transatlantic and diasporic African communities throughout the Americas had to name a relationship to the Haitian Revolution: "*Black Cosmopolitanism* contends that Whites' fear of the revolution and its presumably contagious nature forced people of African descent throughout the Americas, particularly those in the public and published eye, to name a relationship to the Haitian Revolution, in particular, and to a transnational idea of Black community, in general. The revolution made a fear of uprising and, by extension, of transnationally oriented notions of Black community, into continent-wide obsession. The fear was not just of people of African descent in a particular location rising up and rebelling against the power structure in that location rising up and rebelling against the power structure in that location, but rather of people of African descent from and in a variety of locations connecting with each other and fomenting a massive revolution that might overturn the whole Atlantic slave system" (7). Wedderburn's cosmopolitanism is a peculiarly insurgent, underworld form, however, one that imagines citizenship through the remnant remaining after the global messianic transformation of the slave societies of the West.

¹¹ For more on imagining the temporal afterlives of the Haitian Revolution in literature and philosophy, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* (1995; 70-107), Sibylle Fischer's *Modernity Disavowed* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004) 132-42; Nick Nesbitt, *Universal Emancipation and the Radical Enlightenment* (2008; 2-26), Susan Buck-Morss's *Hegel, Haiti, and Universal History* (2009; 109-20), Paul Youngquist's edited collection *Race, Romanticism, and the Atlantic* (2013; 8-10, 110-6, and 138-44), and Marlene Daut's *Tropics of Haiti* (2015; 605-12).

¹² See Ryan Hanley, "A Radical Change of Heart: Robert Wedderburn's Last Word on Slavery." He discusses a newly discovered text apparently by Wedderburn, *An Address to the Right Honourable Lord Brougham and Vaux, Chancellor of Great Britain, by the Descendent of a Negro, Suggesting an Equitable Plan for the Emancipation of Slaves* (1831; Rhodes House collection, Bodleian Library). Published right before Wedderburn's death in 1834 or 35, it details his conflicted reaction to the growing public debate on the abolition of slavery. Scholars have most often focused on Wedderburn's earliest works, including the short-lived radical periodical, *The Axe Laid to the Root* (1817), and his autobiography, *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824), which are unreservedly anti-authoritarianist. *An Address* suggests a late change in Wedderburn's political commitments, as it advocated for a gradual emancipation of slaves, rather than the violent self-emancipation promoted in *The Axe Laid to the Root*.

¹³ I am thus situating Wedderburn as an early example in a black radical prophetic tradition. See Anthony Bogues's *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Black Radical Intellectuals* (2003).

¹⁴ In describing Wedderburn's writings as "prophetic" or enabling an earthly "prophetic," I am influenced by Ian Balfour's argument in *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (2002) that the "prophetic" approximates the multi-generic shifts of visionary literatures: "It is usually more appropriate to speak of 'the prophetic' than of prophecy, if the latter is a genre and the former a mode that can intersect with any number of genres from the ode to the epic, in either poetry or prose" (1). For Wedderburn, the prophetic can also appear in more ephemeral genres, such as periodicals and pamphlets.

¹⁵ In reading Wedderburn's prophetics against forms of messianic history, I am drawing a distinction between messianic and eschatological time, what Giorgio Agamben (quoting Gianni Carchia) in *The Time that Remains* calls, "not the end of time, but *the time of the end*" (62). Agamben provides his own definition later in the passage, announcing that messianic time "Messianic time is the time that time takes to come to an end ... It is the time we need to make time end: the time that is left us" (64). Geoffrey Hartman's "Poetics of Prophecy" makes a similar distinction in the prophetic announcements of Romanticism, arguing that undertakes to transform a "lesion in the fabric of time" into a "time for thought," which allows for a prophetic speech that affirms there is still time (23, 25-27). This distinction between messianic and millenarian prophecy may not always hold for Wedderburn, but it allows us to identify and trace two temporal narratives at work in his speeches and writing: a contraction of time, or a time of anticipation in the present, and a foretelling of the future. See also Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation* (2003; 83-128), and Brian Bitt's "The Schmittian Messiah in Agamben's *The Time that Remains*" in *Critical Inquiry* (2010; 262-87).

¹⁶ In addressing Wedderburn's prophetic voice failing to enact the revolution he imagined, I am interested in David Scott's resituating of the role of the critic in critically engaging with these texts without becoming seduced

by the longing for total revolution: “I think we live in tragic times. This, however, is not merely because our world is assailed by one moral and social catastrophe after another. It is rather because, in Hamlet’s memorable phrase, our time ‘is out of joint.’ The old languages of moral-political vision and hope are no longer in sync with the world they were meant to describe and normatively critique ... But if what is at stake in critically thinking through this postcolonial present is not simply the naming of yet another horizon, and the fixing of the teleological plot that takes us there from here, what is at stake is something like a refusal to be seduced and immobilized by the facile normalization of the present” (2). See especially his epilogue in *Conscripts of Modernity* (209-222).

¹⁷ For transatlantic investigations of millenarian and messianic prophetic speech during the decades of revolution and Romantic output, see Northrup Frye’s *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), David Erdman’s *William Blake: Prophet against Empire* (1977), J.F.C. Harrison’s *The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850* (1979), Geoffrey Hartman’s “Poetics of Prophecy” in *High Romantic Argument: Essays for M.H. Abrams* (1981; 15-40), Jon Mee’s *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (1992) and *Romanticism, Enthusiasm, and Regulation* (2005), Tim Fulford’s *Romanticism and Millenarianism* (editor, 2002), Ian Balfour’s *The Rhetoric of Romantic Prophecy* (2002), Saree Makdisi’s *William Blake and the Impossible History of the 1790s* (2002), Susan Juster’s *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (2003), Morton D. Paley’s *The Traveller in the Evening* (2008), and Jeffrey N. Cox’s *Romanticism in the Shadow of War* (2014; 93-159).

¹⁸ Iain McCalman notes that Wedderburn seems to have settled in the St. Giles district in London, an area infamous for its congregation of immigrant minorities, including Jews, lascars, and the Irish. Here, Wedderburn would have also encountered a “blackguard” subculture that “eked out a living by their wit, strength, agility, and cunning – as musicians, entertainers, beggars, thieves and labourers” (54).

¹⁹ Iain McCalman argues that rather than working as an agent for lower class respectability and political conservatism, “For Robert Wedderburn Methodism was a stepping stone to political unrespectability and extremism” (50). See in particular McCalman’s discussion of William Hamilton Reid’s *Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies in this Metropolis* (1800), an exposé of the relationship between popular Methodist enthusiasm and millenarian radical politics (51-66).

²⁰ Wedderburn formed and registered the Hopkins Street Chapel on April 23, 1819 as a Unitarian meeting-house for religious worship. The background for forming the chapel was caused by a break between Wedderburn and Spence’s successor, Thomas Evans, who Wedderburn believed was becoming too moderate in his tactics and rhetoric (McCalman 130-131). For a history of Wedderburn’s Hopkins Street Chapel, see Iain McCalman’s *Radical Underworld* (132-151; 191-192).

²¹ One spy report from August 9, 1819 records: “The sense of the meeting was taken, -- Question ‘has a Slave an inherent right to slay his mater who refuses him his liberty.’ Nearly the whole of the persons in the room held up their hands in favour of the Question. Mr W. then exclaimed, well Gentlemen I can now write home and tell the Slaves to murder their Masters as soon as they please” (115).

²² See n.74 from the introduction.

²³ Wedderburn’s last appears in the archive in 1834, but is not listed in official death registers, which began in 1837. He may have been the Robert Wedderburn listed for burial in London on January 4, 1835 (*England and Wales Non-Conformist Records Index* RG4-8).

²⁴ For an examination of Wedderburn’s relative literacy, particularly when working on the *Axe Laid to the Root*, see Peter Linebaugh’s “A Little Jubilee? The Literacy of Robert Wedderburn in 1817” in *Protest and Survival: Essays for E.P. Thompson* (1993; 174-220).

²⁵ For criticism on Thomas Spence, see Iain McCalman’s *Radical Underworld* (1988; 3-25, 63-72), David Worrall’s *Radical Culture* (1992; 2-12, et al), and John Barrell’s *Imagining the King’s Death* (2000; 215-226).

²⁶ For more on Wedderburn’s radical contemporary and sometimes colleague, Thomas Evans, see McCalman’s *Radical Underworld* (1988; 101-119, 130-133), and Worrall’s *Radical Culture* (1992; 1-3, 117-130, 150-169).

²⁷ One such surveillance report reproduces a speech of Wedderburn’s at the Hopkins Street Chapel on October 13, 1819 that elaborated on “the earth was given to the children of men”: “There were but two classes of people in England very Rich and very Poor how did this happen? Why the Land was held by 400 Families alone who took special care it should never go out of their families for all the Marriages of their children were made for gain the first question was asked was what landed property has he got what estates is He heir to? but who gave them this Land? God gave the World to the Children of Men as their Inheritance and they have been fleeced out of it” (*Horrors of Slavery*, 120). Here, Wedderburn prophetically divides the world not according to spiritual belief (“sheep and the goats,” as Christ announces in Matthew 25:31-46), but according to material wealth.

²⁸ Iain McCalman’s *Radical Underworld* traces the activities of Spencean ultra-radicals in London at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as a form of millenarian-revolutionary political activism that links the

emergence of working-class political organizations in the 1790s and the beginnings of early Chartism in the 1830s. McCalman is thus primarily invested in the relationships between popular radicalism, indigence, and crime in forming a “continuous revolutionary-republican underground” in London. Although he is often keenly attuned to issues of race and colonialism in his analyses, the geographical and temporal dimensions of his project limit the extent to which he can turn to the Caribbean as a discursive partner in the growth of radical thought. David Worrall, on the other hand, turns to another arena of British colonial and imperial management: Ireland. He explains in his introduction: “The cultural trace of the London-based Spenceans, I have too lately come to realize, is Ireland. Out of Ireland came the emphasis on tillage rather than pasture, on small farms rather than agricultural enclosure and, most importantly, on rebellion rather than reform” (3). To Worrall’s focus on a history of Irish colonialism and radical insurgency, I would like to add Wedderburn’s invocations of specifically Caribbean moments of insurrection.

²⁹ Wedderburn’s support for agrarian communalism hints at a rage against the industrial and imperial beginnings of the Anthropocene. David Worrall reads in Wedderburn’s writings a “green” future that ultimately disappeared: “Instead of an industrial economy, we could have had an agrarian society, even a ‘green’ one in the late-twentieth-century sense of the word. Instead of nineteenth-century imperialism, there might have been a self-sufficient and equitable nation decentralized into parishes, perhaps even into a welfare state, on a Paineite model, whose clock could not be turned back by successive trimming and cutting. It did not have to be the way it is now” (7). For the Industrial Revolution and the Romantic period as the beginning of the Anthropocene, see Dipesh Chakrabarty’s seminal “The Climate of History: Four Theses” in *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009; 197-222).

³⁰ Wedderburn would often invoke the poverty of European or Irish peasants as an example of land dispossession. For instance, in the first issue of the *Axe Laid to the Root*, he exclaims: “Take warnings by the sufferings of the European poor, and never give up your lands you now possess, for it is your right by God and nature, for the ‘earth was given to the children of men’” (82). It is also significant that in this passage Wedderburn links earthly inheritance to both God *and* nature’s law. Wedderburn fits into a history that Vincent Lloyd has recently turned to in *Black Natural Law* (2016; 3-10).

³¹ David Worrall examines how important Leviticus 25 was for radical reformers – and how even possession of that chapter could be construed by a paranoid state as evidence of Jacobin tendencies. He relates an incident in Thomas Spence’s life, when in December of 1792 he was arrested for selling Thomas Paine’s *The Rights of Man* (Part II). The Bow Street runners sent to arrest him searched Spence’s pockets, and found extracts from the works of Locke, Puffendorf, Swift, Pope, and “even the 25th chapter of the book of Leviticus, all of which ... may, according to the present system of proceedings, be equally termed libellous” (qtd. 10).

³² Wedderburn situates this discussion of tenancy within a description of Christ’s own poverty: “What can the landholders, priests or lawyers say, or do more than they did against Christ; yet his doctrine is on record, which says ‘woe unto them that add house to house or field to field’” (83). Given how conflicted a figure Christ assumes in much of Wedderburn’s oeuvre, it is interesting that it is not Christ’s parables, his miracles, or his death and resurrection that will leave an impression on Wedderburn’s own messianic prophetics, but his radical tenancy.

³³ Michel Serres arrives at this notion of tenancy out of his reading of a Christian sense of pilgrimage – that “this religion is based on the life of a person *leaving no trace whatsoever that would allow us to infer a history*” (19; emphasis original). Wedderburn, on the other hand, channels his sense of tenancy through an understanding of a radically transformed earth, rather than an earth abandoned for a heavenly New Jerusalem.

³⁴ Perhaps one of the more interesting political innovations of Spence was the creation of a phonetic alphabet in order to teach the “proper pronunciation” of English diction alongside spelling. Spence believed that if English pronunciation was taught alongside spelling, then class distinctions based on dialectal differences would disappear. After the first edition of “A Supplement to the History of Robinson Crusoe” (Spence published a translation of “Crusonia” in this phonetic dialect, “A s'upl'im'int too thæi Hæistæire ov Robæinsæin Kruzo, bæing th'i h'ist'ire 'ov Kruzonea, or R'ob'ins'in Kruzo'z” (Newcastle, 1782; see also Spence’s *The Pronouncing and Foreigners’ Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments*, 1782).

³⁵ Five years before Wedderburn applied to his half-brother for aid, he also visited his father for the same purpose. As Wedderburn describes in *The Horrors of Slavery*, “It was seven years after my arrival in England that I visited my father, who had the inhumanity to threaten to send me to gaol if I troubled him. I never saw my worthy father in Britain but this time, and then he did not abuse my mother, as my dear brother, A. Colville, has done; nor did he deny me to be his son, but called me a *lazy fellow*, and said he would do nothing for me. From his cook I had one draught of small beer, and his footman gave me a cracked sixpence – and these are all the obligations I am under to my *worthy* father, and my *dear* brother, A. Colville” (60). In relating this incident, it is significant that Wedderburn takes care to contrast his family’s behavior to the servants in the household, who do provide him with aid, impoverished as it is.

³⁶ As I examined in chapter one, Joseph Roach argues in *Cities of the Dead* (1996) that performances substitute for crucial absences in a colonial histories, and coins the term “surrogation” to describe performances that re-animate “actual or perceived vacancies” in cultural networks: “Performance . . . stands in for an elusive entity that it is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace” (3, 2). Wedderburn’s spiritually heterodox liturgies reveal a “vacancy” at the heart of evangelicalism. As we will see, for instance, Wedderburn’s anti-Trinitarianism enables him to read the atonement through Christ’s dead – rather than resurrected – body, a re-writing of redemptive history that opens up possibilities for rethinking violence, vengeance, and revolutionary limits.

³⁷ *The Truth Self-Supported* was directed towards a London audience composed of those disenfranchised along multiple axes: economic, political, and religious. Tracing the intersections of these axes reveals spaces where religion had profound, and often complicated and multivalent, political value. Historians Elie Halévy and E.P. Thompson famously theorized that Methodism disciplined the British underclass and prevented the success of revolutionary activity during the early nineteenth century. For these readings of Methodism, see Elie Halévy’s *The History of the English People in 1815* (1913) and *The Birth of Methodism in England* (1971), and E.P. Thompson’s *The Rise of the English Working Class* (1963; 388-97). More recent studies have shown, however, that popular Methodism proved to be a highly malleable evangelical movement, and often manifested a wide spectrum of what would be considered heterodox behaviors, doctrines, and practices. For examinations of Methodism as a “popular” and “populist” religion, see David Hempton’s *The Religion of the People* (1996) and Arnold Rattenbury’s “Methodism and the Tatterdemalions,” in *Popular Culture and Class Conflict, 1590-1914* (1981; 28-61). See also Gerald Wayne Olsen’s *Religion and Revolution in Early Industrial England* (1989) and David Hempton’s *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (1984) for a full discussion, and Misty G. Anderson’s *Imagining Methodism* (2012; 18-22), and Phyllis Mack’s *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment* (2008; 3-5) for more recent assessments.

³⁸ As Gauri Viswanathan has pointed out in *Outside the Fold* (1998), the experience of spiritual transformation possesses real political valences, which can disrupt communal bonds (xi-xvii, 3). Viswanathan argues that these disruptions, despite their coding in the popular imagination as regressive, are fundamental to the experience of modernity: “Conversion is not limited to the function of either preserving or erasing identity but, in a far more complex ways, is associated with a deconstructive activity central to modernity itself” (76). Although Viswanathan elaborates on this insight by analyzing how legal systems adapt in order to channel and manage these disruptions, I am interested in the extent to which Wedderburn’s shifting collage of spiritual identifications suggest alternative accounts of an emancipatory politics in nineteenth-century London.

³⁹ Substitutionary or sacrificial models of the atonement argue that Christ’s project of redemption works under the logic of sacrifice. In this model, sin or transgression requires a shedding of blood to appease God’s justice (see in particular St. Anselm’s substitution theory of atonement). Christ’s sacrificial death in the place of sinners is thus a way to placate God’s wrath. A particular legacy of the Protestant Reformation situated this reading of the atonement within a particular juridical register where God “imputes” the guilt of sin on Christ. Christ’s sacrifice satisfies the penal demands of the law. See also E.P. Sander’s *Paul* (52-62, 87-90, and 92-94) for the central doctrinal debates.

⁴⁰ Paul in Romans chapter six gives an extended theological account of atonement that inaugurates a new ontology of death and life. This new understanding of being is grounded in (as Alain Badiou argues in *Saint Paul*) Paul’s unflinching fidelity to the (fabled) event of the resurrection: “For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God” (Rom. 6:5-10). Wedderburn’s insistence that Christ is dead and never resurrected constitutes a fidelity to the event of his death, and affirms an alternative theological ontology: to live is to be sheltered by the corpse of Christ.

⁴¹ Wedderburn’s sense of a prophetically-anticipated present as re-imagined in the conversion event rethinks both Paul’s theology of the atonement and of messianic time. His political theology of redemptive history suggests that Caribbean and African-descended Christians constructed heterodox formulations for what it means to live in a violent and contracted present. Given recent interest in Paul (and Benjamin’s) messianism in the Alain Badiou’s *Saint Paul: The Foundation for Universalism* (2003), Slavoj Žižek’s *The Puppet and the Dwarf* (2003), and Giorgio Agamben’s *The Time That Remains* (2005), African-descended writers like Wedderburn may complicate what it is we mean we invoke “messianic time.”

⁴² See Worrall's *Radical Culture* (180-81; 29 November 1819, HO 42/198, 490). *The Horrors of Slavery* also includes a selection of other spy reports and legal documents relating to Wedderburn's career (65-77, 78-80, 114-130).

⁴³ Some recently published works on Jewish communities in the Caribbean would include Mordechai Arbell, *The Jewish Nation of the Caribbean* (2002) and *The Portuguese Jews of Jamaica* (2000); Alan F. Benjamin, *Jews of the Dutch Caribbean* (2004); Richard L. Kagan and Philip D. Morgan (eds.), *Atlantic Diasporas* (2008); and Kristin Ruggiero (ed.), *The Jewish Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean* (2010). See also Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica* (1774), I.557-558, 568, 605; II.29-30, 297, 460, 488-491.

⁴⁴ See Exodus 21:16.

⁴⁵ For critical accounts of Brothers, see also Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (1998; 29-35), Saree Makdisi's *William Blake* (1999; 59-70), John Barrell's *Imagining the King's Death* (2000; 504-543), Susan Juster's *Doomsayers* (2003; 178-215), Deborah Madden's *The Paddington Prophet* (2010; 2-20), and Mary Favret's *War at a Distance* (2010; 81-97).

⁴⁶ For accounts of immigrants and refugees leaving Haiti for the United States, Britain, and other islands in the Caribbean, see Alfred E. Lemmon, et. al.'s *Common Routes: St. Domingue-Louisiana* (2006), Sean X. Goudie's *Creole America* (2006), Ashli White's *Encountering Revolution* (2010), and Julia Gaffield's *Haitian Connections in the Atlantic World* (2015).

⁴⁷ Wedderburn's texts have deep links to American slave narratives. Frederick Douglass, for instance, opened his *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, by describing the beating of his Aunt Hester, which he describes as his coming into consciousness of slavery: "I have often been awakened at the dawn of day by the most heart-rending shrieks of an own aunt of mine, whom he used to tie up to a joist, and whip upon her naked back, till she was literally covered with blood ... I remember the first time I witnessed this horrible exhibition. I was quite a child, but I well remember it. I never shall forget it whilst I remember any thing. It was the first of a long series of such outrages, of which I was doomed to be a witness and a participant. It struck me with awful force. It was the blood-stained gate, the entrance to the hell of slavery, through which I was about to pass. It was a most terrible spectacle. I wish I could commit to paper the feelings with which I beheld it" (42).

⁴⁸ For examinations of Jamaican Obeah, see Magarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert's helpful introduction in *Creole Religions and the Caribbean* (2011; 155-82), Alan Richardson's "Romantic Voodoo: Obeah and British Culture, 1797-1807" in *Sacred Possessions* (1997; 171-94), Srinivas Aravamudan's discussion of Obeah in his introduction to *Obi, or, The History Three-Fingered Jack* (2005; 23-51), Toni Wall Jaudon's "Obeah's Sensations: Rethinking Religion at the Transnational Turn" in *American Literature* (2012; 715-41), Diana Paton and Maarit Forde's edited collection, *Obeah and Other Powers* (2012), Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's "Obi, Assemblage, Enchantment" in *J19* (2013; 172-77), and the special issue of *Atlantic Studies* (ed. by Kelly Wisecup and Toni Wall Jaudon) on Obeah (issue 2, 2015).

⁴⁹ Saidiya Hartman elaborates in *Scenes of Subjection*, "Rather than bespeaking the mutuality of social relations or the expressive and affective capacities of the subject, sentience, enjoyment, affinity, will, and desire facilitated subjugation, domination, and terror precisely by preying upon the flesh, the heart, and the soul. It was often the case that benevolent correctives and declarations of slave humanity intensified the brutal exercise of power upon the captive body rather than ameliorating the chattel condition" (5).

⁵⁰ We might read Wedderburn as a Jamaican equivalent to Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who ordered the massacre of remaining whites on St. Domingue during the final days of the revolution as an appropriate expression of revenge. See Laurent Dubois's *Avengers of the New World* (2004; 280-99) and Jeremy Popkin's *Facing Racial Revolution* (2007; 354-57).

⁵¹ Wedderburn relates that his mother Rosanna was eventually purchased by the Campbell family in Kingston. McCalman theorizes that the "Miss Campbell" who features so prominently in *The Axe Laid to the Root* might have been a child of Rosanna's. Wedderburn relates at other points in the periodical that Miss Campbell was of mixed heritage, and had Maroon ancestry. McCalman suggests that although the correspondence between Wedderburn and Miss Campbell is doubtless fictitious, a historical person probably existed (102, n.1). See also Sue Thomas, "Robert Wedderburn's Correspondent Miss Campbell," *Notes and Queries* (2014; 510-14).

⁵² By attending to marronage in Wedderburn as a social, as well as a performance, practice, I am influenced by the work of Michael Warner's *Publics and Counterpublics* (2005; 225-68), Kathleen Wilson's "The Performance of Freedom: Maroons and the Colonial Order in Eighteenth-Century Jamaica and the Atlantic Sound" in the *William and Mary Quarterly* (2009; 45-86), and Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's *New World Drama* (2014; 241-6).

⁵³ Neil Roberts, for instance, notes that Edmund Burke represented the French revolutionaries through the lens of Caribbean marronage, calling the French radicals in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) "a gang

of Maroon slaves, suddenly broke loose from the house of bondage” (qtd. 12). For other readings of the Haitian Revolution as an expression of marronage, see Paget Henry’s *Caliban’s Reason* (2000; 1-18). In merging messianism to maroon fugitivity in Miss Campbell, Wedderburn renders a figure who voices what Edouard Glissant in *Le Nègre Marron (The Unknown Maroon)* calls a “prophetic vision of the past,” a particular orientation to history as a locus for conjuring a trans-historical politics freed from the weight of historicism (qtd. Roberts 12).

⁵⁴ See the account in *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* from January, 1839 (404).

⁵⁵ For important criticism on tragedy (many of which David Scott and Jeremy Matthew Glick interact with), see George Steiner’s *The Death of Tragedy* (1961), Hannah Arendt’s *On Revolution* (1963), and Raymond William’s *Modern Tragedy* (1966). For more recent accounts of tragedy, see Martha Nussbaum’s *The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (2001), Slavoj Žižek’s *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (2009), and David Scot’s *Omens of Adversity* (2014).

⁵⁶ See Reinhart Koselleck’s *Futures Past* (2004; 43-57 and 255-76), and David Scott’s *Conscript* (2005; 28-31 and 42-5).

⁵⁷ See McCalman’s *Radical Underworld* for a history of the radical press and its repression by the British government, 152-77.

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