

THE RACE FOR AMERICA: BLACKNESS, BELONGING, AND EMPIRE IN THE  
TRANSAMERICAN NINETEENTH CENTURY

By

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## INTRODUCTION

“IF I WERE NOT HERE, I WOULD HAVE TO BE INVENTED”:

### HEMISPHERIC AMERICA AND THE BLACK BODY

In late 1852, the *San Fernando Gazette*—a regional paper published in the second largest city on the Caribbean island of Trinidad—reprinted a *London Times* article on “The Future Destinies of America” for its readers. Such reprintings were ubiquitous. Like most West Indian periodicals, the *Gazette* regularly received a parcel of exchange papers from the USA, Great Britain, and the West Indies, and would supply its own copy to those markets in return. These exchanges resulted in circum-Atlantic tides of information and newspapers whose contents were usually international in scope.<sup>1</sup> This particular essay, however, likely drew the attention of British, Caribbean, South American, and USAmerican readers because it so succinctly captured the energy of the age. It begins:

Among the various fields of broad political speculation there is none more suggestive than that discoverable in the future destinies of America. We use the term as importing not simply the thirty-three United States, but the entire western world—the two enormous continents of North and South... But how is the fate of

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<sup>1</sup> The article originally appears in the *Times* as “Among the various fields of broad political speculation,” on September 22, 1852 (4). While it is not clear that “The Future Destinies of America” was reprinted in the United States, the *Daily Weekly Intelligencer* of Washington, DC reprinted an article from the *Times* that refers to the article (“English Opinions,” February 14, 1853). Oddly and in evidence the circum-Atlantic print circulation’s capacity to recontextualizes and defamiliarize texts, the *Times* quotes from this article in a later piece entitled “The South American Republics” (March 26, 1853, 5), but identifies the source as the Brazilian *Diario del Pernambuco*, rather than its own earlier column.

America to be delineated or conceived? In their present political condition these immense territories resemble those of Europe in the days of Charlemagne. They are imperfectly stocked by a motely population, including barbarous tribes, degenerate races, rising communities, and powerful States. From north to south, and east to west, everything appears in process only of formation, incomplete and undecided.<sup>2</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, independence movements throughout Spanish America, the abolition of slavery in the British and French Caribbean, and USAmerican expansionism, rendered America a radically unstable political geography, where national borders and colonial domains were constantly being renegotiated. Amid this political tumult, Americans began migrating throughout the hemisphere like never before: displaced First Nations sought refuge from the encroachment of Euro-American settlers and imperial expansion. East coast entrepreneurs in the USA sought new economic opportunities in the heartland or pursued fortune during the California Gold Rush. Emancipated African Americans throughout the Caribbean traveled to the Spanish Main in search of paid labor opportunities, while free African Americans from the United States embarked for the Caribbean or Liberia in search of political enfranchisement. Such frenetic and fluctuating “disorganisation of the American continent,” the article suggests, “is such as almost to invite the attempts of a conquering Power”; it resulted in a power void and an implicit, shared desire for the imposition of order, a role, the article argues, the USA was eager to fill. Indeed, the article expresses concern with the “actual strides of the United States towards dominion,” including “the first step taken to the absorption of Mexico” and that nation’s palpable “[dis]content with hovering over the islands of the Caribbean.” At the

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<sup>2</sup> “The Future Destinies of America,” *San Fernando Gazette*, November 5, 1852.

same time, the article bespeaks an odd admiration for the USA's "unparalleled destiny" and the success with which they have "absorbed all immigrants, of whatever race, without any perceptible modification of their political unity." Prescient though the author may have been in his/her prognostications about US American hegemony and imperialist impulses in the Americas, his/her inability to recognize the plainly "perceptible modifications" to the nation-state's political unity that stemmed from racial conflict and would effectuate a Civil War within a decade marks a serious, and perhaps willful, blindspot in his/her foresight.

The tensely interwoven discourses on the "motely population" of diverse Americans that "imperfectly stocked" the hemisphere in the mid-nineteenth century and the energetic, even radical imagination for the different potential (re)configurations of that geography comprise the subject of *The Race for America*. This study contends that ideas about racial sameness/difference and ideas about the proper organization of political borders and populations became mutually constitutive during this period. As the common linguistic slippage between "race" and "nation"—words often used interchangeably in the texts I examine—suggests, arguments about which populations were "rising communities" and which were "degenerate races" were easily and frequently marshaled to provide justifications for how the Americas should be politically subdivided, and which populations belonged where. These debates took place amid a remarkable surge in migration at mid-century, particularly among African Americans who began voluntarily crossing national borders in historically unprecedented numbers. Moreover, national borders themselves were remarkably unstable. In North America, the USA continued expanding farther and farther west, all the while deracinating First Nations, reincorporating Texas, conquering much of Mexico, contemplating the annexation of Caribbean islands (especially Cuba), and planning an interoceanic canal through Central America that would revolutionize global trade.



Meanwhile, the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies (1834) and the French Antilles (1848) set in motion large numbers of liberated African American populations from the islands, seeking paid labor opportunities on other islands or on the Spanish Main. West and south of the islands, newly independent republics and loose confederations formed and dissolved with alarming frequency as people vied for sovereignty and power in the wake of American decolonization from the Spanish Empire.

As flux became the status quo of the Americas' mid-century political landscape, Americans engaged in concurrent and interrelated discourses on racial difference and the future of racial slavery in the hemisphere. In addition to the rise of scientific racism, the invention and ordering of "whiteness," and the ever-more-nuanced efforts to justify the subjugation of African Americans, one of the most popular proposed solutions for slavery's abolition in the USA involved the relocation of African Americans to the Caribbean, Central America, or Africa. Arguments supporting Black-led emigration schemes or white-engineered colonization schemes relied on what I call *georacial logic*, discourses that make claims about which American populations belong where based on a particular understanding of racial affinities, distinctions, or hierarchies. Put simply, georacial logic used ideas about race to underwrite political agendas that dictated how and where national borders should subdivide the American hemisphere.

### **The Race for America**

Questions regarding how "America" came to name a hemispheric geopolitical unit and whether such an idea is coherent or even useful have long preoccupied scholars. They have variously asked if the Americas possess a common history or a common literature, debated whether America was discovered or invented, and traced the development of the "Western

Hemisphere” idea from Columbus to the present.<sup>3</sup> In laying out the intellectual genealogy of these foundational and subsequent labors, Rodrigo Lazo describes what has become known as “Hemispheric American Studies” as an intellectual endeavor conceived within an “impossible epistemology”; it is, to his mind, an attempt to know the unknowable, to name the unnamable. The problem, for Lazo, lies in a fundamental contradiction: the disjunction between our ideas about the ontological content of “America” and the material archives that might shed light on that content. “Archives throughout the Americas,” he writes, “offer the opportunity for alterity and unforeseen problems that do not correlate with the geographic and spatial conceptualization of what Americas work entails.”<sup>4</sup> Nor do they correlate with popular understandings of what America—that slippery sign, a nation and a hemisphere, a nightmare and a dream, and a dream deferred—entails. Lazo himself has compellingly modeled ways of making meaning out of the productive dissonance between meta-narratives of the Americas’ development and the lived transnational experiences of Americans.<sup>5</sup> The archives of American history and literature therefore become sites for revealing a complex set of inconsistent explanations for what we talk about when we talk about America.

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<sup>3</sup> Herbert Bolton, “The Epic of Greater America,” *The American Historical Review* 38.3 (April 1933): 448-474; Edmundo O’Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of Its History* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1961); *Do the Americas Have a Common History?: A Critique of the Bolton Thesis*, ed. Lewis Hanke (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964); Arthur P. Whitaker, *The Western Hemisphere Idea: Its Rise and Decline* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1965); ed., *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?*, ed. Gustavo Perez-Firmat (Durham: Duke UP, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Rodrigo Lazo, “The Invention of America Again: On the Impossibility of an Archive,” *American Literary History* 25.4 (2013): 753.

<sup>5</sup> See Rodrigo Lazo, “Confederates in the Hispanic Attic,” *Unsettled States: Nineteenth-Century American Literary Studies* (New York: New York UP, 2014), ed. Dana Luciano and Ivy G. Wilson, 31-54.

In a different register, the story of hemispheric America is a story that “cannot be told, yet must be told.”<sup>6</sup> I adopt and adapt the lyrics of M. NourbeSe Philip’s poetic efforts to narrate the 1781 *Zong* massacre with only the ledgers of that transatlantic voyage because, as I argue in this dissertation, the story of how hemispheric America came to have theoretical purchase cannot be told without also telling how that story was inscribed upon the palimpsestic flesh of the Black body. *The Race for America* contends that textual representations of the Black body and the transamerican theories posited by Black writers, contributions largely excluded from the intellectual genealogy that Lazo rehearses, played a constitutive role in the invention of “America.” I argue that these writings exemplify the “alterity and unforeseen problems” of History (writ large) that might productively reorient hemispheric American studies toward a reconsideration of precisely what is “impossible” about that field’s archives and why, exactly, we “must” embrace a hemispheric vision of America.

In her famous opening to “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” for example, Hortense Spillers describes herself as “a marked woman,” positing further that the Black body in the USA operates as “a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth.” She concludes, both playfully and powerfully, that “[m]y country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented.” *The Race for America* takes up Spillers’s questions about why and how the United States *needs* the Black body to have “no movement in a field of signification” in a particularly volatile historical moment. While Spillers focuses her analysis on the function of the Black body (especially the Black female body) within a nationalist frame, the dramatically unstable political borders, imperialist ambitions, and migratory movements of the mid-nineteenth century provide

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<sup>6</sup> M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 2008).

fecund terrain for refashioning these questions for a transamerican register in order to narrate the role of the Black body in the invention of hemispheric America. Not only did this period see the codification of as distinctly USAmerican Grammar Book through explosive arguments and prolific print culture debating the role of slavery in the nation's future. The decades leading up to the Civil War also saw USAmerican writers and politicians theorizing (and enacting) racially motivated imperialism throughout the Americas, such as the conquest of Mexico, westward expansion, the attempted annexation of Cuba, and filibustering missions to Nicaragua. Riffing on Spillers, I submit that the mid-nineteenth-century Black body became a *transnational* "treasury of rhetorical wealth," an index of how the transamerican scope of white supremacist discourse helped to reify, subdivide, and order the hemispheric geopolitical unity that we now call "America."<sup>7</sup> Indeed, whereas USAmerican racial ideologies required the "powerful stillness" of the Black body in the white, national imagination, in transnational and international settings, this symbolic stasis becomes strained. Although the Medusan white gaze of the USA paralyzed the Black body in one signifying posture, racial ideologies in Cuba, Trinidad, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Liberia operated much differently and, as a result, required that body be contorted and calcified in different positions that served local racial orders determined by historical and cultural contexts. Simply stated, Blackness needed to be fixed differently according to local understandings of racial hierarchy, and the movement of Black bodies across cultural/national contexts insurgently revealed that Blackness was not fixed at all.

As a result, when mid- century writings aimed to vindicate the reorganization of American borders, Blackness represented a distinct problem: writers either had to admit that

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<sup>7</sup> Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17.2 (1987): 64, 66.

Blackness was a malleable, discursive invention that served to naturalize white supremacy, or they needed to explain precisely how Blackness operated differently in other cultures, cultures with which the commentators were often painfully unfamiliar. This ignorance was often shared by their readers and frequently became an advantage rather than an encumbrance for writers who sought to render ideologically coherent portraits of alien bodies and cultures. That is, readers unfamiliar with foreign ways of thinking, experiencing, and organizing racial identities were remarkably susceptible to misinformation presented as intelligible ideology that confirmed pre-existing ideas of USAmerican exceptionalism, the Vanishing Indian, the Black Legend, or white supremacy. These challenges notwithstanding, it was through the processes of relational racialization that Americans staked out their visions for how America should take shape. Whereas the *de facto* (though not yet legally codified) “one-drop rule” and the blanket civic disenfranchisement of free and enslaved USAmericans of African descent were the governing racial logics of the USA, a much broader spectrum of political, sexual, and economic experiences were available in Spanish America, where class privileges, skin color, and legal rights afforded African Americans more opportunities for socioeconomic mobility and political engagement.<sup>8</sup> The justification of USAmerican intervention in Nicaragua and the deportation of free Black USAmericans to Liberia, for examples, each hinged on sensitive articulations of racial sameness and difference. Nicaraguans needed to be Black enough to appear innately subservient, but not so Black that the prospect of their integration in a USAmerican parent state in the region

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<sup>8</sup> While Frank Tannenbaum and, more recently, Jane Landers have emphasized the opportunities for political enfranchisement and civic rights that African Americans in Spanish America (including the enslaved) had access to in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a point of a stark contrast with their USAmerican counterparts, such claims should not be presumed to downplay the subjugation and violence that African Americans endured nonetheless; see Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1947); and Jane Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2010).

was impossible. Similarly, free Blacks in the United States needed to be Black enough that their incorporation into the US American nation-state was impossible, but, at the same time, not as Black as the native Africans, toward whom they were asked to adopt a paternal posture toward when colonizing West Africa. In light of these plural and pliable attempts to define Blackness, *The Race for America* meditates not only on why writers *needed* particular representations of the Black body to buttress their (often imperialist) visions of the Americas' reorganization. This study also explains how these writers *invented* symbolically expeditious (though historically incoherent) Black bodies when confronted with insufficient examples to serve their understandings for how the hemisphere should be politically and demographically ordered.

But as the dual meaning of "race" in this study's title suggests, the Black body also became a contested site for meaning making, a site of resistance where the external imposition of symbolic value often failed to take root. Indeed, what the many attempts to inscribe ideologies of difference upon the Black body reveal are the inconsistencies and fallacious logics of white supremacy. By challenging how their own bodies were (once more) taken captive into narratives that would justify the geopolitical organization of the Americas in a manner consistent with Manifest Destiny or the Monroe Doctrine, African Americans bring to light how these narratives simultaneously rely on the pliability of Blackness (its capacity to bend to meet the rhetorical needs of a particular political project) and the fixity of a transnational sign of Blackness (the homogenization of a diverse array of experiences, histories, and cultures into an imagined, universal concept). Exemplifying what Daphne Brooks, in the context of nineteenth-century transatlantic Black drama, terms "Afro-alienation," the uncomfortable tension between defamiliarized definitions of Blackness and all-too-familiar, white-authored, stereotypical definitions provides a space for African Americans to redefine their individual identities and

broker power for themselves in the changing political landscape of the Americas.<sup>9</sup> As a result, the extension of USAmerican understandings of Blackness beyond national borders and into the desired realms of a prospective hemispheric empire put pressure on racialists, politicians, and novelists to articulate specific definitions of race, definitions that quickly became unsustainable when brought to bear on the diverse diasporic populations collected under the umbrella of Blackness. If, as Frantz Fanon famously argues, “the black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man,” then the Black body became a site for the white imposition of ontological content. He further underscores that efforts to name Blackness are always relational: “not only must the black man be black, he must be black in relation to the white man.”<sup>10</sup> I additively contend that he must also be Black in relation to white *criollos*, mixed-race *mulatos*, *zambos*, and *mestizos*, and Afro-descended *negros* and *morenos*, all of whom, in turn, must also be Black, or at least nonwhite, in relation to the white, USAmerican man. In the transamerican context of the mid-nineteenth century, such impositions gave expression to white, imperial desires about how the disparate nations and peoples of the Americas could be reorganized and reconstituted into an imagined idea of “America.”

*The Race for America* explores how manifold kinds of writing from (and about) the United States, Cuba, Trinidad, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Liberia illustrate the challenges that discussing the Black body in transnational contexts presented to writers. Relatedly, this study details the maneuvers that writers employed to erase, circumvent, or incorporate diversity into universalized formulations of Blackness. Critical narratives of how race obtained as a discourse

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<sup>9</sup> Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850-1910* (Durham: Duke UP, 2006), 4-13.

<sup>10</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove P, 1967), 110.

chart the refinement of wily, inchoate seventeenth- and eighteenth-century definitions of “race” in the into relatively standard, ostensibly coherent definitions that coalesced during the rise of the American School of Ethnology in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The uncertainties of race’s definitional ambit and fixity during the colonial and early republican period were normalized throughout the nation’s maturation and achieved relative stability and certain political purchase during increasingly heated debates over slavery in the antebellum period. Tellingly, the historiography of race also tends to tether the concept’s development closely to the development of the USAmerican nation-state. Reginald Horsman demonstrates convincingly that the ideological and ontological maturation of race in the mid-nineteenth century grew out of not only the formalization and institutionalization of ethnology in the USA, but also the emergent political discourses of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny.<sup>12</sup> Put differently, the standardization of race through institutionalized pseudoscience and ethnology coincided with political rhetoric justifying the imperial expansion of the USAmerican nation-state as a providential outcome of Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

At the same time, Americans were moving throughout the Americas like never before. Travel writing emerged as an exciting, popular, and high-volume genre, including ostensibly nonfictional travel narratives by major USAmerican authors like Richard Henry Dana, dime novel romances from prolific journeymen like Maturin Murray Ballou and Ned Buntline, and scientific writings from professional ethnologists like Samuel Morton, John Lloyd Stevens, and E.G. Squier (the subject of my fourth chapter). Such physical movements, complemented by the

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<sup>11</sup> See Katy Chiles, *Transformable Race: Surprising Metamorphoses in the Literature of Early America* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014).

<sup>12</sup> See Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986).



unprecedented circulation of print culture by and about Americans from outside the United States, rapidly engineered previously unimaginable contact zones among the peoples of the Americas. At the same time, free Black USAmericans, seeking opportunities systematically denied to them in the United States, variously expatriated to British Canada, the British West Indies, the British Isles, Haiti, Liberia, and Central America. While these phenomena have heretofore been regarded as largely distinct historical processes, *The Race for America* centers the fictional and physical migrations of African Americans within broader occurrences of inter-American contact, rather than relegating them to an ancillary or unrelated trend that emerged strictly in response to debates of slavery and emancipation. In doing so, I trace how the Black body—either in the form of an actual mid-century migrant or as a textual symbol in internationally scoped writings—put pressure on supposedly stable definitions of race and racial difference. Just as ethnologists in the USA began to normalize understandings of race, the USAmerican nation-state began trying to expand its national borders into other American geographies where race in general and Blackness in particular operated much differently. Because Blackness signified variously depending on political and cultural variables largely determined by local colonial histories, the treatment of Blackness as an ontological absolute required adroit rhetorical gymnastics, revisionist historicization, and delicate maneuverings of sameness and difference in order to preserve ideologies of white supremacy. In the many portraits of the Black body that I consider in this study, inconsistent and often contradictory epistemologies of race collide in ways that reveal the absurdity of claims to Anglo-Saxon supremacy and Anglo-USAmerican exceptionalism, and the untenability of such essentialist categories in cultural contact zones that increasingly muddled such distinctions into meaninglessness.

## Race and the Transnational Turn

*The Race for America* builds on what we might call the “second wave” of hemispheric scholarship. In a review of recent contributions to the field of nineteenth-century American literary studies, Philip Gould begins with an insightful understatement: “It is no longer critically engaging to simply announce one’s work in American literary studies as being ‘transnational,’” he writes, thanks in large part to “the very success that makes this ‘new’ approach not so new anymore.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as a foundation for the works by Christopher Iannini, Anna Brickhouse, and Caroline Levander that Gould rightfully praises for avoiding critical cliché, a number of innovative studies from the 1980s and 1990s profitably challenged nationalist literary histories by bringing to light multidirectional cultural exchange through intermingling archives of people, print, and politics.<sup>14</sup> From these studies, it becomes startlingly clear that there is no critical consensus on the boundaries, contents, histories, or literatures of “the Americas.” As the lengthy bibliography of hemispheric scholarship attests, however, the ontological uncertainty of Hemispheric America has done little to slow the procession of works on the nineteenth century that presumptively take the discursive existence of The Hemisphere as their starting point. As Christopher Taylor charges though, the result has been the reification of that geospatial construct as such through demonstrative examples of inter-American scenes of literary, political, and economic exchange. Such circular studies, he argues, have yet to theorize effectively the

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Gould, “Where Is American Literature?” *American Quarterly* 67.4 (2015): 1225.

<sup>14</sup> See Christopher P. Iannini, *Fatal Revolutions: Natural History, West Indian Slavery, and the Routes of American Literature* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2012); Anna Brickhouse, *The Unsettling of America: Translation, Interpretation, and the Story of Don Luis de Velasco, 1560–1945* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014); Caroline Levander, *Where Is American Literature?* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2013). For an overview of the development of hemispheric studies, see Ralph Bauer, “Hemispheric Studies” *PMLA* 124.1 (2009): 234-250; and Lazo, “The Invention of America Again,” 751-771.

processes by which the American hemisphere came into being as a geopolitical and discursive concept in the nineteenth century rather than in twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholarship.<sup>15</sup> Time and time again, works within the field of hemispheric American studies exhaust themselves rehearsing the interdisciplinary, intellectual genealogies of the field and engaging in what Kimberly O’Neill describes as “trenchant historiographies and metacommentaries.”<sup>16</sup> This pointed emphasis on reflexivity in works like Robert Levine’s and Caroline Levander’s *Hemispheric American Studies* (2007) and thoughtful literature reviews by Carolyn Porter and Dana Nelson, has subsequently resulted in a failure to consider how, as Vera Kutzinski frames the problem, “[t]he slippage between hemispheric *studies* and hemispheric *knowledge* avoids the question of how one can *become* the other.”<sup>17</sup>

One positive outcome that this presumptive reification of The Hemisphere yields, however, is that we can now turn our attention to more local scenes of inter-American contact without needing to undertake the onerous task of rehearsing the historical and print cultural bases for such adopting a hemispheric framework. Alleviated of the burden borne by the first wave or “foundation generation” of transnational American studies scholars like Bell Gale Chevigny and Gari Laguardia, Earl Fitz, Kutzinski, Gustavo Perez-Firmat, José David Saldívar, Doris Sommer,

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<sup>15</sup> Christopher Taylor, “Empire of Neglect: Caribbean Literature, British Liberalism, and New World Asylums, 1776-1888,” (dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Kimberly O’Neill, “On the Limits of History and Hemispheric Literary Studies,” *American Literary History* 27.1 (Spring 2015): 172.

<sup>17</sup> Vera Kutzinski, *The Worlds of Langston Hughes: Modernism and Translation in the Americas* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2012), 233. See Robert S. Levine and Caroline Levander, introduction to *Hemispheric American Studies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2007); Carolyn Porter, “What We Know that We Don’t Know: Remapping American Literary Studies,” *American Literary History* 6.3 (1994): 467-526; and Dana Nelson, “From Manitoba to Patagonia,” *American Literary History* 15.2 (2003): 367-394.

and Lois Parkinson Zamora, a new generation of transamerican scholars has turned our attention to transamerican literary histories as well as the ways in which drama, visual culture, and nonliterary writings can expand the archives (and repertoires) of transnational American studies. Others have productively reconsidering the totalizing hemispheric paradigm and USA-centrism that typically characterizes the field by reorienting their studies around sites like the USA-Mexico Border, Cuba, Haiti, and oceanic geographies as potentially new gravitational cores of transamerican scholarship.<sup>18</sup> In their respective and collective challenges to the long-maligned

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<sup>18</sup> For “foundation generation” scholarship in transnational American literary studies, see *Reinventing the Americas: Comparative Studies of Literature of the United States and Spanish America*, ed. Bell Gale Chevigny and Gari Laguardia (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986); J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1998); Earl Fitz, *Rediscovering the New World: Inter-American Literature in a Comparative Context* (Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1991); Vera Kutzinski, *Against the American Grain: Myth and History in William Carlos Williams, Jay Wright, and Nicolás Guillén* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987); Perez-Firmat, *Do the Americas Have a Common Literature?* (1990); José David Saldívar, *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991); Doris Sommer, *Proceed with Caution, When Engaged by Minority Writings in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999); and Lois Parkinson Zamora, *The Usable Past: The Imagination of History in Recent Fiction of the Americas* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997). For formative works of “second wave” scholarship, see Kirsten Silva Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture: The Transamerican Origins of Latino Writing* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2002); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003); Anna Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004); Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004); Rodrigo Lazo, *Writing to Cuba: Filibustering and Cuban Exiles in the United States* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2005); Gretchen Murphy, *Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005); Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2005); David Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonization: Discourses of Race and Hemispheric Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico, and the United States* (Durham: Duke UP, 2008); Marissa K. López, *Chicano Nations: The Hemispheric Origins of Mexican American Literature* (New York: New York UP, 2011); Sara E. Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2012); Colleen C. O’Brien, *Race, Romance, and Rebellion: Literatures of the Americas in the Nineteenth Century* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2013); Shelley Streeby, *Radical Sensations: World Movements,*

USA-centric optics of transamerican literary studies, many of the works comprising this second wave redirect our focus to “new” sites from which to explore what Raúl Coronado calls the “alternative language(s) of modernity.” These studies reveal how an array of historical subjects and literatures that have been strategically and institutionally excluded from the hegemonic “language of modernity” subjunctively imagining modes of hemispheric relations. While most of these vernacular modernities failed to metastasize and therefore have been buried beneath the nationalist narrative of neocolonial USAmerican paternalism that currently defines our understandings of hemispheric history, Coronado poignantly expresses the urgency of unearthing such possibilities in our critical labors. These “worlds not to come,” he stresses, nevertheless sedimented themselves in the transamerican imaginary. “By returning to these moments of aspiration and failure,” he argues, “we, too, may be inspired to imagine our present and future in more capacious ways that move beyond possessive individualism and xenophobic nationalisms” that currently inform our understanding of hemispheric relations.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, Coronado’s call forms part of a larger trend: the recuperation of the energetic possibilities embedded in articulations of the hemisphere idea prior to its assuming its present

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*Violence, and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke UP, 2013); Raúl Coronado, *A World Not to Come: A History of Latino Writing and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2013); Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, *New World Drama: The Performative Commons in the Atlantic World, 1649-1849* (Durham: Duke UP, 2014); Marlene Daut, *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789-1865* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2015); and Gretchen Woertendyke, *Hemispheric Regionalism: Romance and the Geography of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 20. Robert Levine issues a similar call in *Dislocating Race and Nation: Episodes in Nineteenth-Century American Literary Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2008), wherein he expounds on the value of recuperating the “unknowingness that writers convey in their writings” as a counter to narratives of “national literary development and fulfillment,” which are anachronistically and retrospectively imposed onto “literary debates that were much messier at the time than subsequent literary critics have general allowed” (2,3; original emphasis).

form, what Stephen Park calls the “Pan-American Imagination,” and what Ramón Saldívar and Paula Moya term the “trans-American imaginary,” which they define as “a chronotope, a contact zone, that is both historical and geographical and that is populated by transnational persons whose lives form an experiential region within which singularly delineated notions of political, social, and cultural identity do not suffice.”<sup>20</sup> By restoring the pervasive sense of possibility that characterized the mid-nineteenth century, *The Race for America* disinters these several of these vernacular and speculative theories of hemispheric America’s geopolitical development in order to restore devalued voices to conversations in which they originally participated and continue unraveling the tightly woven historiographical fabric of white, USAmerican exceptionalism within the Americas. More to the point, this dissertation helps us to contour a more robust, multifarious narrative of how The Hemisphere discursively coalesced in the nineteenth century, while also providing key insights into the ideologies of belonging and difference that suture together the nations of the Americas. Holding side by side the submerged alternative modernities that mid-century writers imagined and the devastating realities of USAmerican neoimperialism that actually became manifest, *The Race for America* challenges exactly how “natural” and inevitable the hemispheric hegemony of the USA is, while also refusing to (strictly or simply) romanticize these counternarratives, which, despite their theoretical purchase and historical value, were eventually crushed under the foot of white, USAmerican dominance.

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<sup>20</sup> Paula M. L. Moya and Ramón Saldívar, “Fictions of the Trans-American Imaginary,” *MFS: Modern Fiction Studies* 49.1 (2003): 2. See also Stephen Park, *The Pan-American Imagination: Contested Visions of the Hemisphere in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2014); and *The Imaginary and its Worlds: American Studies after the Transnational Turn*, ed. Laura Bieger, Ramón Saldívar, and Johannes Voelz (Dartmouth: UP of New England, 2013).

Perhaps unsurprisingly to those of us trained as African Americanists, much of the scholarship engaged in the labor of narrating vernacular modernities has emanated from nineteenth-century archives of Black literature, print culture, and performance. But because of USAmerican scholars' limited access to archives of non-USAmerican Black writing, however, many transamerican studies that explicitly examine the role of race in the geopolitical formation of the Americas have tended to limit their engagement with nineteenth-century African American literature to that produced within or available within the United States. This trend stands in stark contrast to these studies' twentieth-century counterparts in which Black diasporic writers from throughout the Caribbean and the continental Americas enjoy pride of place.<sup>21</sup> For example, Colleen C. O'Brien's *Race, Romance, and Rebellion: Literatures of the Americas in the Nineteenth Century* (2013) provides a rich and engaging analysis of how the romance genre forged a literary space for writers to imagine utopian possibilities of inter-American relations that counter the oppressive discourses of USAmerican imperialism and white supremacy. But despite its focus on transnational readings of Black USAmerican authors (David Walker, Harriet Jacobs, Julia Collins, etc.), despite the celebration of the work as "recognizing the imbrication of the United States, the Caribbean, and Latin American within an Americas network" in *American Quarterly*, and despite the title's ambitious ambit ("Literatures of the Americas"), *Race,*

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<sup>21</sup> See George B Handley, *Postslavery Literatures in the Americas: Family Portraits in Black and White*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Timothy Cox, *Postmodern Tales of Slavery in the Americas: From Alejo Carpentier to Charles Johnson* (New York: Garland, 2001); Robert Carr, *Black Nationalism in the New World* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002); Jana Evans Braziel, "Trans-American Constructions of Black Masculinity," *Callaloo* 26.3 (2003): 867–900; Michelle Stephens, *Black Empire: The Masculine Global Imaginary of Caribbean Intellectuals in the United States, 1914-1962* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005); Zita Nunes, *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008); and Kutzinski, *The Worlds of Langston Hughes* (2012).

*Romance, and Rebellion* considers only one major text written outside of the USA: Nina M. Scott's 1993 English translation of *Sab* (1841), a sentimental antislavery novel published in Madrid by a white Cuban woman, Gertrudis Gómez Avellaneda y Arteaga.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Stephen Knadler's sharp reading of the diasporic imagination's impact on Black political theory in *Remapping Citizenship and the Nation in African-American Literature* (2009) and Judith Madera's remarkably interdisciplinary study of African American theories of geography in *Black Atlas: Geography and Flow in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (2015) analyze the transnational visions of authors like Martin Delany and William Wells Brown in their efforts to contest nationalist frameworks of Black literary studies. But because neither study considers, in any sustained fashion, writers from outside the boundaries of what currently cinctures the USA, they ultimately naturalize national difference at the level of criticism, even as they compellingly demonstrate how their writers dismantle it.

I cite these specific examples not to question their value or undermine their interventions. All three make exceptional contributions to both Black studies and transnational American studies, and their influence on my own approaches has been tremendous. Instead, I highlight their narrow scope of African American literature as byproducts of systemic, critical, and historical limitations, not shortcomings of particular critics, methodologies, or monographs. Speaking in an *Early American Literature* forum, for example, Suzanne Bost issues a sobering call for more responsible and efficacious approaches to hemispheric studies:

It is hard work for those of us educated in the US to un-learn the narratives and definitions that govern US academic studies, and it is hard work to understand

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<sup>22</sup> Michelle Stephens, "Intimate Relations: Bodies, Texts, and Indigenizations in Archipelagic American Space," *American Quarterly* 67.4 (2015): 1240. See Gertrudis Gómez Avellaneda y Arteaga, *Sab* and *Autobiography*, trans. Nina M. Scott (Austin: U of Texas P, 1993).



(and sometimes even to locate) scholarship from and about other nations in the hemisphere. But if we want to move past US exceptionalism, we must expand our sense of history, we must encourage more multilingual education, and we must be willing to surrender our own narrow perspectives to wider and longer views.<sup>23</sup>

That “hard work” has become even more difficult for a new generation of transamericanist scholars in the USA, where, the recognition of these imperatives notwithstanding, the myriad practical, financial, and institutional hurdles that comprise the obstacle course of the twenty-first-century corporate university make such undertakings almost unmanageable. How, for instance, are USAmerican scholars supposed to train themselves in multiple languages, conduct archival research in the USA, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and achieve “comprehensive” field knowledge of diverse, disparate constellations of Area Studies (Latin American Studies, Caribbean Studies, Hemispheric Studies, Atlantic Studies, etc.) as well as national literary *and* historical field knowledge about the particular geographical sites we consider? And all this within the breakneck timelines of graduate programs and the telltale ticking of the tenure clock? And all this while facing institutional funding crises? Moreover, as Ricardo Salvatore points out, the history of USAmerican imperialism in the nineteenth century has largely centralized the archives and cultural artifacts of the Caribbean and Latin America in USAmerican repositories like Yale, Harvard, Tulane, the Huntington, the Peabody, and the Library of Congress. The reason for such a consolidation of knowledge is “relatively simple,” he argues: “Because US and European scholars, collectors, and diplomats, in a moment of imperial expansion, acquired (purchased, stole, or transcribed) these materials, presenting the collections secured as the pre-

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<sup>23</sup> Suzanne Bost, “Doing the Hemisphere Differently: A Response to Ralph Bauer,” *Early American Literature* 45, no.2 (2010): 235-236.

condition for area-studies knowledge, it not as constitutive of such.” While Salvatore leverages this history to unravel “the implicit—and quite erroneous—assumption that localities, nations, and regions are equally positioned in the world of knowledge production” and to call for more collaborative hemispheric research agendas, including “a sort of United States Studies from a Southern [i.e. Latin American] perspective,” I want to underscore that the imperial history of consolidating cultural knowledge in metropolitan archives is self-replicating.<sup>24</sup> For early-career transamerican scholars in the USA, the immense challenges inherent in securing funding to undertake international archival investigations make such work daunting, expensive, and potentially unfruitful. At the same time, the proximity of USAmerican repositories with rich holdings on these subjects and the availability of prestigious short-term fellowships to consult materials at the Beinecke, the Houghton, and the Huntington, make domestic research on foreign cultures not only the path of least resistance, but also the path which the Academy (writ large) is mostly likely to reward. Simply stated, hiring committees and tenure-review committees do not put equal value on self-funded research trips to the Caribbean and Latin America (trips often met with skepticism rooted in the problematic perceptions of these tropical geographies as strictly sites of tourism, fruity cocktails, and pristine beaches; trips regarded more as vacations than serious academic ventures) and winning highly coveted fellowships from elite libraries and universities to consult supposedly similar materials. For my own part, this ethos contributed to my decision to travel to the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago to consult newspaper collections for Chapter Three, rather than traveling to the British Library, which undeniably

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<sup>24</sup> Ricardo Salvatore, “On Knowledge Asymmetries and Cognitive Maps: Reconsidering Hemispheric American Studies,” *MLN* 130.2 (2015): 373, 372, 383.

houses significantly more robust holdings in Trinidadian periodicals, colonial dispatches, and census data.

But as I learned on that research trip and as many have learned before me, the hindrances I detail above are twofold for African Americanist scholars, who, even when we are financially equipped and rigorously trained to propose ambitious transamerican projects, are confronted with a more profoundly impoverished resource: the Archive (writ large) itself. As too many have had to point out, this problem marks the long legacy of slavery and colonialism in the Americas. First, transnational African Americanists must grapple with the fact that the voices of the enslaved and formerly enslaved often circulated through oral culture rather than texts, as their access to the materials and education required to produce written texts were systematically denied for generations. Though Elizabeth McHenry correctly cautions that giving too much primacy to the orality of Black culture risks overlooking the archives of Black print culture that do exist, the institutional and cultural devaluation of written texts created by men and women of African descent has nonetheless effectuated an irreversible failure to collect and preserve these documents.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, in American repositories outside the USA, especially in the Caribbean, these calculated exclusions have been historically exacerbated by humid conditions, architectural decay, and infrastructural disregard. Too many dilapidated libraries bear, in Jamaica Kincaid's words, "a splendid old sign from colonial times" promising that "REPAIRS ARE PENDING," while "most of the books, instead of being on their nice shelves, resting comfortably... are in cardboard boxes in a room, gathering mildew, or dust, or ruin."<sup>26</sup> While we might take issue with

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<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth McHenry, *Forgotten Readers: Recovering the Lost History of African American Literary Societies* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1988), 9, 43.

the exilic lens that colors Jamaica Kincaid's *small place* or the theoretical utility of Antonio Benítez-Rojo's *repeating island*, we cannot deny that the earthquaked St. John's Public Library forms part of a "meta-archipelago" of Caribbean archives burst forth from a sea of Eurocentric record-keeping and post-plantation-era colonial neglect.<sup>27</sup> We of the present have inherited a white, sunburned corpus of Caribbean history. As a result of these practical and historical obstacles, the intellectual contributions of non-USAmericans of African descent to the invention of America in the nineteenth century remain fundamentally underrepresented in transnational American literary studies.

*The Race for America* does not claim to rectify such imbalances. While a number of the writings I explore in my own transamerican study were composed by African Americans from outside the USA, I have no pretensions that these inclusions accomplish anything more than a modest mitigation of a large, looming problem. Instead, this study joins African Americanist and Caribbeanist theorists who have confronted the challenges of transamerican Black studies with the innovation of creative critical tools for restoring African American voices to archives in which they were putatively (and actually) silenced. Saidiya Hartman, for example, espouses a heuristic of *critical fabulation*, a strategy of "playing with and rearranging the basic elements of" archival accounts of enslaved women's lives in order to "jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done." The result of such reparative criticism, she admits, "isn't anything as miraculous as recovering the lives of the enslaved or redeeming the dead," but nevertheless provides a tactic for "straining against the limits of the archive to write a cultural

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<sup>27</sup> Antonio Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*, trans. James E. Maraniss (Durham: Duke UP, 1992).

history of the captive, and, at the same time, enacting the impossibility of representing the lives of the captives precisely through the process of narration.”<sup>28</sup> Relatedly and more recently, Nicole Aljoe argues that the “prevailing format of the Caribbean slave narrative is a fragmentary one” precisely because “the wholesale disenfranchisement of slaves has left only fragments of their voices in the colonial archives.” Rather than mourning an incomplete archive, however, she builds on Hartman’s approach and proposes a mode of a “recombinant reading” that isolates and extracts Caribbean captives’ testimonies from the white-authored texts in which they are often embedded.<sup>29</sup> Significantly, the recovery and analysis of these *creole testimonies* is not only the labor of Aljoe’s monograph of the same name, but has also become the ongoing project of the Early Caribbean Digital Archive (EDCA) hosted by Northeastern University (<http://omekasites.northeastern.edu/ECDA/>). An online repository of digitized early Caribbean texts and dis-embedded creole testimonies, the EDCA launched a working group and symposium (“The Early Caribbean and the Digital”) in 2016, which provided trans-institutional, collaborative opportunities for scholars to explore the possibilities for research and teaching with the EDCA. In fostering such sustained occasions to engage with marginalized archives of Black history, especially those written and published outside of the United States, Aljoe and her team at Northeastern join a number of exciting new research tools and critical approaches that are gradually making ambitious transamerican studies of Black literature possible.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Saidiya Hartman, “Venus in Two Acts,” *a small axe* 12.2 (2008): 11.

<sup>29</sup> Nicole N. Aljoe, *Creole Testimonies: Slave Narratives from the British West Indies, 1709-1838* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 28, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Ed White’s and Duncan Faherty’s “Just Teach One” project, hosted at the American Antiquarian Society’s online forum *Common-Place* ([www.jto.common-place.org](http://www.jto.common-place.org)), publishes critical editions and pedagogical guides for little known works of early American literature, many of which provide exciting opportunities for transnational and comparative readings, such

*The Race for America* joins Hartman, Aljoe, Brickhouse, Erna Brodber, and others in positing creative, even speculative approaches to predominantly white archives American literature and history.<sup>31</sup> This study lingers in moments when the totalizing rhetoric of the American hemisphere and the unyielding march of US American imperialism seem to prescribe the future of the Americas as a teleology to reveal how alternative visions of the Americas' future were always jockeying for position with these hegemonic discourses. This study also lingers in moments when History appears to cast African Americans as predictable, moldable actors in racial pageants designed to justify the political reorganization of the hemisphere. Here, I reveal how their Blackness was never as stable as white writers wanted it to be. Throughout this study, I restore and imagine local, peripheral readings of and responses to narratives that attempt to imbue Blackness with positive ontological content for the purposes of underwriting a

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as their inclusion of the widely reprinted short story "Account of a Remarkable Conspiracy Formed by a Negro in the Island of St. Domingo," which originally appeared in the French journal *Mercure de France* in 1787. Similarly, the Public Archive ([www.thepublicarchive.com](http://www.thepublicarchive.com)) has long been a forum for making freely available the archives of Haitian history in an effort to counter what Michel-Rolph Trouillot famously termed that nation's silenced past; see *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon P, 1997). The Colored Conventions project at the University of Delaware, headed by P. Gabrielle Foreman, provides opportunities for participants to transcribe and interact with archival materials pertaining to mid-nineteenth century colored conventions. While these documents were all expressly conceived within the USA, as I have written elsewhere, these resources present immense opportunities for transamerican readings; see R.J. Boutelle, "Manifest Diaspora: Black Transamerican Politics and Autoarchiving in *Slavery in Cuba*," *MELUS* 40.3 (2015): 110-133.

<sup>31</sup> Brodber, a Jamaican novelist and sociologist, frequently argues for the critical and theoretical value of epistemologies rooted in fiction, imagination, and spiritual practices in her writings. In particular, see her 1996-1997 lectures delivered in the small Jamaican village of Woodside and published as *The Continent of Black Consciousness: On the History of the African Diaspora from Slavery to the Present Day* (London: New Beacon Books, 2003); "Beyond the Boundary: Magical Realism in the Jamaican Frame of Reference," in *Sisyphus and Eldorado: Magical and Other Realisms in Caribbean Literature*, ed. Timothy J. Reiss (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2002), 15-24; and "Me and My Head-Hurting Fiction," *a small axe* 16.3 (2013): 119-125.

transnational political project. As we will see in my second and third chapters, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and its Trinidadian adaptations participate in complex georacial mythologies that enlist characters of African descent to justify their own deportation/emigration from their homes. Despite these novels' careful descriptions of Blackness in the United States, Haiti, and Liberia (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*), and Trinidad and Venezuela (*Adolphus* [1853] and *The Slave Son* [1854]), I model a critical praxis for reading these characters from local and regional historical perspectives that unsettle these seemingly totalizing portraits. If we read Topsy, for instance, from a West African or West Indian cultural context, she becomes not a compliant body performing in a minstrel show and a conversion narrative that boosts US American Empire, but rather a cunning trickster who succeeds precisely because of the reductive lens through which white US Americans even could see her. In sustaining the productive tension between dominant discourses and submerged, even speculative alternatives that circulated simultaneously, I recuperate the flexibility of Blackness and its resistance to ontological prescription in precisely the moments when it is ostensibly being fixed in place.

There are, of course, significant risks inherent to endeavoring contributions to both Americas work and race work. As Alexander Weheliye cautions, "the empirical existence of national boundaries, or linguistic differences that often help to define the national ones, become the ultimate indicators of differentiation and are in danger of entering the discursive record as transcendental truths, rather than as structures and institutions that have served repeatedly to relegate black subjects to the status of western modernity's nonhuman other."<sup>32</sup> Put differently, the comparative methodologies used to approach the African diaspora tend to reify national

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<sup>32</sup> Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke UP, 2014), 31.

differences between distinct Black populations in order to furnish a basis for comparison. While Blackness exists as a discursive construct forged within locally specific national, colonial histories unique to whatever geographic contexts we may examine, the constructedness of race too often falls out of view when we undertake diasporic analysis. In this view, the more robust vocabularies of racial monikers that govern social organization in Cuba, Liberia, Trinidad, Venezuela, or Nicaragua become “ontological absolutes,” rather than linguistic and sociopolitical manifestations of non-USAmerican racist ideologies. By engaging in a transamerican analysis of racial formations that respects and historicizes the constructedness of Blackness in a variety of geographical and cultural contexts, *The Race for America* tells a story of how non-USAmerican racial epistemologies came to operate both locally and transnationally.

### **The Structure of the Study**

This study centers considerations of race in its own meditations on how hemispheric America developed in the nineteenth century and how the critical field that emerged to explore such questions. It brings together canonical, culturally dominant writings about inventing and ordering the American hemisphere with the historically undervalued writings of African Americans, regarding these diverse writers as equal interlocutors in the mid-nineteenth-century race for America even as the historical realities around them would undercut such a reading. Using a broad range of transnational print culture, each of my chapters recreates a complex discourse around how the physical or textual migration of Black bodies from one nation to another contributed to projections of how the American hemisphere would develop. Within these dominant discourses, which espouse nationalist and transnational theories of white supremacy, I approach the characterization of Afro-descended men and women as sites of ideological



inscription. Their bodies become laboratories where racial alchemy transforms physical features and personality traits into fodder for geopolitical theories about what roles and what geographies (if any) Afro-descended people might come to occupy in the Americas. By reading these attempts to corporealize differences and to enlist African American characters as evidence for demographic reorganization, imperial expansion, or transnational affiliations, I also reveal the incompleteness of such appropriations. For many of the African American characters and historical figures I analyze, such attempted cooptations provided opportunities for the oppressed and marginalized to imagine alternative forms of transnational alliances and national citizenship that cut sharply into how white supremacist imagination ordered them within its fantasy of the Americas. Each chapter recognizes the powerful discursive disenfranchisement of people of color that articulations of the American hemisphere entailed at the same time that discourses were not totalizing and, in fact, yielded significant opportunities for refashioning narratives of America.

The primary geographical focus of this study is the USA and the circum-Caribbean region. Because such a focus risks perpetuating the problematic centrality of the USA in hemispheric American studies, I want to offer a brief rationale for its centrality in *The Race for America*. The USA was no less a hegemonic force in the Americas in the mid-nineteenth century than it remains today. In fact, it was arguably more so. During the antebellum period, USAmerican foreign policy began to shift away from its staunchly isolationist stance from the earlier part of the century. Evolving and intensifying debates over slavery prompted serious considerations of expanding the USA not only westward toward the Pacific Ocean, but also southward into Mexico, Cuba, and Central America. At the same time, so-called pragmatists, both Black and white, formed societies and published prolifically on the merits that a variety of

sites (Haiti, Trinidad, Jamaica, and Liberia) might pose for free Blacks in the event of slavery's persistence in the USA or in the event of their successful emancipation. As a result, the USA provides us with one of the densest archives for visions of redefining national borders, imagining new kinds of transamerican affiliations, and considering the ontological viability of Blackness in a variety of national contexts.

With these historical realities in mind, my goal in *The Race for America* is to engage in a transamerican analysis that focuses primarily on the USA and yet evades the pitfalls of USAmerican-centrism, like, as Ralph Bauer notes, such an approach's "complicity with a mystification of the important differences between historical experiences, especially between those of Latin America and of the United States—a mystification that would undermine the national integrity and sovereignty of Latin American nation-states in the face of the United States economic imperialism."<sup>33</sup> In response to these and many other concerns, my analysis draws heavily on non-USAmerican scholarship and, where possible, non-USAmerican archives. Moreover, the USA occupies a central position within this study precisely because my argument is deeply invested in countering what Amy Kaplan labels "the resilient paradigm of American exceptionalism ... [and the] blind spots to the cultures of U.S. imperialism."<sup>34</sup> My emphasis recognizes how the history of USAmerican imperialism, neocolonialism, and transnational white supremacy have shaped the field of knowledge that we call "America," as well as the study of that concept. The productive tension between diagnosing and combatting that legacy is one of the primary occupations of this study. Recuperating the historical functions of African

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<sup>33</sup> Bauer, "Hemispheric Studies," 236.

<sup>34</sup> Amy Kaplan, "'Left Alone with America': The Absence of Empire in the Study of American Culture," in *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald E. Pease, (Durham: Duke UP, 1993), 11.

Americans in positing alternative modes of hemispheric development provides a powerful means of challenging white (and) USAmerican hegemony within the Americas.

Chapter One examines the international circulation of a textual Black body: the Cuban Martyr Poet, Juan Placido. Through a deep comparative archival analysis of John Greenleaf Whittier's "The Black Man" (1845), I reveal how this essay actually combines biographical details from the lives of two different Cuban poets of color (Juan Francisco Manzano and Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, aka Plácido) into the narrative of Juan Placido's exceptional life and death. In order to transform Juan Placido into a *cause célèbre* for abolitionists (which he did with remarkable success), Whittier universalizes Juan Placido, portraying him as a transnational, representative "Black Man" and, in the process, erasing significant markers of Cuban racial, historical, and cultural context. Juan Placido becomes Cuban only as a sign of slavery's transamerican expanse, while he simultaneously serves a fungible symbol of Black intellectual capacities and USA such as Henry Highland Garnet, William G. Allen, and Martin Delany were also able to incorporate the fictionalized Cuban poet into narratives beyond the party line of white, corporate abolitionism. Ultimately, the cultural decontextualization of Juan Placido allowed these Black radical abolitionists opportunities to articulate theories of diasporic collaboration, Black nationalism, and transnational antislavery revolutions.

My second chapter turns our attention to the largest Black emigration movement of the period: the American Colonization Society's project of relocating free Blacks from the USA to Liberia. Situating Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) as an indispensable cultural index for colonization, I contextualize the deportation of the novel's surviving Black characters within the broader racialist discourses of Manifest Destiny, which claimed that the Americas were destined to be the exclusive dominion of white, Anglo USAmericans. Because

the novel narrates the “Americanization” of free Blacks as an integral, preliminary step toward their relocation to Liberia, however, I argue that the fictional emigrations of George, Eliza, and Topsy also form an influential part of an adjacent imperial discourse that I call “Manifest Destiny East.” Once indoctrinated into the US American ideologies of republicanism and capitalism, Black men and women could serve as imperial agents in Africa, helping to conquer and proselytize that continent in the name of US American Empire. Topsy, in many ways, becomes the poster child for Manifest Destiny East, ostensibly evolving under the tutelage of a white, Protestant mentor from an unruly, uncivilized Black child into a Christian missionary in Africa. I read Topsy’s arc alongside the historical example of Daniel H. Peterson, who published an account of his journey to (and return from) Liberia as part of his autobiography, *The Looking-Glass* (1854). Although each of these individuals travel to West Africa as part of the corporate colonization movement, they ultimately take advantage of these colonizationist organizations’ willingness to see them as pawns in order to negotiate their power for themselves in a manner they see fit.

The productive tensions between fictional and actual migrations also preoccupy Chapter Three. This chapter examines two Trinidadian novels, *Adolphus* (1853) and *The Slave Son* (1854), that adapted *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* for that colony’s local political, racial, and economic contexts. At the conclusion of each novel, Trinidadians of color leave the island for Venezuela. I argue that both texts superficially signify as post-1848 historical novels, as they project the present into the past in order to mystify historical change and naturalize the current political climate as historically nonspecific. In particular, prejudice and oppression directed at the “Coloured” (mixed race) population becomes a “natural” fixture of colonial Trinidad, leading both works to espouse Coloured emigration to Venezuela as their solution. For *Adolphus*, settling

Venezuela represents an opportunity to actualize the promises of racial democracy and representative government that Simón Bolívar articulated but never realized. For *The Slave Son*, settling Venezuela promises to effectuate the “whitening” of colonial Trinidad and thereby facilitates the island’s enfranchisement within the British and USAmerican network I term “Greater Anglo America.” By also reading these historical novels through Edouard Glissant’s theory of “nonhistory,” however, I demonstrate how the realities of slavery and emancipation in Venezuela and Trinidad actively undermine the ideological labor of the texts. Whereas the symbolic function of historical-social-types in historical novels serves to normalize an ideological understanding of a historical moment, I show how the formulation of demographically and racially representative figures fails when confronted with the complexities of lived racial experience (nonhistory).

In its final chapter, *The Race for America* focuses on the Central American writings of E.G. Squier, a white anthropologist and the USAmerican *chargé d’affaires* to Nicaragua. Through readings of his revolutionary study, *Nicaragua: Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal* (1852), and his fictional, pseudonymous travel narrative, *Waikna, or Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* (1855), this chapter explores how the institutionalization of academic science (including scientific racism) and the USAmerican proposal for an interoceanic canal through Nicaragua inflected Squier’s strange negotiation of genre. In his anthropological study of the region and its people, Squier clearly manipulates “objective” demographic data and “facts” in order to mold his observations into a political agenda. The Black radical abolitionist and medical professional James McCune Smith elegantly calls out these “facts” in his review of Squier’s book. In order to insulate himself from further critiques of “bad science,” Squier adopted a pseudonym and published the fictional *Waikna* as the travel narrative of “Samuel A.

Bard.” Here, his expertise, colorful style, and anonymity allowed him to render an “authentic” portrait of the region that complemented his politics, but also protected his scientific reputation. At the same time, however, *Waikna*’s plot reveals how Squier took the critiques of McCune Smith seriously, as the book concludes with an earnest meditation on the ethical, social, and political implications of imperial anthropology.

Ultimately, *The Race for America* poses important methodological challenges to the fields of both hemispheric American studies and African American studies, challenges that one final gloss on this study’s title bring into relief: Barbara Christian’s reorienting call for self-reflexive critical practices in her watershed essay, “The Race for Theory” (1987). Presciently anticipating the “culture wars” of the 1990s and the institutionalization of Cultural Studies, Ethnic Studies, African American Studies, and Women’s Studies in the USAmerican academy, Christian comments on two interrelated phenomenon that the pun of her title makes clear. On the one hand, she laments how academics were beginning to move away from “teaching or writing one’s response to specific works of literature” and toward the self-serving, self-defeating, and disturbingly insular jockeying for the temporary spotlight in the academic vanguard, “that moment when one creates theory, thus fixing a constellation of ideas for a time at least, a fixing which no doubt will be replaced in another month or so by somebody else’s competing theory as the race accelerates.” On the other hand, Christian roundly and soundly rejects the notion that Black critics are not practitioners of the kind of “high theory” valued by the Academy. “My folk,” she writes, “have always been a race for theory,” though the theorizing work of African Americans has tended to occur “in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and

proverbs, in the play with language” rather than in the academic journals that lead to jobs, tenure, and promotions.<sup>35</sup>

Too often, African American(ist) scholars engaging in transamerican studies are excluded from the discursive field of hemispheric American studies, as book reviews, edited collections, and conference programs all testify. Take, for instance, the mid-2000s, a small, dense window in which new books by Brickhouse, Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Lazo, Gretchen Murphy, Ifeoma Nwankwo, Debra Rosenthal, and Shelley Streeby collectively signaled a resurgence of hemispheric approaches to American Studies. In the September 2006 issue of *American Literature*, Claudia Sadowski-Smith reviews a selection of these studies, clustering together Rosenthal’s *Race Mixture in Nineteenth-Century U.S. and Spanish American Fictions* (2004), Brickhouse’s *Transamerican Literary Relations* (2004), and Murphy’s *Hemispheric Imaginings* (2005) as a set. She narrates these works as a cooperative effort to “remap the nineteenth-century as a period of intense cultural relations among the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean.”<sup>36</sup> In the same issue, Nwankwo’s *Black Cosmopolitanism* (2005), a book whose subtitle frames it as a study of “Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas” is also reviewed, but is set aside apart from this triad of hemispheric projects. Instead, Michelle Stephens examines *Black Cosmopolitanism* alongside two transatlantic works that explicitly take on questions of African American Studies: Sarah

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<sup>35</sup> Barbara Christian, “The Race for Theory,” in *New Black Feminist Criticism, 1985-2000*, ed. Gloria Bowles, M. Giulia Fabi, and Arlene R. Keizer (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2007), 41.

<sup>36</sup> Claudia Sadowski-Smith, “*Race Mixture in Nineteenth-Century U.S. and Spanish American Fictions: Gender, Culture, and Nation Building; Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere; Hemispheric Imaginings: The Monroe Doctrine and Narratives of U.S. Empire*,” *American Literature* 78.3 (September 2006): 624.

Meer's *Uncle Tom Mania* (2005) and John Cullen Gruesser's *Confluences* (2005); the first words of Stephens's review are "Paul Gilroy," effectively repositioning Nwankwo's scholarship under the aegis of the Black Atlantic, rather than hemispheric American studies.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, despite an explosion of scholarship on nineteenth-century hemispheric American studies since then—much of which explicitly deals with race and some of which is the labor of African American scholars—the same problem continues. In *American Quarterly* in December 2009, Matthew Pratt Guterl penned a review on excellent transamerican studies of race at the turn of the century, including works by George Handley, Jill Lane, David Luis-Brown, Ramón Saldívar, Rebecca Scott, and Harilaos Stecopoulos, but overlooking outstanding interdisciplinary studies like Jennifer Morgan's *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, Stephanie Smallwood's *Saltwater Slavery: A Middle Passage from African to American Diaspora* (2007), or Zita Nunes's *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas* (2008).<sup>38</sup> Similarly, O'Neill's 2015 review for *American Literary History* entitled "On the Limits of History and Hemispheric Literary Studies" provides a telling, albeit tacit, commentary on the overwhelming whiteness of hemispheric literary studies: not only does the essay review two works by white authors despite the preponderance of hemispheric

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<sup>37</sup> Michelle Stephens. "Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas; *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s; Confluences: Postcolonialism, African American Literary Studies, and the Black Atlantic.*" *American Literature* 78.3 (September 2006): 638.

<sup>38</sup> Matthew Pratt Guterl, "The Importance of Place in Post-Everything American Studies," *American Quarterly* 61.4 (Dec. 2009): 931-941.



literary scholarship by nonwhite authors, but its bibliographical footnotes do little to mitigate the overwhelming absence of Black scholars.<sup>39</sup>

Through its titular and methodological indebtedness to Christian, *The Race for America* calls attention to the ways practitioners of hemispheric American studies (not to mention related fields and approaches, such as World Literature, Global Anglophone Studies, and the Global South) risk reenacting the kinds of the racialized academic segregation of scholars and their scholarship that plagued—and continues to plague—Theory (writ large). Rather than abandoning the paradigm of hemispheric studies, *The Race for America* returns to it with the renewed rigorousness and vigorousness emanating from the deeply politicized academic environment in which it was incubated. Written as the #BlackLivesMatter movement and Donald Trump’s meteoric rise throughout the US American presidential primaries have, from opposite poles, reignited public conversations about the present palpability of anti-Black racism, Jim Crow, and even slavery itself, *The Race for America* provides deep historical context for how these discourses have always been interwoven with xenophobia, white supremacy, US American exceptionalism, and expressly racialized ideologies of belonging and borders in the Americas. Forged at the intersection of hemispheric American studies’ penchant for critical self-reflexivity and Black studies’ methodological innovations in response to systemic racism, this study takes up the project of institutional critique so essential to Christian’s (and more recently P. Gabrielle Foreman’s) scholarship.<sup>40</sup> I want to be careful here to emphasize that no amount of credentials,

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<sup>39</sup> O’Neill, “On the Limits of History and Hemispheric Literary Studies,” 172-185. For a powerful critique of how racial politics and disenfranchisement manifest in bibliographies and footnotes, see Beth McCoy, “Race and the (Para)Textual Condition,” *PMLA* 121.1 (2006): 156-169.

<sup>40</sup> See P. Gabrielle Foreman, “A Riff, a Call, and a Response: Reframing the Problem that Led to Our Being Tokens in Ethnic and Gender Studies; or Where Are We Going Anyway and with

qualifications, or apologies on the part of white scholars (like myself) engaging in race work or USAmerican scholars (like myself) engaging in Americas work make these individuals properly suited to lead this charge. In my own efforts to rehearse, at length, my indebtedness to African American and non-USAmerican scholars in my thinking, I risk downplaying the “freshness” of my “scholarly intervention” and dulling the critical edge of this dissertation, though these are precisely the claims I have been trained to make. But these are necessary risks. Confronting the institutional problems of white supremacy and USAmerican exceptionalism that pervade the Academy is a collaborative project, but one in which white, USAmerican scholars must recognize their complementary rather than driving role. Because even though the political borders and population distribution throughout the hemisphere appear to be much more stable than they were in the mid-nineteenth century, the race for America is still very much underway.

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Whom Will We Travel?” *Legacy* 30.2 (2013): 306-322. For a particularly important contribution to discussions of diversity in the practice of nineteenth-century USAmerican literary studies, see Henry B. Wonham’s edited volume *Criticism and the Color Line: Desegregating American Literary Studies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1996).

## CHAPTER I

### “GREATER STILL IN DEATH”: RACE, REPTITION, AND REANIMATION IN THE CURIOUS CASE OF JUAN PLACIDO

*“Whenever an anti-slavery martyrology is written, as one day we hope it will be, Placido [sic], the Cuban Poet, will assuredly have a place therein.”*

— H.G. Adams, *God’s Image in Ebony* (1854)

*“Great was Placido in life,— he was greater still in death.”*

— William G. Allen, “Placido” (1853)

When Philadelphia’s *Nonslaveholder* began publishing the slave narrative of the “Cuban Martyr Poet” Juan Placido in 1854, there was a problem: Juan Placido was not a real person.<sup>1</sup> In actuality, this personage represented a synthesis of two different Afro-descended Cuban poets, an accidental amalgamation that originated in John Greenleaf Whittier’s essay “The Black Man” (1845). The first of these poets was Juan Francisco Manzano, the author of the only extant slave narrative from Spanish America, translated by the Irish abolitionist Richard Robert Madden for inclusion in his *Poems by a Slave in the Island of Cuba* (1840). To protect Manzano, Madden

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<sup>1</sup> “Juan Placido,” *Non-slaveholder*, February 1854, 18. The *Non-slaveholder* originally began as an abolitionist periodical tied to local free-labor movement in 1846, but it ceased within its first three years of publication owing to a public feud with William Lloyd Garrison. The paper was later resurrected in 1853 thanks to the sponsorship and support of the Ohio Free Produce Association, meaning the paper enjoyed broad circulation in both Pennsylvania and Ohio; see Stacey Robertson, *Hearts Beating for Liberty: Women Abolitionists in the Old Northwest* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2010), 85-86.

excised the ex-slave's name from the publication, creating the conditions for the eventual misattribution of authorship to the second poet, Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (better known by his *nom de plume* Plácido).<sup>2</sup> A free-born comb-maker and widely published poet, Plácido was executed in 1844 as the alleged mastermind of a failed slave rebellion, *La Conspiración de la Escalera* (the Ladder Conspiracy). Whittier, in possession of a copy of *Poems by a Slave* and deeply affected by the news of Plácido's execution, proceeded under the assumption that the anonymous "Negro Poet" from Madden's compendium and the "Cuban Martyr Poet" that the abolitionist papers were buzzing about were one and the same.

Drawing liberally from these source texts, Whittier wove together details from Manzano's early life in slavery and Plácido's spectacular death into what he understood to be the extraordinary biography of Juan Plácido. The powerful pathos and sentimental style of "The Black Man" immediately struck a chord on the heartstrings of US American readers, and Juan Plácido became a *cause célèbre* for abolitionists, circulating prolifically throughout the antebellum networks of abolitionist print culture.<sup>3</sup> Over time, these proliferate reprintings and

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this chapter, I will refer to the Whittier character as "Juan Plácido" and Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés as "Plácido." In my discussion of *Blake*, I use "Plácido" to refer to Delany's character.

<sup>3</sup> I have identified fifteen instances in which "The Black Man" was reprinted in entirety or in part: "Our friend Whittier," *Emancipator*, 5 Feb. 1845, 161; "The Martyr-Poet of Cuba," *Liberty Standard* 27 Feb. 1845; "The Last Prayer of Plácido, the Martyr Poet of Cuba," *Barre Patriot*, 30 May 1845; "A Fine Sketch," *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, 13 Aug. 1845, 132; "Miscellany; Juan Plácido, Prayer of Plácido," *Prisoner's Friend*, 19 Aug. 1846, 132; "Miscelany: Juan Plácido," *Liberator* 28 Aug. 1846, 140; "Juan Plácido," *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 18 Sept. 1846; "Juan Plácido, the Negro Poet," *Rondout Freeman*, 19 Sept. 1846; "Selections: Juan Plácido," *The North Star*, 7 Dec. 1849; "Miscellany; A Cuban Slave," *Christian Inquirer*, 27 January 1855; "Imprisonment of Eminent Men" *Prisoner's Friend*, 1 Sept. 1856, 3; "The Imprisonment of Eminent Men," *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 11 Oct. 1856; "Juan Plácido," *Wisconsin Chief*, 1 Apr. 1857; "Juan Plácido," *Friends' Review; a Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Journal*, 16 May 1857, 572; "Juan Plácido," *Friends' Intelligencer*, 12 Mar. 1859, 826. This list compiles sources found through keyword searches in a number of digital periodical databases,

adaptations codified Whittier's misattribution into an astonishing and well-wrought tale of Black martyrdom for the cause of freedom.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, almost a decade after Plácido's death, the *Nonslaveholder* anticipated that its audiences would not only be familiar with "Whittier's captivating little volume," but also that they would "be glad to know more of the hero."<sup>5</sup> When the *Nonslaveholder* provided these eager readers with Juan Plácido's supposed slave narrative (actually Madden's translation of Manzano's *Autobiografía* from *Poems by a Slave*), there was no doubt in the minds of the editors or the paper's readers that the "credible specimen of negro literature" subsequently serialized was the autobiography of Juan Plácido.<sup>6</sup>

This essay offers a comparative analysis of two works that bring into relief the immense and diverse symbolic labors foisted onto the textual body of Juan Plácido in the scene of his execution: Whittier's "The Black Man" and Martin R. Delany's *Blake; or the Huts of America. A Tale of the Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States, and Cuba* (1859; 1861-2). In "The Black Man," the public assassination of Juan Plácido canonizes him as a martyr for the cause of

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including the American Periodical Series, America's Historical Newspapers, Accessible Archives' African American Newspapers, and the digital collections of the American Antiquarian Society. I believe there to be other instances in resources that have yet to be digitized.

<sup>4</sup> Curiously, despite the tremendous circulation of Whittier's misattribution, there were a number of accounts of Plácido in the United States and Great Britain during this period that do not conflate Manzano and De la Concepción Valdés: John George Wurdemann, *Notes on Cuba* (1844), 355-359; "The Poetry of Spanish America," *North American Review* 68 (Jan. 1849): 129-160; Francisco Javier Vingut, *Poesias de Plácido* (1857); Richard Henry Dana, *To Cuba and Back: A Vacation Voyage* (1859), 100-101; "Cuban Literature," *Littell's Living Age* 7 Jan. 1860, 37-42; and "The Mulatto Poet of Cuba," *National Anti-Slavery Standard* 4 Feb. 1860.

<sup>5</sup> "Juan Plácido," *Non-slaveholder*, February 1854, 18.

<sup>6</sup> "Auto-Biography of the Negro Poet" appeared in monthly installments in the *Non-Slaveholder* from February to October 1854. According to an advertisement on Christmas Day that same year, the *Non-Slaveholder* also sold bound volumes of the paper, one of which included the complete memoir of "Juan Plácido."

freedom and forces readers to confront their complicity in his death; he dies for their sins (slavery). As a consequence of this narrativization, his symbolical purchase within the abolitionist political apparatus hinges upon both his tragic death and the repetitive reproduction of that sentimental execution scene in the many reprintings and adaptations of Whittier's account. Moreover, in his fervor to provide such a narrative account, Whittier transmutes the complex and divergent lives of two Cuban poets into a succinct, ideologically coherent narrative of antislavery resistance that would be immediately affective and persuasive to (largely white) USAmerican readers, primarily through his translation of their Cubanness, Blackness, and activism into the realm of the transnational generalizations. Juan Placido, in this formulation, becomes the fungible, eponymous "Black Man" of Whittier's titular framing, and the ambit of the poet's politicized execution, originally only a concern for Cuba, dilates to a hemispheric scope that also challenges slavery in the United States. The meaning of Juan Placido's death for Delany, by contrast, exceeds his dying body's affective capacity to convince white USAmericans of slavery's excesses and Black men's humanity. In fact, whereas the many reprintings of "The Black Man" reproduce the graphic execution scene, Delany literally resurrects Placido (who was 15-years dead by the initial serialization of *Blake* in the *Anglo-African Magazine* [1859]) as a lively figure of Black transamerican collaboration. Refusing to kill the poet yet again, Delany recuperates a range of representational possibilities, unfastening Juan Placido from his fixed, static position within the symbolic economy of sentimentalism, moral suasion, and political (read: white-led) abolitionism. As a periodical novel, *Blake* foregrounds the fictionality of Juan Placido through weekly reinstantiations, drawing the attention of readers to the Black body's capacity to signify flexibly in order to meet the needs of radical abolitionists and more moderate

Garrisonians. Delany thereby underscores the Black body's capacity to *survive* despite the repetitive acts of destruction textually reenacted against it.

The symbolic violence enacted through repeatedly rehearsing such scenes of Black subjection has been well documented and robustly theorized in Black Studies scholarship, most famously in the debate between Saidiya Hartman and Fred Moten about the implications of critics quoting (and thereby reproducing) Aunt Hester's beating in Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* (1845).<sup>7</sup> My readings of "The Black Man" and *Blake* situate Juan Placido as a compelling case study for how the reiterations and rewritings of his execution became a site not (only) of destruction, but also creation. By considering the repeated assassination of Juan Placido as a phenomenon of abolitionist print culture, I argue that the Cuban Martyr Poet's textual body becomes a privileged site through which readers *articulate*, to borrow Brent Hayes Edwards's metaphor for translation, specific visions of emancipation. "What does it mean to say," Edwards asks, "that one *articulates a joint*? The connection speaks... But the joint is a curious place, as it is both the point of separation (the forearm from the upper arm, for example) and the point of linkage."<sup>8</sup> I flex the muscular corporeality of this metaphor to conceptualize the textual Black body as a similar kind of joint within antislavery discourses: as Juan Placido "speaks," he mediates the realities of Black lived experience (e.g. Manzano's and Plácido's lives) and the political imaginaries of abolitionist authors, translating the former into the latter. For Whittier, the dying, textual Black body provides a means of expanding the geopolitical scope of

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<sup>7</sup> See Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997) and Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003), 15.

USAmerican abolitionism and moving Northern readers to instigate legislative reform. But as *Blake* reveals, Whittier's (and others') insistence upon the poet's repeated death calcifies him in a subordinate relationship to white abolitionists and legislators. Delany's reanimation of Juan Placido alternatively testifies to the capacity of these repetitions and revisions to preserve rather than foreclose the possibilities of Black insurgency. Even if the real Plácido is deceased, Delany posits, a creative, literary revival of the poet can also revitalize the squandered revolutionary energy that Whittier mourns on the occasion of Juan Placido's execution into active, expedient, Black diasporic political action in the present.

This chapter charts the extensive, errant, and unexpected trajectories of Juan Placido's textual movements. Beginning with a brief overview of the print cultural, political, and discursive conditions which brought about the fictive fusion of Manzano and de la Concepción Valdés into a single personage, this chapter explores the rhetorical mechanics of Whittier's essay. In particular, I attend to the ways in which "The Black Man" *translates* the complexities of Cuban racial epistemologies and history into a more accessible and affective story for USAmerican audiences. In doing so, Whittier generates a character whose exceptional poetic productions make him an exemplar of his race – "The Black Man." Moreover, by framing the narrative arc of Juan Placido's life and death as a heroic martyrdom for freedom, Whittier inaugurates the Cuban poet into a transamerican pantheon of race leaders. While the geographical dimensions of this genealogy create the impression that racial unrest regarding the oppressive institution of slavery was spreading quickly throughout the Americas, because the genealogy of Black revolutionaries that Whittier rehearses are all deceased or effectively removed from the USAmerican political sphere, "The Black Man" leaves its readership with only a vague sense of unease rather than an urgent sense of an impending uprising among the



enslaved peoples in the United States and its neighbors. By demonstrating the intellectual capacities and degraded spirit of “The Black Man,” then, Whittier hoped to persuade his white readership to engage in abolitionist action, implying that inaction may result in widespread slave revolts both in the United States and in highly desired sites of US American imperial expansion, especially Cuba.

In the second half of this chapter, I explore how black radical abolitionists in the United States took up Whittier’s biographical sketch of Juan Placido in order to imagine transamerican collaboration and even revolution among the African diaspora in the Americas. Deploying the same narrative tropes of heroism and martyrdom, as well as the organizational structure of genealogy, Henry Highland Garnet and Martin Delany resurrect Juan Placido as an active figure in the transamerican imaginary of Black diasporic resistance. I conclude with an examination of William Wells Brown’s inclusion of Juan Placido in his encyclopedia of black attainment, *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements*. Whereas Whittier’s “The Black Man” celebrates race leaders of the past and thereby disavows Black political agency in the present, Brown’s *The Black Man* incorporates Juan Placido into a more expansive catalogue of Black leadership, both dead and alive, both within and outside the United States. In doing so, Black radical abolitionists employ the narrative of Juan Placido in order to claim an active role for Black leaders in the political formation of the United States and the Caribbean.

### ***La Escalera and the Shot Heard ‘Round the Atlantic World***

Concerns that Cuba could become the next Saint-Domingue were palpable and increasingly justified in the early 1840s: the island had recently reached a demographic tipping point (people of African descent or extraction were now the demographic majority on the island),

and there had been two major uprisings in 1843 alone (a March revolt in Cárdenas and a multi-plantation uprising Matanzas in November).<sup>9</sup> In the winter of that same year, fear of a slave revolution in Cuba culminated in an unprecedented level of colonial violence against Cubans of color and antislavery sympathizers. As *criollo* (Euro-descended, American-born) planters throughout the Matanzas province frantically scrambled to quash this most recent rebellion and braced themselves for further insurrections, one plantation-owner, Esteban Santa Cruz de Oviedo, learned of a major slave rebellion planned for Christmas Day. He hastily elevated the intelligence to the colonial government, and Captain-General Leopoldo O'Donnell responded to the rumor with draconian measures to suffocate the rumored uprising. Across western Cuba, thousands of slaves, free people of color, and even *criollos* antislavery sympathizers were imprisoned, exiled, or executed; others simply disappeared. *La Conspiración de la Escalera* (the Ladder Conspiracy), as these events became known, earned its name for its iconic interrogation tactic of lashing prisoners tied to a ladder. These public tortures and executions functioned both punitively and spectacularly so as to preclude future revolts; in both operations, they were highly effective. The swift, severe response from the colonial government decimated the island's antislavery movement and, in turn, fomented the passage of more stringent regulations that further entrenched slavery within Cuban society.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> According to official census data, Cuba's population in 1841 consisted of 418,291 whites, 436,495 slaves and 152,838 "free coloured" persons in 1827; see Murray, "Statistics of the Slave Trade to Cuba, 1790-1867," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 3.2 (1971): 131-149; 136.

<sup>10</sup> "It was to be many years," Philp Foner writes, "before they dared attempt other uprisings. The ranks of the free Negro and white Cuban leadership of the anti-slavery struggle had been so decimated by the repression that it took almost two decades for it to recover" (219). For more on the spectacular, repressive nature of these executions, see Michele Reid-Vasquez. *The Year of the Lash: Free People of Color in Cuba and the Nineteenth-Century Atlantic World* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 2011), 42-67.

The climax of these disciplinary spectacles involved Plácido, a skilled artisan and renowned poet whose verses often trafficked “thinly disguised expressions of sedition” and critiques of the colonial government.<sup>11</sup> Plácido was singled out as the conspiracy’s architect, though historians disagree about the extent of his involvement.<sup>12</sup> After his imprisonment and conviction, Plácido and ten of his alleged co-conspirators were marched to the Cemetery of San Carlos in Matanzas, where they were shot before thousands of onlookers, over 20,000 according to one account.<sup>13</sup> These grim proceedings quickly became international news in Europe and the Caribbean, but especially in the United States, where tales of the excessive violence of *La Escalera* proved both moving and useful for the abolitionist movement. Plácido’s execution, in particular, energized antislavery activists who transformed the slain poet into a *cause célèbre* in the struggle for emancipation and a symbol of the intellectual capacities of the African race. For example, William Lloyd Garrison reprinted a Thomas Clarkson article on Plácido in the

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<sup>11</sup> Fredrick Stimson, *Cuba’s Romantic Poet; the Story of Plácido* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1964), 79.

<sup>12</sup> Some historians have even suggested that the Cuban administration fabricated the conspiracy in order to quash anticolonial factions who supported the reform of slavery as a means toward independence. For a more on the debate over Plácido’s involvement in *La Escalera*, see Robert Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletow: Wesleyan UP, 1988); Daisy A. Cué Fernández, *Plácido, el poeta conspirador* (Santiago de Cuba: Editorial Oriente, 2007); and Aisha Finch, *Rethinking Slave Rebellion in Cuba: La Escalera and the Insurgencies of 1841-1844* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2015). Moreover, the extent to which De la Concepción Valdés admitted names or affiliations of others is dubious. Stimson notes: “Certain biographers, failing to produce really incriminating or unquestionably authentic documents, insist that Brigadier Salas treacherously advised Plácido that, in payment for freedom, he should furnish O’Donnell a list of friends involved in abolitionist causes, and that the poet acceded to the request with a *revelación* containing fifty-five names” (80-81). Similarly, William Luis suggests: “Plácido’s accusation against Del Monte may have been contrived since he never signed the confession”; see *Literary Bondage: Slavery in Cuban Narrative* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1990), 16-17.

<sup>13</sup> For an overview of several contemporary accounts of Plácido’s trial and execution, see Stimson, *Cuba’s Romantic Poet*, 79-89.

*Liberator* on 15 November 1844; the article originally appeared in the *British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Reporter* and included several translated excerpts from the *Madrid Herald*, exemplifying the international circulation and sensational accumulation of the poet's execution by the time his story reached USAmerican readers.<sup>14</sup> In addition to recounting Plácido's lachrymose last words and detailing some of the "sorrowful verses" he composed in prison, the article supplies background for its originally British, currently USAmerican audience: "It may be interesting to our readers to know, that in Placido, they renew their acquaintance with a poet with whom, and his writings, they are in some degree familiar. He was, we believe, the author of the compositions published a few years ago under the title of *Poems by a Cuban Slave*, and edited by Dr. Madden."<sup>15</sup> The text in question was Richard Robert Madden's *Poems by a Slave in the Island of Cuba* (1840), which featured the poems and memoir of the recently emancipated *pardo* (mixed-race) poet Juan Francisco Manzano. That Clarkson, one of two dedicatees of *Poems by a Slave*, misidentifies the "Negro Poet" of Madden's publication as Plácido is not surprising. In his translation and liberal editing of Manzano's autobiography, Madden excised the author's surname for "obvious reasons" (to protect him from the retribution of his influential former masters or the Cuban administration), but left intact the poet's references to himself as "Juan."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The original article appeared as Thomas Clarkson, "The Anti-Slavery Reporter," *The Anti-Slavery Reporter and Aborigines' Friend (The British and Foreign Antislavery Reporter)*, September 4, 1844, 172.

<sup>15</sup> "The Martyr Poet Placido," *Liberator*, November 15, 1844, 184.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Robert Madden, *Poems by a Slave in the Island of Cuba, Recently Liberated; Translated from the Spanish, by R.R. Madden, M.D. With the History of the Early Life of the Negro Poet, Written by Himself; to Which Are Prefixed Two Pieces Descriptive of Cuban Slavery and the Slave-Traffic, by R.R.M.* (London: Thomas Ward and Co., 1840), iii. Critics debate about Madden's intentions in doing so. Sylvia Molloy impugns his motivations in publishing Manzano's text anonymously and as part of a book predominantly comprised of his own writings; see "From Serf to Self: The Autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano," *MLN*

One avid reader of the *Liberator*, John Greenleaf Whittier, happened across this article with great interest, especially since he was also “in some degree familiar” with the subject of Madden’s publication. In February 1841, the chief organizer of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and the other dedicatee of *Poems by a Slave*, Joseph Sturge, solicited Whittier’s service as a like-minded guide for his tour of the United States.<sup>17</sup> Over the course of their travels together, the pair developed an intimate friendship rooted in their shared experiences and their hatred of slavery. If Sturge did not supply Whittier with a copy of Madden’s *Poems by a Slave* as a token of gratitude during his initial visit, the book was no doubt one of many that changed hands during the men’s ensuing transatlantic correspondence.<sup>18</sup> Whittier therefore could have

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104 (1989), 405-6. Conversely, Gera C. Burton counters this claim, citing a letter from Madden to Joseph Soul in which he describes the extent of his friendship with Manzano and mourns the (false) rumor of the poet’s death: “I cannot tell you how grieved I am about poor Manzano, the Cuban poet. Many a time the poor fellow came to my house and talked over his trouble and those of his unfortunate tribe with me”; see *Ambivalence and the Postcolonial Subject: The Strategic Alliance of Juan Francisco Manzano and Richard Robert Madden*, (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 95. For Burton, Madden’s extensive résumé as an international abolitionist in Ireland, England and the West Indies, and his clear sympathies for Manzano should speak for themselves. At the very least, Madden’s decision certainly looks justified in the wake of *La Escalera*. After Manzano’s imprisonment and release, fellow *tertulia* attendee José Echeverría’s offers a favorable opinion of Madden’s excision and recommends similar circumspection moving forward: “Puede V. darle la noticia á Mr. Madden; y en obsequio del pobre Manzano tenga V. cuidado de que si alguno de esos literatos franceses escribe sobre su vida, no cometa la diablura de nombrarlo/ Could you give the news to Mr. Madden; and in service of poor Manzano take care that if any of the French literati write about his life, they do not commit the sin of naming him; see José Echeverría to Del Monte, *Centón epistolario*, vol. 3, ed. Sophie Andioc (Havana: Imagen Contemporanea, 2002), 9 November 1845, 529.

<sup>17</sup> Prior to his trip, Sturge wrote Whittier seeking a “companion, uniting with my views and with a pretty general knowledge of the individual character and standing, both of the abolitionists and the members of the Society of Friends in your land”; see *Whittier Correspondence from the Oak Knoll Collections, 1830-1892*, ed. John Albree (Salem: Essex Book and Print Club, 1911), 69-70. Whittier enthusiastically accepted the invitation.

<sup>18</sup> As early as December 1841, Whittier references exchanging books with Sturge, admitting his excitement to receive a copy of Sturge’s *A Visit to the United States in 1841* in the next package from England; see *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, vol.1, ed. John B. Pickard

read Manzano's poetry in translation as early as 1841, but he had no reason to doubt that the "Negro Poet" of the title was anyone other than who Clarkson claimed him to be – Manzano, after all, was virtually unknown outside of Cuba.<sup>19</sup> Upon reading the *Liberator* though, Whittier recognized a unique opportunity: because *Poems by a Slave* was never published nor marketed in the United States, his familiarity with its contents would allow him to contour a fuller portrait of the extraordinary life and death of "The Martyr Poet Plácido" for USAmerican audiences, and, as the acting editor of the Lowell-based *Middlesex Standard*, he had an immediate venue for just such a sketch. Cobbling together biographical details and poetry of Juan Francisco Manzano (excerpted directly from Madden's *Poems by a Slave*) and a sentimental account of Plácido's premature death (adapted from the *Liberator*'s reprinting of Clarkson's article), Whittier fashioned an "authoritative" account of the man he ironically dubs "the only Cuban poet": Juan Plácido.<sup>20</sup> "The Black Man," along with a dozen other essays that Whittier originally composed

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(Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1975), 526. Sturge also apparently sent copies of *Poems by a Slave* to others, including George Stewardson (held in the Special Collections at Harvard University's Houghton Library) and the editor of the *Non-slaveholder*, William J. Allison ("Juan Plácido," February 1854, 18).

<sup>19</sup> According to Ivan Schulman, Manzano published poems in *La Moda* (1831), *Diario de la Habana* (1830-8), *El Pasatiempo* (1834), *El Aguinaldo Habanero* (1837-8), and *El Álbum* (1837-8); see Juan Francisco Manzano, *Autobiography of a Slave*, ed. Ivan A. Schulman, trans. Evelyn Picon Garfield (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1996), 36. Luis also mentions the publication of a poetry manuscript *Flores pasajeros* (1830), "del cual no se ha encontrado un ejemplar/of which no examples can be found"; see *Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos*, ed. William Luis, (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2007), 75. Once freed, Manzano also published a tragic play, *Zafira* (1842), before apparently quitting writing all together after *La Escalera*.

<sup>20</sup> "The Black Man" actually includes poems by no less than three different Cuban poets: Manzano, Plácido, and the anonymous author of "To Cuba," which Madden actually prints under a separate section heading ("A Specimen of Inedited Cuban Poems, Presented to Dr. Madden on His Departure from Cuba, and Translated by Him from the Spanish") from Manzano's poems ("Poems, Written in Slavery, by Juan ---- and Translated from the Spanish by R.R.M.") in *Poems by a Slave*.

for the *Middlesex Standard* before he resigned as editor in March 1845, was later compiled in an anthology entitled *The Stranger in Lowell*, published in June of that same year.

“The Black Man” unfolds in a formulaic manner characteristic of the collection: Whittier opens with a brief scene of life in Lowell and then allows his thoughts to drift to larger political matters. It begins with the story of a free Black Virginian who flees to the North, where the generosity of white citizens (including those in Lowell) helped him purchase his wife’s freedom. Whittier advances from this anecdote into a meditation of strategies for persuading skeptical or apathetic Northerners to join the antislavery struggle. In the familiar registers of corporate abolitionism, Whittier argues that the sympathies of his predominantly white, Northern audience can only be activated if “the terrible reality of slavery is from time to time brought home to the people of this section of the country.”<sup>21</sup> (49). Whittier attributes the ethereality of Northerners’ “air-woven apologies for this great American wrong” slavery to their strictly conceptual understanding of slavery’s violence and their lack of personal contact with former slaves. The solution, he argues, is for these readers to witness the dehumanizing routines of slavery and their visceral impact on the captive body. Accordingly, Whittier elaborates on how readers should experience the enslaved person’s pain: the white, Northern “we” repeated through the passage is the anaphoric subject that “see(s),” “listen(s) to,” “feel(s),” and “regard(s)” the physical violence of slavery (49). Although the passage reiterates the capacity of such encounters to render visible the “common nature” of all persons, it is clear that the burden of “giving evidence” falls onto the Black body because of its “claim upon our [white] sympathies” (49, 50). The white Northerner needs to *feel* “his scarred shoulder” synesthetically with his/her eyes in order to *feel* “that here

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<sup>21</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Stranger in Lowell* (Boston: Waite, Pierce, and Co., 1845), 49. All future references to this text will be made parenthetically.

our common humanity has suffered,” and the mere “sight of one of them, standing before us erect and manly” effectively “sweeps away at once all *our* air-woven apologies for this great American wrong” (49, 50, my emphasis). Whittier entices his readers to imagine a fraternal, even homoerotic bond between Black men and white male readers as a mode of persuading white voters to liberate and enfranchise a “brother MAN,” but he also maintains the fractious binarism of “us” and “them” (49).<sup>22</sup> Ironically, in order for white Northern audiences to “no longer regard slavery in the abstract,” abolitionist authors need to *abstract* the physical black body into a textual sensorium through which readers who have not confronted slavery in person can apprehend the physical and psychic violence executed against the enslaved body. There is an important shift in subjectivity: it is not about white readers actively attempting to apprehend what the slave feels, but rather about what the captive Black body can make these readers feel. Apprehension, here, signifies doubly: limning the textual Black body through sensory imagery helps white Northern audiences to grasp the meaning of slavery’s violence as manifest on the scarred body of the fugitive, but it also helps those same readers to take that body into custody where it can performatively “give evidence” for the injustice of slavery.<sup>23</sup> The particular

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<sup>22</sup> For more on homoeroticism as a persuasive strategy to persuade white readers/voters of Black humanity, see P. Gabrielle Foreman, “Sentimental Abolition in Douglass’s Decade: Revision, Erotic Conversion, and the Politics of Witnessing in ‘The Heroic Slave’ and *My Bondage, My Freedom*,” in *Criticism and the Color Line: Desegregating American Literary Studies*, ed. Henry B. Wonham (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1996), 191-204.

<sup>23</sup> In this way, Whittier’s theory of sentimental persuasion functions distinctly from Hartman’s “empathetic substitution” and Glenn Hendler’s “sympathetic identification.” For Hendler, sympathy entails “an emotional response to reading or seeing an expression of another’s feelings. It is thus at its core an act of identification. To feel compassion, as opposed to mere pity, one must be able to imagine oneself, at least to some extent, in another’s position” (3). For Hartman, the white witness to violence against the Black body empathizes with enslaved “by phantasmically becoming the enslaved” (18). While Whittier’s account does widen “the distance between the readers and those suffering by literally removing the slave from view as pain is



performance required of Juan Placido, in order to move white Northern audiences to action, is the role of the martyr. Indeed, “The Black Man” styles the poet’s unjust conviction, imprisonment, and public execution as a Passion Play, right down to his long march along the *via dolorosa*: “with singular composure, amidst a great concourse of people, gracefully saluting his numerous acquaintances,” he proceeded to the site of his death “holding a crucifix in his hand” and reciting his poem “Plegaria a Dios” (“Prayer to God”) (57-58). One rewriting of Whittier renders this reading even more explicit. The *Friends’ Weekly Intelligencer* of 9 July 1847, reprinting a liberal account from the *People’s Journal*, describes the procession as follows: “On his way to the place of execution, he held a crucifix in his hand, and repeated aloud a solemn prayer in verse, call upon God to rend the veil of calumny which was cast around him, declaring he was transparent before the Divine, but ready to submit if it was his will that men should blaspheme his dust.”<sup>24</sup>

Whittier’s powerful prose style in these framing remarks articulates an urgent need for white readers to confront the institutional and physical violence that slavery enacts against the Black body through physical or textual encounters with the Black body. Whittier betrays his sophisticated understanding of the rhetorical mechanics of sentimentalism, which, as Sally Gomaa describes them, “treated pain as a prerequisite for a sort of sympathetic activism by assuming that pain was akin to experiencing it.”<sup>25</sup> In his melodramatic recreation of the Juan

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brought close,” “The Black Man” does so by privileging the horror experienced by the witnesses over the pain experienced by Juan Placido (20).

<sup>24</sup> “Capacities of the Negro Race,” *Friends’ Weekly Intelligencer*, July 9, 1847, 323.

<sup>25</sup> Sally Gomaa, “Writing to ‘Virtuous’ and ‘Gentle’ Readers: The Problem of Pain in Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents* and Harriet Wilson’s *Sketches*,” *African American Review* 43 (Summer 2009): 372.

Placido's public execution, Whittier invokes this tropic transference of pain from the sufferer to the spectator as a means of catalyzing an affective and subsequently political response from his readers. While I want to acknowledge the significance of critiques that caution against reproducing such scenes of Black subjection, I quote the execution scene in full here because Whittier's rhetorical maneuvers require careful analysis and the scene itself remains a constant in the manifold reprintings and adaptations of "The Black Man":

At the last moment just as the soldiers were about to fire, he rose up and gazed for an instant around and above him, on the beautiful capital of his native land, and its sail-flecked bay, on the dense crowds about him, the blue mountains in the distance and the sky glorious with the summer sunshine. "Adios mundo!" (Farewell world!) he said calmly and sat down. The word was given, and five balls entered his body. Then it was, that, amidst the groans and murmurs of the horror-stricken spectators, he rose up once more and turned his head to the shuddering soldiers, his face wearing an expression of superhuman courage. "Will no one pity me?" he said, laying his hand over his heart. "Here, fire here!" while he yet spake, two balls entered his heart and he fell dead. (59-60)

Ironically, as much as the passage sets out to document Juan Placido's suffering, the verbiage assigned to his experience suggests that he actually suffers very little: he "rose up," "said calmly and sat down," "rose up once more and turned his head" and spoke before "laying his hand over his heart" and then falling dead. Whittier offers no sensorial descriptions of Juan Placido's experience. He hears no uneasy whispers from the "dense crowds" and does not feel the out-of-place warmth of the "summer sunshine" on his skin; he simply "gazed" at the social and natural landscapes that enclosed him in the plaza. Instead, the passage spotlights what the "horror-

stricken spectators” and “shuddering soldiers” who hear “the groans and murmurs,” see the poet’s “expression of superhuman courage,” and develop feelings of terror and disgust. Through the perspectives of these eye-witness accounts, Whittier’s readers also become “horror-stricken spectators” to the execution by extension. The scene ultimately does not ask its readers to identify sympathetically with Juan Placido’s trauma; it asks them to identify sympathetically with the traumatization of those who bear witness to his death.

In this way, “The Black Man” privileges its readers’ sensations over its subject’s. Through their imaginative engagement with the text, they sense in Juan Placido’s pensive final reflections his “intellectual vigor, and fine and delicate sensibilities” to the world around him, making superfluous any articulation of those reflections. Such tensions between the speaking Black man (currently or formerly enslaved) and abolitionist ideology were common in the fight against slavery. For instance, Frederick Douglass, in his postbellum reflections on the early years of his speech tours (concomitant with Whittier’s publication of “The Black Man”), famously recalls John A. Collins instructing him to “Give us the facts,” while assuring Douglass that the white, abolitionist leadership would “take care of the philosophy” (219). In this way, the particular draw of Juan Placido martyrdom’s exceeded its affective capacity for moral suasion. In death, he became an ideal Black figure for white abolitionists: the “facts” of his extraordinary narrative could be selectively gleaned from putatively authentic and thus incontrovertible texts (such as his autobiography and the first-person accounts of his death) in a manner that conformed perfectly to the abolitionist “philosophy,” while, at the same time, his death necessarily precluded any interference with that philosophy from the Black subject himself.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> For more on abolitionist investment in “authenticity” of slave narratives and accounts of slavery, see Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007), 303-362; Augusta Rohrbach, *Truth Stranger than*

Plainly stated, the dead Black body proved much easier to manipulate and, therefore, served as a more effective and affective vehicle for white, abolitionist philosophy.

Whittier's narration of the poet's heroic martyrdom, however, is as much a fictional construct as "Juan Placido" himself. Historians continue to debate the extent of Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés's involvement in plotting a slave rebellion, while others debate whether or not there even was a conspiracy at all. "Some interpreters have called it a preempted revolution that threatened the foundation of Cuba's slave society," Robert Paquette observes, while "others have doubted its existence, arguing that the government manufactured it to justify a Machiavellian policy of colonial repression."<sup>27</sup> Though "The Black Man" admits that "how far Placido was implicated in the insurrectionary movement, it is now perhaps impossible to ascertain," the essay proceeds under the unambiguous assumption that he was the mastermind behind the conspiracy. It offers a rigorous defense of his hypothetical involvement and a proliferative enumeration of the wrongs he endured as justification for his actions (57). The accumulation of abuses in this defense renders the speculative dimensions of Placido's involvement irrelevant and superfluous: even if he did not actively mastermind the conspiracy, the text argues, he accepted the punishment for doing so because he agreed with rebellion in principle and would have been happy to have done so. Thus, while the essay allows for some skepticism on his involvement, it leaves no room for impugning his heroism, which it transforms into incontrovertible fact.

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*Fiction Race, Realism, and the U.S. Literary Marketplace* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Lara Langer Cohen, *The Fabrication of American Literature: Fraudulence and Antebellum Print Culture* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2011), 101-132; and Teresa A. Goddu, *Selling Antislavery: Corporate Abolition and the Rise of Mass Culture in Antebellum America* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, forthcoming).

<sup>27</sup> Paquette, *Sugar is Made with Blood*, 4.

Juan Placido's heroism marks an even more important aspect of his impact on white Northern audiences, as it elevated him as an exemplar of "The Black Man," an exceptional, transnational representative of his race. As part of this promotion, the essay situates the Cuban poet within a genealogy of enslaved revolutionaries more familiar to US Americans. Whittier not only invokes Juan Placido's predecessors in this passage, but he regards each of them with reverence. The execution of "the stout-hearted Gabriel," whose organized uprising failed in 1800, is glossed with a popular saying of the day: he "'died and made no sign' of contrition for having risen against his oppressors" (50-51). The phrase originates from the second part of Shakespeare's *Henry VI*, wherein Cardinal Beaufort, who expires with the guilt of murdering his political rival on his conscience, fails to signal to the titular king that he has ascended to heaven upon his death; the king remarks, "He dies, and makes no sign" (III.3 30). Whittier's election to eulogize Gabriel in this manner not only elevates the revolutionary by applying the words of Shakespeare to his death, but it recontextualizes those words so as to exonerate the enslaved leader. While Beaufort made no sign of ascension, Gabriel makes no sign of contrition, suggesting the latter died with confidence in the justice of his violence – the emphasis on the fact that he rose against his "oppressors," juxtaposed with the cardinal's murder of Gloucester, a peer, confirms this. Similarly, Whittier also lists "that Virginia fanatic" in his genealogy of enslaved, Black revolutionaries (51). Because Whittier is sensitive enough to his audience to know that mentioning Nat Turner by name or rehearsing the gruesome details of his uprising's early stages would unsettle even the most avid abolitionist, he turns our attention instead to Turner's prophetic vision from his "confessions" to Thomas Gray in 1831. Whittier takes seriously Turner's capacity to "read the doom of his enslavers" in the signs of Nature and offers a brief sketch of his revelation with added poetic embellishments like "the voices of the wind

calling him to arise and avenge his race” (51). While such a genealogy of slave revolutionaries might still have disconcerted a white, Northern audience, Whittier’s purpose in this passage is not intimidation. He offers these men’s lives instead as evidence of the intellectual capacities of these race leaders and highlights how such exemplars can serve the mission of moral suasion:

I was conversing not long since with a gentleman well and honorably known in the political world, who declared that, in all frankness and honesty, he must admit that he did not and could not pity Southern blacks, drawing as they did in the yoke like so many oxen, stupid and passive, as if their necks were made for it. I alluded to the capture of the Creole slave-ship by Madison Washington and his fellow bondmen. “Ah!” said he, “that has given me a better opinion of the negroes than all your Quaker testimonies in their behalf put together.” (51)

Whittier invokes the *Creole* cook and his successful slave uprising aboard that ship in order to demonstrate the influential potential of such examples to convert believers of the innate inferiority of “The Black Man” to a more generous perspective. Indeed, this conversion anecdote testifies that heroism and exceptionalism offer a complementary model for persuasion to the affective depictions of suffering that he rationalizes in his opening gambit. Again, Whittier outlines these two effective strategies for warming skeptics to the cause of abolitionism, all the while presenting his biographical sketch of Juan Placido’s tragic martyrdom as powerful site where both these strategies converge.

As a collective portrait of the growing discontent with slavery throughout the USAmerican South and the Caribbean, “The Black Man” spoke directly to urgent political issues of the mid-1840s. Debates about the potential USAmerican annexation of Texas defined the 1844 presidential election and provide an immediate context for the composition and publication

of the essay. For abolitionists like Whittier, who actively combated the expansionist platform of the Polk presidential campaign, the eventual success of Texan incorporation as a slave state in March 1845 (two months after “The Black Man” first appeared in the *Middlesex Standard*) marked a dangerous precedent: USAmerican expansion could quickly become a strategy for the expansion of slavery.<sup>28</sup> Cuba started to become a site of special interest. In November of 1844, for example, around the time that Whittier was likely composing the essays for *The Stranger in Lowell*, *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* published an article entitled “Present State of Cuba,” which included a “Memorial” by a native Cuban. While the memorial makes no direct case for USAmerican annexation of the island, it does advertise the shared political interests of the United States and Cuba; John O’Sullivan, the magazine’s editor, even remarks in his preface that “They are obviously under every point of view, of the deepest interest to the government and people of the United States; and deserve a greater share of attention than they have hitherto received from the public press.”<sup>29</sup> The Cuban memorial directs that “deeper interest” toward the subject of slavery, noting the vulnerability of the island and its neglect in the hands of the Spanish administration. It begins, “The Island of Cuba is at present in imminent danger of being irrecoverably lost, not only to Spain, but to the white race and the civilized world, unless the Spanish government, shall adopt immediately some energetic measure to remedy the evil.” Although the memorial was originally addressed to the Spain, reprinted in this

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<sup>28</sup> From 1844 to 1846, for example, Whittier published five “Texas” poems, which aimed to express the discontent of the North with the annexation of Texas: “Voice of New England,” “To Faneuil Hall,” “To Massachusetts,” “New Hampshire,” and “The Pine-Tree”; see John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Writings of John Greenleaf Whittier: Anti-slavery Poems; Songs of Labor and Reform* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1892), 94-104.

<sup>29</sup> “Present State of Cuba,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 15.77 (Nov 1844): 478

context the idea that Cuba may be “lost, not only to Spain, but to the white race and the civilized world,” reads as a desperate plea for USAmerican aid and plays off anxieties in the USAmerican South that Caribbean slave rebellions could easily spread northward.<sup>30</sup> The memorial drives this point home in a latter passage, wherein it describes the “condition of the countries in the immediate neighborhood of Cuba, all swarming with blacks, who seem to cover, as if with a dark and ominous cloud, the whole horizon.”<sup>31</sup> The apocalyptic imagery of Black Jamaicans and Haitians descending upon the island like locusts “ominously” locate Cuba as a buffer between the United States and the Black Caribbean. Moreover, because the memorial describes British and French designs on acquiring Cuba in addition to the Spanish mismanagement of the island’s affairs, the article speaks the logic of the Monroe Doctrine back to the United States – protecting the American hemisphere from European influence. Together these rhetorical strategies render USAmerican protection of the island a necessary and urgent political action. Within the context of the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, a pro-expansionist literary magazine, this political action invariably signified as annexation or conquest.<sup>32</sup>

Whittier was no doubt aware of the quickly coalescing USAmerican designs on Cuba. He was a frequent contributor to the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*; many of his poems and short essays were published in its pages in 1842 and 1843. In fact, the same issue of

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 478.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 482-483.

<sup>32</sup> The author of this article was none other than Domingo del Monte, the Cuban *criollo* whose *tertulia* (reading group) purchased Juan Francisco Manzano’s liberty and who supplied Richard Robert Madden with the manuscript of Manzano’s memoir. Alexander Hill Everett, Del Monte’s close friend and the former USAmerican Minister to Spain, arranged for the publication of this essay. For more on the relationship between Del Monte and Everett, see David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 159-180.



the magazine in which John O'Sullivan wrote his defense of the Texas Annexation – the same article that famously coins the phrase “Manifest Destiny” – also published a review of Whittier's *The Stranger in Lowell*, including several excerpts; “The Black Man” was not among the selections reprinted.<sup>33</sup> By rehearsing a genealogy of Black revolutionaries throughout the US American South and the Caribbean, Whittier too intentionally fanned the flames of Southern anxieties of slave rebellions, but with a different aim in mind. In his portrait of Juan Placido's failed uprising and the popularity of the martyr across the island, Whittier limns Cuba as an island on the verge of an antislavery revolution. This sense of volatility would function as a definite disincentive to proponents of Cuban annexation looking to incorporate the island into the United States as a slave state. Contextualized in this debate, Whittier's catalogue of Black revolutionaries not only canonizes Juan Placido into a pantheon of race leaders, but he serves as a cautionary tale for pro-annexationists coveting Cuba.

### **Translating and Transmuting Race**

At the conclusion of “The Black Man,” Whittier reassures readers that the poet “has not fallen in vain. His genius, and his heroic death, will doubtless be regarded by his race as precious legacies. To the great names of [Toussaint] L'Ouverture and [Alexandre] Petion the colored man can now add that of Juan Placido” (60). I read this final gesture as part of a secondary project in Whittier's essay: figuring Juan Placido as a fungible, yet exemplary symbol of his race. In making these comparative gestures, Whittier inaugurates him into a transamerican pantheon of Black leaders of slave rebellions. These concluding remarks complement an earlier moment in

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<sup>33</sup> See John O'Sullivan, “Annexation,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17.85 (July/Aug 1845): 5-10; and “Whittier in Prose,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 17.85 (July/Aug 1845): 115-126.

which Whittier quotes a passage from Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Address on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies* (1844) that references "Toussaint and the Haytian heroes," as well as "the leaders of their race in Barbadoes [sic] and Jamaica" (50). These allusions appear alongside a more sustained celebration of several US American examples, including the "stout-hearted" Gabriel, "that Virginia fanatic" Nat Turner, and Madison Washington (50, 51). Whittier offers an explicit explanation for such a canonization, recounting how an acquaintance recently confided in him that Washington's *Creole* rebellion "has given me a better opinion of the negroes than all your Quaker testimonies in their behalf put together" (51). In order for Juan Placido to catalyze such transformations, Whittier needed to position within this longer and more geographically expansive historiography of Black resistance, lest he code as a protonational "hero-poet of Cuba" instead of a transnational representative of "his race" (60). To do so, Whittier attentively manages the biographical details from Madden's liberal English translation of Manzano's already frenetic, disjointed memoir so as to produce an image of "The Black Man" that transcends national difference.

As a result, "The Black Man" proceeds under the untenable and deeply problematic assumption that the racial identities and the economies of power associated with Blackness operate identically in the US and Cuba. Unlike the fixed categories and the *de facto*, though not yet codified, "one-drop rule" in the United States, racial designations in Cuba were more a matter of perception than identity, and the intricate calculus of race in Cuba depends upon situational variables and functions inconsistently.<sup>34</sup> Manzano, for instance, is variously referred

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<sup>34</sup> For more on Cuban racial categories, see Jack D. Forbes, *Black Africans and Native Americans: Color, Race, and Caste in the Evolution of Red-Black Peoples* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1988); Louis A. Pérez Jr., *Cuba: Between Reform and Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988); and Mark Q. Sawyer, *Racial Politics in Post-Revolutionary Cuba* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006).

to in the scholarship on his memoir as a *pardo*, a *moreno*, a *mulato*, and even a *chino esclavo* (a “Chinese slave,” an epithet applied to mixed-race individuals prior to the large-scale importation of coerced Chinese labor to Cuba).<sup>35</sup> Additionally, socioeconomic status often served to “lighten” the perceived race of an individual, and self-identifying within the same racial category as another Cuban was no guarantee of equal treatment or social status in Cuban society.

Although Manzano and Plácido were both men of mixed European and African ancestry, and both are typically labeled as *pardos*, their experiences of race and class were radically different from one another. As a mutual acquaintance of the two poets wrote in an 1845 essay,

Plácido was never a slave; he was born free; he was the son of a white woman and a mulatto, and of course his skin color was almost White. He did not have to fight in his life like Manzano, who was almost black, as the son of a black woman and a mulatto, and a slave by birth, with the insurmountable obstacles of his condition and his color, in order to develop the natural talents of his imagination, which was truly poetic. (Del Monte 149-150)<sup>36</sup>

Manzano was born into slavery to two parents of mixed African-European descent and became a favored house servant who received an education. He occupied a privileged position relative to the darker-skinned men and women laboring in the cane fields or sugar refineries, but he

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<sup>35</sup> The reference to Manzano as a “*Chino esclavo*” occurs in an unnumbered introductory page of *Obras completas de Juan Francisco Manzano esclavo de la Isla de Cuba*, a handwritten, bound volume assembled by Nicolas M. de Azcarate (Box 2, Folder 14, Caribbean Collection [MS 1780], Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library).

<sup>36</sup> Domingo del Monte, “Dos poetas negros,” *Escritos*, Vol. 2, ed. José A. Fernández de Castro (Havana: Editorial Cultural, 1929), 149-150. The original Spanish reads, “Plácido nunca fué esclavo; nació libre: era hijo de blanca y de mulato, y por supuesto su color era casi blanco. No tuvo por lo mismo que luchar en su vida, como Manzano que era casi negro, como hijo de negra y de mulato, y esclavo de nacimiento, con los obstáculos insuperables de su condición y su color, para desarrollar las dotes naturales de su imaginación, que era realmente poética.”

remained enslaved and thus at the mercy of his mistress. He only finally escaped slavery due to the philanthropy of white, *criollo* sponsors familiar with his verses, including Del Monte: these men solicited a memoir of his life in slavery in an apparent *quid pro quo* exchange for his emancipation. After being himself implicated and imprisoned during *La Escalera* because of his connection to the very men who had purchased his freedom, Manzano spent the remainder of his life working in quiet obscurity as a cook. Plácido, by contrast, was the illegitimate son of a *mulato* barber from Havana and a Spanish dancer. Despite his humble beginnings as a foundling in a Havana orphanage and his minimal formal education, Plácido quickly became a successful and revered poet by age twenty-five. He had a skilled trade (comb-making) and supplemented his income with his poetry, including a per-poem commission for his daily contributions to a provincial newspaper, *La Aurora de Matanzas*, in the 1830s. Thus, though most contemporary and modern commentators classify both men as *pardos*, this designation is shown to predict little about their physical appearance or their social standing in Cuban society. Still, as the title of Del Monte's essay—"Dos Poetas Negros"—suggests, the Cuban logic of anti-Blackness nonetheless emphasized these poets' African ancestries, their relative "whiteness" notwithstanding.

As Ifeoma Nwankwo notes of a Whittier-inspired encyclopedia entry on "Placido" from 1863, the synthesis of Manzano's life and Plácido's death into a single narrative "constitute[d] an abolitionist's dream story: the experience of slavery, then freedom, followed by activism and martyrdom."<sup>37</sup> While the biographical details of the poets' lives certainly lend themselves to such a "dream story," Whittier's selective sampling of source texts reveals the manner in which and

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<sup>37</sup> Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2005), 52. See the entry for "Placido" in William Wells Brown's *The Black Man, His Antecedents, His Genius, and His Achievements* (New York: Thomas Hamilton, 1863), 88-90.

degree to which he manipulates the narrative of Juan Placido in order to render the dream of abolishing slavery through moral suasion and legislative action a reality. For example, although Madden's translation of Manzano's *Autobiografía* into "Life of the Negro Poet," which appears in *Poems by a Slave* takes significant liberties with its own source text, it nevertheless presents a complex portrait Manzano's experiences of slavery, especially during his childhood.<sup>38</sup> Manzano, in Madden's version, begins by professing that "[i]t would be tedious to detail the particulars of my childhood, treated by my mistress with greater kindness than I deserved, and whom I was accustomed to call 'my mother.'"<sup>39</sup> In the original Spanish, however, Manzano writes, "Así sería ocioso pintar cual andaba yo entre la tropa de nietos de mi Sra. travesando y algo más bien mirado de lo que merecía por los favores que me dispensaba aquella a quien yo también llamaba *mamá mía*."<sup>40</sup> Madden's translation adopts the generalizing phrase "the particulars of my childhood" in place of the specific particulars that Manzano enumerates in Spanish: *travesando* ("making mischief") along with *la tropa de nietos de mi Sra* (his mistress's grandchildren"). Lost in the many layers of translation are the particular privileges of education and favoritism that

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<sup>38</sup> As a number of scholars have noted, Madden's *Poems by a Slave* took substantial liberties in its translation of language, style, structure, and even generic form. For more on how Madden's manipulation of the text fundamentally transformed the original, see Susan Willis, "Crushed Geraniums: Juan Francisco Manzano and the Language of Slavery," *The Slave's Narrative* (1985), ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates Jr., 199–224; Sylvia Molloy, "From Serf to Self: The Autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano," *MLN* 104 (Mar. 1989): 393–417; Fionnghuala Sweeney, "Atlantic Countercultures and the Networked Text: Juan Francisco Manzano, R. R. Madden and the Cuban Slave Narrative," *Forum of Modern Language Studies* 40 (Oct. 2004): 401–414; Joselyn M. Almeida, *Reimagining the Transatlantic: 1780–1890* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011); and R.J. Boutelle, "'The Most Perfect Picture of Cuban Slavery': Transatlantic Bricolage in Manzano's and Madden's *Poems by a Slave*," *Atlantic Studies* 10 (Dec. 2013): 528–549. Throughout this section, I cite from *Poems by a Slave* (1840) because it was the text that Whittier consulted.

<sup>39</sup> Madden, *Poems by a Slave*, 56.

<sup>40</sup> Manzano, *Autobiografía*, 84.

Manzano enjoyed during his youth: he plays alongside his mistress's white grandchildren and even refers to her as "mother" ("mamá mía"). While I want to be careful here not to replicate the rhetoric of slavery apologists and revisionist historians who would propagate the image of the "kind master," these advantages, such that they were within the dehumanizing system of slavery, become important distinctions that shape Manzano's understanding of himself relative to his darker-skinned enslaved counterparts. As Jerome Branche argues, the diversity of Afro-descended racial identities that comprised the Cuban plantation played a significant role in Manzano's original, Spanish-language memoir: his racial self-fashioning depends largely upon disentangling himself from the plantation's many *esclavos negros* (enslaved Black Cubans), whom he casts as barbaric, violent, and villainous. The details of his privilege that Madden downplays and Whittier erases abound in *Autobiografía*: Manzano and his parents are household servants rather than field laborers, and his godparents are white aristocrats; not only is he literate, but he actually attends school alongside his mistress's white children. By distinguishing his own station as an exceptional, talented, mixed-race *esclavo de razón* with a "delicate, 'poetic' personality" from the "brutality of the Black males incorporated in the system of oppression," Manzano brokered power and status for himself within the complex hierarchy Cuban plantation slavery.<sup>41</sup> For Whittier, this intraracial, anti-Black antagonism, filtered though they were through Madden's translation, conflicted with his desire to portray Juan Placido as a universal representative of the entire race. As a result, he further flattens the details of Manzano's early

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<sup>41</sup> Jerome Branche, "'Mulato Entre Negros' (y Blancos): Writing, Race, the Antislavery Question, and Juan Francisco Manzano's 'Autobiografía,'" *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 20.1 (2001): 79. Ivan Schulman describes *un esclavo de razón* as a slave in possession of special talents, resulting from preferential training and education, thereby "creating in [Manzano's] soul the illusory notion of being able to overcome his condition as a slave through his intellectual aptitudes of the use of reason;" see *Autobiography*, 45n2.

life, succinctly summarizing the first twelve years of his life in a single sentence, which intimates that the external provision of privileges was the only thing that differentiated him from any other enslaved African American: “His mistress treated him with great kindness and taught him to read” (51).

Rather than exploring the complexities of Manzano’s early life as presented in *Poems by a Slave*, “The Black Man” fast-forwards to a scene from Manzano’s adolescence in which he witnesses the *mayoral* (overseer) beating his mother and then retaliates. “The Black Man” spotlights this instance alone among the many emotionally evocative episodes from *Poems by a Slave*. Notably though, Whittier does not simply transplant this scene of retaliation into “The Black Man,” and the labor of his heavy editorial hand sheds light on the scene’s function within the essay. Manzano’s telling offers the background to his mother’s beating: he falls asleep while driving a cart and the *mayoral* punishes him by whipping his mother. Whittier, conversely, offers no context for the violence, abruptly commencing the scene *en medias res*. Again, I highlight this background not to suggest that Manzano’s nap merits the despicable violence that the accident incurs, but rather to signal how “The Black Man” omits the build-up to these lashings (i.e. Manzano’s admission that he made a mistake) to strategically suggest that that violence was entirely arbitrary and unwarranted, not a punitive, albeit extreme and indefensible response. This excision circumvents any risk of portraying of an imperfect slave, and “The Black Man” effectively styles Manzano as both an innocent victim and courageous defender of his helpless mother:

At the age of eighteen, on seeing his mother struck with a heavy whip, he for the first time turned upon his tormentors. To use his own words, “I felt the blow in my heart. To utter a loud cry, and from a downcast boy with the timidity of one weak

as a lamb, to become all at once like a raging lion, was a thing of a moment.” He was, however, subdued, and the next morning, together with his mother, a tenderly-nurtured and delicate woman, severely scourged. On seeing his mother rudely stripped and thrown down upon the ground, he at first with tears implored the overseer to spare her; but at the sound of the first blow, as it cut into her naked flesh, he sprang once more upon the ruffian, who having superior strength beat him until her was nearer dead than alive. (51-52)

Whittier’s adaptation draws directly on Madden’s text, but the transcriptional variances are instructive. For example, Madden’s translation “meek as a lamb” becomes “weak as a lamb” in “The Black Man.”<sup>42</sup> In turn, Manzano’s dispositional docility (meekness) becomes Juan Placido’s bodily vulnerability (weakness) as a “downcast boy” in a physical altercation against the “superior strength” of the adult *mayoral*. Furthermore, where *Poems by a Slave* alludes to “the sound of the first lash” when the *mayoral* strikes the poet’s mother, Whittier takes creative license in describing how the first blows “cut into her naked flesh.”<sup>43</sup> More to the point here though, the revision of this scene establishes the enslaved poet as a courageous and fearless defender of the defenseless, thereby foreshadowing his tragic martyrdom. In his efforts to demonstrate the masculine heroics of Juan Placido, however, Whittier erases several important references to race in this scene. “The Black Man” divides the actors in this episode into the neatly divided categories of the oppressed and their tormentors, categories that US American audiences would incorrectly assume are coextensive with the categories of Black and white,

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<sup>42</sup> Curiously, the descriptor “raging” that is attached to “lion” is maintained in both, despite the absence of any modifier for *león* in the original Spanish: “convertirme de manso cordero en un león/transforming me from a meek lamb into a lion” (*Autobiografía* 93).

<sup>43</sup> Madden, *Poems by a Slave*, 66; Whittier, *Stranger in Lowell*, 52.



respectively. Whittier encourages this misreading. Whereas *Poems by a Slave* makes clear that Manzano's mother is "stripped down by the negroes and thrown down to be scourged" (66), these racially marked accessories are expurgated from Whittier's version in what becomes a passive construction: "On seeing his mother rudely stripped and thrown down upon the ground."<sup>44</sup> (52). This omission simplifies Cuban racial politics into a Manichean struggle between Black and white. Rather than remaining faithful to the narrative of a privileged "mulatto" among Black Cubans that appears in Manzano's original memoir and then survives Madden's liberal translation in *Poems by a Slave*, Whittier's adaptation of the text imagines Juan Placido to be a champion of his entire race (i.e. "The Black Man").

Still, it mattered significantly to "The Black Man" that Juan Placido had mixed European and African ancestry, and despite Whittier's failure to comprehend the nuances of Cuban racial designations, he well understood that the author of *Poems by a Slave* (who he understood to be Juan Placido) was distinct from the enslaved collective that he monolithically glosses as a "dark, dumb, inert mass of silent suffering" (50). Whittier, like many of his time, associated lighter skin with higher intellect, and forging the bonds of sympathy between Juan Placido and white, USAmerican readers required his abjection as an exemplary, transnational mulatto—he could be neither a projection of the white self nor an objectified Black Other.<sup>45</sup> Manzano's emphasis on the antagonism between lighter-skinned and darker-skinned slaves could not serve this end: such a nuanced distinction was relatively meaningless to white, USAmerican readers, especially those

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<sup>44</sup> Madden, *Poems by a Slave*, 66; Whittier, *Stranger in Lowell*, 52.

<sup>45</sup> My sense of "abjection" here stems from not only Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia UP, 1982), but also Zita Nunes's *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008).

Northerners who had never encountered an African American in person and had little appreciation for the diversity of phenotypes organized under the purview of “Black.” Instead, the rehearsal of the poet’s racial ancestry at the beginning of *Poems by a Slave* provided Whittier with the means to establish Juan Placido as both of and above his race. “He was born in Cuba,” Madden writes of Manzano, adding that “[h]is father and mother lived and died in slavery in Cuba. The former was a ‘pardo’ negro; the latter, the offspring of an African and a mulatto union.”<sup>46</sup> Whereas Madden’s tracing of Manzano’s lineage at least simulates an attention to the gradations of Cuban racial categories, Whittier’s summarization of this genealogy further simplifies these classifications: “Juan Placido was born a slave... His father was an African, his mother a mulatto” (51).<sup>47</sup> This formulation of the poet’s ancestry erases any sign of Cuban racial designations and focuses instead on what it takes to be the gist: “negro” comes to signify not only “Negro” but African, and his mother, “the offspring of an African and a mulatto union” becomes simply “a mulatto.” Although it remains unclear whether Whittier intends “African” as a racial signifier (i.e. Black or *negro*) or a marker of geographic origin (i.e. born in Africa or *bozal*), this translation of race effectively establishes that Juan Placido has enough African

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<sup>46</sup> Madden, *Poems by a Slave*, iv. Strangely, the catalogue of racial descriptors in this passage fail to signify properly within either Anglophone or Hispanophone categories. The pairing of *pardo* and “negro,” for instance, is confounding. If the lowercase “negro” is intended as the Spanish “*negro*” (meaning *moreno* or Black) then *pardo* becomes contradictory. Conversely, if “negro” is intended as the English “Negro,” then *pardo* becomes superfluous – the precise purpose of the many classifications for Cubans of mixed European and African descent (i.e. *pardo*, *mulato*, etc.) was to distinguish these groups from Black Cubans.

<sup>47</sup> Apart from transforming the name of the plantation-owner from “Toribio de Castro” into the wonderfully Dickensian “Don Terribio de Castro,” Whittier also misinterprets the text: Toribio de Castro was actually Manzano’s father, a slave on the plantation of the Marqués Don Manuel Manzano and the Marquesa Doña Beatriz de Jústiz.

ancestry to represent “The Black Man” and enough European ancestry to distinguish him from his anonymous darker-skinned peers.

To better understand Whittier’s differentiation between the exceptional individual and the purportedly uniform masses in the economy of racial representation, we need to look to the final lines of “The Black Man,” in which Whittier inaugurates the martyred Cuban poet into a pantheon of race leaders: “To the great names of L’Ouverture and Petion [sic] the colored man can now add that of Juan Placido” (60). That Whittier’s shrine of exceptional Black Men includes three deceased mulattoes is in itself revealing, but the examples of the Haitian political leaders Toussaint L’Ouverture and Alexandre Pétion merit special attention. Pétion, who actually led a counter-revolutionary alliance against L’Ouverture in the “War of Knives” and fled Saint-Domingue for France in 1800, went on to become the first President of the Haitian Republic in 1806. His democratic election and presidency stand in sharp contrast not only to his rival, King Henri Christophe I, who ruled a dictatorial state in the northern part of the island simultaneously, but also to the previous leader of Haiti, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, who famously ordered and executed the 1804 massacre of between 3,000 and 5,000 white Haitians.<sup>48</sup> Both Dessalines and Christophe were born to African parents and into slavery; they were uneducated and illiterate. Pétion, conversely, was a freeborn *gen de couleur*, educated at the Military Academy in Paris. Thus, while Pétion was hardly a popularly renowned figure among nineteenth-century USAmericans, his European education, his vision of a democratic republican nation-state, and his distance from the anti-white violence strongly associated with the Haitian Revolution made him an ideal candidate for Whittier to prop up as an exemplar of “The Black Man.”

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<sup>48</sup> For more on these early postcolonial years of the Haitian Republic, see Laurent Dubois, *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (New York: Macmillan, 2012).

Whittier's invocation of L'Ouverture is more complex, however, owing to the revolutionary figure's preponderance throughout antebellum print and the cultural capital his name commanded in the abolitionist movement, particularly among Black abolitionists in the United States. The most immediate context for his cameo in "The Black Man" is Whittier's own poem, "Toussaint L'Ouverture," originally published in *New England Magazine* in November 1833.<sup>49</sup> The poem itself is strange and gothic. Against the oneiric backdrop of exoticized tropical imagery, the poem's plot rehearses a familiar antislavery argument, particularly popular among religious abolitionists like Whittier: slavery is a crime against God and against Nature. The poem animates Nature, which both issues and answers the call to rebel against the humans who have transformed Edenic Saint-Domingue into a hellish scene of gothic horror: "The shame and hate, which liken well / Earth's Garden to the nether Hell, / Had found in Nature's self a tongue, / On which the gather'd horror hung."<sup>50</sup> Personified Nature gives voice to the unrest of the slaves; it actively conspires against the slaveholders, as "Tree, vine, and flower in shadow met" (12); finally, it initiates the actual rebellion, when "The wild beast from his cavern sprang – / The wild bird from her grove!" (14). When the enslaved men and women finally appear in the poem, they exist as an undifferentiated mass of "dark, naked arms" and "a thousand fiery spirits" (15, 20). The corollary to the personification of Nature, then, is the naturalization of persons. The revolutionary black masses are "the creatures of his [the slave-owner's] lawless beck" (15), "the

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<sup>49</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier, "Toussaint L'Ouverture," *New England Magazine* (November 1833): 368-373. This poem was reprinted or anthologized at least three times in proximity to the publication of *The Stranger in Lowell*: "Poetry: Toussaint L'Ouverture," *Christian Reflector*, 30 November 1838, 4; *Poems* (Philadelphia: Joseph Healy, 1838); and *Voices of Freedom* (Philadelphia: T.S. Cavender, 1846).

<sup>50</sup> Whittier, *Poems*, 14. All further references to this poem will be made parenthetically and will refer to this edition unless otherwise noted.

wild sounds of fear and death” (16), “madden’d men, / Unchain’d, and fierce as tigers” (18); they are but another example of the “fiery stain, / and flashes,” marking a pronounced contrast with the representations of L’Ouverture who, the poem emphatically insists, “was a MAN!” (16). The differentiation of L’Ouverture from the creaturely monolith of Black fieldworkers crystalizes as the plot unfolds: a group of self-emancipated men rape the plantation’s white mistress in an early passage, while L’Ouverture mercifully rescues a white child and offers to protect the white “Friends of the Negro” in their flight to the sea (19). Moreover, the poem extends this differentiation so far as to suggest that the leader’s hands remain entirely unsullied through the uprising, despite the gory scenes unfolding around him: “He stood the aged palms beneath, / That shadow’d o’er his humble door, / Listening, with half-suspended breath, / To the wild sounds of fear and death— / Toussaint L’Ouverture!” (16). From his observation post beneath a tropical tree, described earlier as “The kingly palm’s imperial stem, / Crown’d with its leafy diadem,” L’Ouverture assumes an august, even royal air despite his “humble” posture and beginnings. He is not only “a MAN!” among the masses, these verses argue, but also a courageous, compassionate, and rational leader. Indeed, in his historical preface to the lengthy narrative poem, Whittier notes the incomparability of L’Ouverture: “The treatment of Toussaint finds a parallel only in the murder of the Duke d’Enghein. It was a remark of [Reverend Benjamin] Godwin, in his Lectures, that the West India islands, since their first discovery by Columbus, could not boast of a single name which deserves comparison with that of TOUSSAINT L’OUVERTURE” (12).<sup>51</sup> By 1845, though, Whittier reneged on these claims

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<sup>51</sup> Whittier alludes to *The Substance of a Course of Lectures on British Colonial Slavery, Delivered at Bradford, York and Scarborough* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 1830), in which the Reverend Benjamin Godwin asks, “can the West-India islands, since their first discovery by Columbus, boast a name that deserves comparison with that of Toussaint L’Ouverture[?]” (99).

regarding the unique exceptionalism of L'Ouverture's legacy and maltreatment, drawing the direct comparison between the Haitian revolutionary's premature death and that of Juan Placido.

### **The Afterlives of Juan Placido**

Despite the fact Whittier only rarely left Massachusetts, and, it was rumored, had never traveled further south than Philadelphia, perhaps no nineteenth-century US American writer was more successful at circulating his work throughout the entire nation. Whittier's cultural capital as a trenchant abolitionist and accomplished poet gave his astonishing account of Juan Placido authority, while his intricate knowledge of antislavery print networks and the rhetoric maneuvers of sentimental abolitionism guaranteed the rampant circulation, reprintings, and adaptations of "The Black Man." By its 1845 publication, Whittier had already served as editor-in-chief or assistant editor to the *Haverhill Gazette*, the *Pennsylvania Freeman*, the *Emancipator*, and the *Middlesex Standard*, in addition to his labors in more explicitly political print culture, working as a petitioner for the American Anti-Slavery Society in the summer of 1837 and serving as amanuensis for the first slave narrative that the Society published, *Narrative of James Williams, an American Slave, Who Was for Several Years a Driver on a Cotton Plantation in Alabama* (1838).<sup>52</sup> As a result, he was acutely aware of what Jeffrey D. Grove terms "the courtesy of the trade" – regular exchanges of stereotypes, electrotypes, and copy among periodical editors, printers, and publishers – as well as what Meredith McGill characterizes as the normative antebellum culture of unauthorized reprinting.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, the many textual afterlives of "The

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<sup>52</sup> Frederick J. Blue, *No Taint of Compromise: Crusaders in Antislavery Politics* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2005), 45.

<sup>53</sup> See Jeffrey D. Grove, "The Courtesy of the Trade," in *A History of the Book in America Volume 3: The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, ed. Scott Casper, Jeffrey D. Groves, Stephen

Black Man” affirm Whitman Bennett’s claim that Whittier had “acquired the secrets of popular appeal, authorship, and of astute politics so thoroughly that from the humblest of small town cottages he could exert a dynamic force throughout the nation and beyond the seas.”<sup>54</sup> In addition to more than a dozen instances of direct reprinting in local and national newspapers, accounts of Juan Placido that can be traced back to Whittier appeared in a wide range of abolitionist texts, including gift books like Maria Weston Chapman’s *Liberty Bell* (1848) and Julia Griffiths’s *Autographs for Freedom* (1853), Henry Highland Garnet’s speech “The Past and the Present Condition, and the Destiny of the Colored Race” (1848), Joshua Leavitt’s educational primer *Selections for Reading and Speaking* (1850), and, most famously, Delany’s serial novel *Blake* (1859; 1861-2).<sup>55</sup>

Between the original publication of “The Black Man” in January 1845 and the dawn of the Civil War, Whittier’s sketch of Juan Placido was reprinted, in whole or in part, no less than fifteen times. The venues were various: major antislavery periodicals like the *Liberator*, *Emancipator*, *North Star*, *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, and *Liberty Standard*; the Unitarian *Christian Inquirer*, the Quaker *Friends’ Intelligencer* and *Friends’ Review*; the Methodist Episcopal *Zion’s Herald and Wesleyan Journal*; and local papers like the *Wisconsin Chief*, the *Barre Patriot*, and the *Rondout Freeman*.<sup>56</sup> Excerpts from Whittier’s “The Black Man” also appeared in two bound

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Nissenbaum, and Michael Winship (2007), 139-47; and Meredith McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853* (2003).

<sup>54</sup> Whitman Bennett, *Whittier, Bard of Freedom* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1941), 71.

<sup>55</sup> See Benjamin B. Wiffen, “Placido, the Cuban Poet,” in *The Liberty Bell*, ed. Friends of Freedom [Maria Weston Chapman] (1848), 60-64; William G. Allen, “Placido,” in *Autographs for Freedom*, ed. Julia Griffiths (1853) 256-63; and Joshua Leavitt, *Selections for Reading and Speaking for the Higher Classes in Common Schools* (1850), 204-208.

<sup>56</sup> For a full list of these articles, see footnote 3.

books published by John P. Jewett (of eventual *Uncle Tom's Cabin* fame): Joshua Leavitt's instructional textbook *Selections for Reading and Speaking, for the Higher Classes in Common Schools* (1850) and Julia Griffiths's abolitionist gift book, *Autographs for Freedom* (1853).

In addition to these direct reprintings of Whittier's "The Black Man," antebellum readers in the United States could have encountered Juan Placido or traces thereof in a variety of textual or oral contexts. Charles Spear, a prominent Universalist minister from Bostonian, reprinted an excerpt from "The Black Man" in the *Prisoner's Friend* twice, once in 1846 and again in 1856.<sup>57</sup> The paper was focused on prison reform and its stated objective, according to the 1846 header, was "the abolition of capital punishment, and the improvement of prison discipline." The 1846 version of the Juan Placido sketch appears on the back page of the paper as the first item under the "Miscellany" column. Spear introduces the article with a preface that directly cites its source: "We have made the following extracts from Whittier's 'STRANGER IN LOWELL,' believing it will be interesting to most of our readers. We regret we have not room to give the article entire."<sup>58</sup> The excerpts are carefully chosen. The article opens with the early parts of Juan Placido's life in which Whittier catalogues the "vicissitudes of slavery" that the poet suffers, which continues into a section break immediately before Whittier begins analyzing his subject's poetry. The article resumes with the single stanza that Whittier supplies from "some of his devotional pieces [which] evince the fervor and true feeling of the Christian poet," before another section break. The article concludes with the tragic details of Juan Placido's incarceration, conviction, recital of the lachrymose "Prayer of Placido," and his eventual

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<sup>57</sup> "Miscellany; Juan Placido, Prayer of Placido." *Prisoner's Friend* (19 Aug. 1846), 132; "Imprisonment of Eminent Men," *Prisoner's Friend* (1 September 1856), 3.

<sup>58</sup> "Miscellany; Juan Placido, Prayer of Placido." *Prisoner's Friend* (19 Aug. 1846), 132.



execution. Within the *Prisoner's Friend*, the poet's race is ancillary; the paper even changes the title from "The Black Man" to "Juan Placido." In this refashioning of Whittier's biographical essay, the injustice of his trial and subsequent execution take center stage and the "vicissitudes of slavery" become background information that further demonstrate the failures of the Cuban justice system.

During the decade between Juan Placido's appearances in this periodical, the paper transformed from a weekly paper into a monthly magazine, complete with an ornately bordered frontispiece and a prefatory manifesto stating the objectives of United States Prison Association. Indeed, Spear's prison reform efforts had grown substantially. In 1847 and 1848, he published *Voices from Prison*, an anthology of poetry "written within the cell" according to the collections' subtitles. A translation of the "Prayer of Placido" appears in both editions, alongside the poetry of William Lloyd Garrison, James Montgomery, John Bunyan, Sir Walter Raleigh, Daniel Defoe, and several British monarchs.<sup>59</sup> Within this transatlantic anthology of the wrongly imprisoned and unjustly executed, Juan Placido is radically removed from the racialized context of "The Black Man." Although the persuasive portrait of injustice that Whittier carefully crafts in his original essay serves an entirely distinct political function when reprinted or excerpted in Spear's publications, readers no doubt still understood Juan Placido to be an exceptional member of his race. Moreover, these writings were easily reincorporated back into a racialized

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<sup>59</sup> Notably, the translation of "Prayer of Placido" is different from the one that appears in "The Black Man." Spear takes this translation, conducted by Maria Weston Chapman, from the 1845 edition of the *Liberty Bell*, which was actually compiled in late 1844, a few months before the January publication of "The Black Man" in the *Middlesex Standard*. Although Chapman's brief preface to the poem in the *Liberty Bell* makes no direct references to Madden or Manzano, she commits the same error as Whittier and describes the author as "originally a slave" (67); see Maria Weston Chapman, "Placido," in *Liberty Bell*, ed. Friends of Freedom (Boston: Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Fair, 1845), 67-71.

abolitionist context. In February 1858, for example, two years after the reprisal of “The Black Man” in *Prisoner’s Friend*, the *Liberator* announced an event that Spear and his wife would be hosting on Saturday evening at Chapman Hall School for Boys in Boston. For a 10-cent admission charge, audiences could hear Spear deliver a lecture on “The Mission of Prison Reform,” while his wife would be performing “Recitals of Poems, composed by Placido, a Cuban Slave, and a martyr to Liberty.”<sup>60</sup> Even if readers of the *Liberator* did not remember Juan Placido from the newspaper’s articles in 1844 and 1846, encountering this figure within the pages of Boston’s most respected and well-circulated abolitionist daily (re)established the poet as a symbol of Black excellence and an exemplary victim to slavery’s violent excesses.

Despite with the ease with which Juan Placido could be coopted into other political causes, the circulation of his narrative in both printed and oral networks remained closely tied to the cause of abolitionism. Black abolitionists, in particular, were quick to take up the fictionalized narrative of the formerly enslaved Cuban poet who died attempting to liberate his race. The Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, a former slave himself and an internationally renowned radical abolitionist, found the story of Juan Placido’s life and death to be a compelling material for his fiery and theatrical speeches. In addition to fostering an interest in the island of Cuba, which he had visited in 1828 and again in 1830, Garnet remained preoccupied with the political efficacy of slave rebellions throughout his career as a public figure. Many of his abolitionist peers (white and Black alike) found his endorsements of organized slave violence to be polarizing and even detrimental to the antislavery project since they tended to alienate more conservative proponents of the cause. In his controversial “An Address to the Slaves of the

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<sup>60</sup> “Charles Spear,” *Liberator*, February 5, 1858, 23.

United States of America,” delivered at the 1843 National Convention of Colored Citizens in Buffalo, Garnet entreated USAmerican slaves, “Let your motto be resistance! *resistance!* *resistance!* No oppressed people have ever secured their liberty without resistance.”<sup>61</sup> The speech was so shocking that the Convention refused to endorse his remarks because, according to Garnet, “if the Convention should adopt it, that those delegates who lived near the borders of the slave states, would not dare to return to their homes.”<sup>62</sup> Garnet kept firm to his message, however, and in 1848, John Brown, who eventually led his own armed slave rebellion at Harper’s Ferry, financed the publication of the reverend’s “Address” alongside David Walker’s *Appeal* (1829).<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Henry Highland Garnet, *Walker’s Appeal with a Brief Sketch of His Life. And Also Garnet’s Address to the Slaves of the United States of America* (New York: J.H. Tobbitt, 1848), 96. All further references are to this edition of the speech. Fascinatingly, the 1848 edition of the “Address,” which appeared alongside David Walker’s *Appeal* includes a disclaimer toward the end of the speech that tries to assuage the overall endorsement of anti-white violence: “We do not advise you to attempt a revolution with the sword, because it would be INEXPEDIENT. Your numbers are too small, and moreover the rising spirit of the age, and the spirit of the gospel, are opposed to war and bloodshed. But from this moment cease to labor for tyrants who will not remunerate you. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been—you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. RATHER DIE FREEMEN, THAN LIVE TO BE SLAVES. Remember that you are THREE MILLIONS” (96). In another version of the speech reprinted Garnet’s *Memorial Discourse* (1865), this paragraph is replaced with a paragraph that vehemently and explicitly promotes violent insurrection: “Brethren, arise, arise! Strike for your lives and liberties. Now is the day and the hour. Let every slave throughout the land do this, and the days of slavery are numbered. You cannot be more oppressed than you have been—you cannot suffer greater cruelties than you have already. Rather die freemen than live to be slaves. Remember that you are four millions!”; see Garnet, *Memorial Discourse*, ed. James McCune Smith (Philadelphia: Joseph M. Wilson, 1865), 51.

<sup>62</sup> Garnet, *Address*, 89.

<sup>63</sup> See W.L. Katz, introduction to *Walker’s Appeal, in Four Articles and An Address to the Slaves of the United States of America* (New York: Arno Press, 1969); and *Lift Every Voice: African American Oratory, 1787-1900*, ed. Philip S. Foner and Robert James Branham (Tuscaloosa: U of Alabama P, 1998), 198.

Much like Whittier's "The Black Man," Garnet's "Address to the Slaves" rehearses a genealogy of revolutionary slaves rising up against their masters, including Denmark Veazie (Vesey), Nathaniel Turner, Joseph Cinque, and Madison Washington. Garnet locates this genealogy within a longer tradition of just revolutions though, adding that "Many a brave hero fell, but history, faithful to her high trust, will transcribe his [Veazie's] name on the same monument with Moses, [John] Hampden, [William] Tell, [Robert] Bruce and [William] Wallace, Toussaint L'Ouverture, [the Marquis de] Lafayette, and [George] Washington."<sup>64</sup> By locating the leaders of slave rebellions within this catalogue of revered revolutionaries, Garnet avers that History, writ large, maintains a "high trust" in justice and liberty, and, according to the tradition outlined here, always rewarded those who fight back against oppression.

Juan Placido does not appear in this revolutionary genealogy, of course, since his execution post-dates Garnet's "Address to the Slaves" by a year. Five years later though, when Garnet delivered his well-known speech, "The Past and Present Condition, and the Destiny of the Colored Race" (1848) to the Female Benevolent Society in Troy, New York, the reverend seamlessly weaves the Cuban poet into a similar lineage. In this oration, however, Garnet details the expanse of this revolutionary genealogy on a geographical plane, rather the more historical timeline in "Address":

But latterly, the slave-trade has been pronounced to be piracy by most all of the civilized world. Great Britain has discarded the chattel principle throughout her dominions. In 1824 Mexico proclaimed freedom to her slaves. The Pope of Rome, and the sovereigns of Turkey, and Denmark, and other nations bow to the shrine or [sic] Liberty. But France has laid the richest offering upon the alter [sic] of

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<sup>64</sup> Garnet, *Address*, 95.

freedom, that has been presented to God in these latter days. In achieving her almost bloodless revolution, she maintained an admirable degree of consistency. The same blast of the trumpet of Liberty that rang through the halls of the Tulleries [sic], and shattered the throne of the Bourbons, also reached the shores of her remotest colonies, and proclaimed the redemption of every slave that moved on French soil. Thus does France remember the paternal advice of La Fayette, and atone for the murder of Tousaint [sic]. Thanks be to God, the lilly [sic] is cleansed of the blood that stained it. The nations of the earth will gaze with delight upon its democratic purity, wherever it shall be seen. Whether in the grape-grown valleys where it first bloomed, or in the Isles of Bourbon, Guadaloupe, Martinique, or in Guinna [sic]. The colored people of St. Bartholomews, who were emancipated by a decree of the King of Sweden last year, have lately sent an address to their Liberator. Hayti, by the heroism of her Oge, Tousaint La-Ouverture [sic], Dessalines, Christophe, Petion, and Boyer, have driven the demon of slavery from that island, and have buried his carcass in the sea.<sup>65</sup>

The primary line of revolutionary descent that Garnet traces in this passage is French: the ideals liberty, fraternity, and equality preached during the French Revolution manifest too in the Saint-Domingue Revolution and the independent Haitian Republic. Moreover, the speech, delivered on Valentine's Day of 1848, presciently anticipates that the French people's "admirable degree of

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<sup>65</sup> Henry Highland Garnet, *The Past and the Present Condition, and Destiny, of the Colored Race: A Discourse Delivered at the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Female Benevolent Society of Troy, N.Y. February 14, 1848* (Troy, NY: J.C. Kneeland and Co., 1848), 13-14. All future references will be made parenthetically.

consistency” would manifest in the popular overthrow of King Louis Philippe and establishment of the Second Republic less than two weeks later; it also anticipates Victor Schœlcher’s declaration abolishing slavery throughout the French colonies later in April. By detailing the patrilineal revolutionary heroics from Lafayette to the Haitian heroes to pan-colonial emancipation and democracy, “Past and Present Condition” offers French history as an example of the efficacy of sustained dedication to the cause of freedom. On the geographical boundaries of this French genealogy lie the histories of emancipation in Great Britain, Mexico, Rome, Turkey, Denmark, and Sweden. Within the temporal unity of “latterly,” the “civilized world” is trending toward freedom. Still, Garnet laments, slavery endures in several key nations in the Atlantic world. He turns his audience to “Spain, who gave the first impulse and royal sanction to the slave trade, [and who] still clings to her idolatry,” paying particular attention to the island of Cuba (16). As in his “Address to the Slaves,” the reverend once more invokes Cinque and the *Amistad* uprising, but then introduces, for the first time, Juan Placido into his pantheon of revolutionary heroes:

Recently, a great sacrifice has been made in that Island to the Spirit of despotism, in the death of the Patriot and Poet, Placido. Freedom mourns over his early tomb. The waves of the Atlantic, of whose vastness and sublimity he had sung, chanted his dirge as the tyrants hid him in the grave! Placido was a mulatto, a true Poet, and of course a Patriot. His noble soul was moved with pity as he saw his fellow men in chains. Born to feel, and to act, he made a bold attempt to effect a revolution, and failing in it, he fell a martyr to his principles. (17)

Although Garnet’s speech notably does not refer to Placido as a former slave, the influence of Whittier’s popular account on the reverend’s frame of reference is evident in the rhetoric of

patriotism, martyrdom, revolution, and the oddly specific announcement of the poet's *mulatez* (the purpose of which I will return to shortly). Moreover, Garnet actually quotes from "To a Southern Statesmen" (1846), a poem by "the gifted and devoted Bard of Liberty, JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER" later in his speech (23-24). The poem had recently been republished in the *National Era* less than three weeks before Garnet delivered this address the Female Benevolent Society. That Garnet read the *National Era* is significant. Almost exactly a year before Garnet's speech, Whittier, who was working as an editor and contributor at the *National Era* at the time, published an article about the Afro-Russian poet Alexander Pushkin in which he locates Juan Placido within yet another genealogy of black intellectuals:

With such examples of the intellectual capacity of the colored man as are afforded by L'Overture [sic] and Petion, of Hayti; Dumas, of France; Pushkin, of Russia; and Placido, the slave poet and martyr of Cuba, to say nothing of such men as James McCune Smith, Frederick Douglass, Henry H. Garnett [sic], and Henry Bibb, in our own country, it is scarcely in good taste for white mediocrity to taunt the colored man with natural inferiority.<sup>66</sup>

If, indeed, Garnet learned of Juan Placido from directly from Whittier's writings, then he also understood his own antislavery activism as contributing to the same revolutionary project documented in "The Black Man" and "Alexander Pushkin."<sup>67</sup> This fact puts a different gloss on

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<sup>66</sup> J.G.W., "Alexander Pushkin" *National Era* 11 Feb. 1847.

<sup>67</sup> Garnet later lists "Pushkin in Russia, Dumas in France, Toussaint in Hayti, [Benjamin] Banaker, Theodore Sedgwick Wright, and a host in America" as evidence against "the old doctrine of the natural inferiority of the colored race" (25); it is almost certain that Garnet was familiar with Whittier's article. Garnet also misquotes part of the poem "Hymn to Liberty," which was originally printed in the *New York Tribune* and was reprinted with excerpts from "The Black Man" in Spear's *Voices from Prison*. Garnet offers a different variation of this poem in his address at a meeting of the Cuban Anti-Slavery Committee in December 1872; see *Slavery in*

Garnet's decision to publish his controversial "Address to the Slaves" alongside David Walker's *Appeal* later that same year: these texts, both of which advocate violence as a means of political agency for the enslaved, mark Garnet's fulfillment of a revolutionary ethos shared by the race leaders that he enumerates throughout his speeches.

Garnet's particular contribution in "The Past and the Present Condition, and the Destiny, of the Colored Race" exceeds simply testifying to the intellectual capacity of African America; his text is primarily a theoretical treatise about race and a response to the urgent political debates of early 1848. As a number of historians have noted, the rhetoric surrounding war between the United States and Mexico (1846-1848) intimately tied together the logics of Manifest Destiny and the vicious racism of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism – the geographical expansion of the USAmerican nation-state owed to the providential superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race.<sup>68</sup> With the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo less than two weeks prior to Garnet's address, the fears of USAmerican geographic expansion facilitating the political expansion of slavery that provide a background to Whittier's "The Black Man" become vital in "Past and Present Condition." For many, the USAmerican victory and the successful annexation of a large portion

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*Cuba : A Report of the Proceedings of the Meeting Held at Cooper Institute, New York City, December 13, 1872 : Newspaper Extracts, Official Correspondence, Etc., Etc.* (New York: Powers, MacGowan, and Slipper, 1873). The origins of the poem are unclear and its attribution to De la Concepción Valdés is dubious at best. For more on this "mysterious" poem, see Stimson, *Cuba's Romantic Poet*, 142-143.

<sup>68</sup> See, in particular, Reginald Horsman's influential *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1981). For more on race and the USA-Mexico War, see Gene Brack, *Mexico Views Manifest Destiny, 1821-1846: An Essay on the Origins of the Mexican War* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1975); Arnoldo de León, *They Called Them Greasers: Anglo Attitudes toward Mexicans in Texas, 1821-1900* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1983); David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1987); and Mark Carroll, *Homesteads Ungovernable: Families, Sex, Race, and the Law in Frontier Texas, 1823-1860* (Austin: U of Texas P, 2001).



of the North American continent marked the beginning of the triumphant Anglo-Saxon conquest of the Americas. For Garnet, the realities of race in the former Mexican territories would provide a powerful counter to not only the reinstatement of slavery in areas where it had already been abolished for over two decades, but also to the advancement of the Anglo-Saxon race. Citing an article from the *Cincinnati Chronicle* that describes the demographic development of the slave states in proximity to the newly conquered territory (Texas, Louisiana, Missouri, and Arkansas), Garnet demonstrates that “the Colored race, are increasing in a ratio unprecedented in the history of any oppressed people”; or as the *Chronicle* more forcefully states the issue: “The slaves keep pace with the whites! If [slavery is] carried into Mexico, their masters bring a colored race, and find one there! The oppressive burdens of slavery, therefore, will keep down Anglo-American progress in that direction” (24). The perception that these newly annexed territories are inhabited by an “altogether mongrel” Mexican population provides the evidentiary basis for Garnet’s claim that the influence of the African race is already inextricably ubiquitous throughout North America: “the Colored race, although they have been transplanted in a foreign land, have clung to and grown with their oppressors, as the wild ivy entwines around the trees of the forest, nor can they be torn thence. At this moment when so much feigned hatred is manifested toward us, our blood is mixed with every tribe from Cape Horn to the Frozen Ocean” (24, 25). The language of “entwining” here is paramount, as Garnet uses the *Chronicle*’s demography to assert that “it is too late to make a successful attempt to separate the black and white people in the New World” through African Colonization, and to further claim that “this republic, and this continent, are to be the theatre in which the grand drama of our [the Colored race’s] triumphant Destiny is to be enacted” (25).

While many perceived the USAmerican conquest of the Mexican west as a harbinger of Anglo-American domination throughout North America, Garnet argues that the pervasiveness of racial admixture throughout the hemisphere – “from Cape Horn to the Frozen Ocean” – renders such a claim nonsensical. Instead, Garnet argues, it is to be the “Colored” race which helps the Americas to manifest their destiny: “*This western world is destined to be filled with a mixed race*” (26). The function of elaborating genealogy of Black revolutionaries in “Past and Present Condition” now begins to come into focus. Earlier, I argued that Garnet locates a transamerican tradition of Black resistance that includes Haitian and Cuban freedom fighters within a transatlantic antislavery project and the *longue durée* of democratic thought. In doing so, he situates African Americans as key interlocutors in the long intellectual history of the “civilized world” in general and the New World in particular. By further asserting that mixed-race occupation of the entire Americas is inevitable, Garnet intimates that in the future annals of hemispheric history, mulatto leaders like Ogé, Pétion, L’Ouverture, and Juan Placido will be regarded as the “founding fathers.” After cataloguing the ways in which men of African descent have been barred from formal participation in the USAmerican nation-state, Garnet remarks, “When the great national account shall be rendered before the tribunal of Justice, the guilt of course must be borne by those who might have had, or who have used the power of the government. There may, therefore, be some good that may come out of this evil. But no thanks to the evil doers. Their works are evil still, the good comes in spite of them” (28). It is no accident that, in the very next paragraph, Garnet cites “Mr. Thomas Jefferson” as the propagator of the insidious “old doctrine of the natural inferiority of the colored race” (28): Jefferson, an agent of the nation who “used the power of the government” to naturalize white supremacy and weave slavery into the fabric of the USAmerican nation-state, is destined to be judged guilty

“before the tribunal of Justice.”<sup>69</sup> In his place, mixed-race men will stand as the progenitors of a hemispheric future founded upon the modern democratic ideals of “peace and temperance, industry and frugality, and love to God, and to all men” (28).

Garnet’s historicization of a prototypical “cosmic race” cuts sharply against the polygenetic theories of human origins propagated among the USAmerican School of scientific racialism.<sup>70</sup> As intellectual discourses of race became more popular and more public throughout the 1840s, no question stirred more controversy than the debate over whether the idea of racial diversity was consistent with a religious account of human genesis. Racialist writers like Samuel Morton, Josiah Nott, Louis Agassiz, and William Frederick Van Amringe increasingly espoused polygenesis.<sup>71</sup> The most influential of these with regards to this debate was Van Amringe, who, despite having no scientific background, convincingly persuaded most USAmericans that the existence of distinct species of humans was entirely consistent with Genesis. In *An Investigation into the Theories of the Natural History of Man* (1848), Van Amringe explains that “God,

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<sup>69</sup> The influence of David Walker, who writes that Jefferson “is gone to answer at the bar of God, for the deeds done in his body while living” is apparent; see *Walker's Appeal, in Four Articles; Together with a Preamble, to the Coloured Citizens of the World, but in Particular, and Very Expressly, to Those of the United States of America* (Boston: David Walker, 1829), 17.

<sup>70</sup> See José Vasconcelos, *The Cosmic Race/La Raza Cósmica*, trans. by Didier Tisdell Jaén, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

<sup>71</sup> See Samuel Morton, *Crania Americana; or a Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1839); Josiah Clark Nott, *Two Lectures on the Connection between the Biblical and Physical History of Man, Delivered by Invitation, from the Chair of Political Economy, Etc., of the Louisiana University, in December, 1848* (New York: Bartlett and Welford, 1849); Louis Agassiz, “The Diversity of Origin of the Human Races,” *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany* 49 (July 1850): 110-145; and William Frederick Van Amringe, *An Investigation of the Theories of the Natural History of Man by Lawrence, Prichard, and Others: Founded upon Animal Analogies: and an Outline of a New Natural History of Man: Founded upon History, Anatomy, Physiology and Human Analogies* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1848).

himself, made four distinct species of men soon after the flood; the Shemetic, the Japhethic, the Ishamaelitic, and the Canaanitic,—why, then, should we say that because we had a common father in Adam,—in Noah,—that we must, therefore, be of one species?”<sup>72</sup> Though Van Amringe, a lawyer by trade, makes no pretensions to scientific rigor in his inquiry in natural history, his account was so influential that by 1850 the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, a periodical previously skeptical of polygenesis, cited Van Amringe as the primary reason that “few or none now seriously adhere to the theory of the *unity* of the races.”<sup>73</sup>

Delivered and published the same year as Van Amringe’s study, Garnet’s *Past and Present Condition* offers a competing historical narrative of racial diversity. He defends a monogenetic theory of human origins, arguing that “there is but one race, as there was but one Adam” (6). Similar to Van Amringe, Garnet details how the sons of Noah – Shem, Ham, and Japheth – were the progenitors of the “three grand divisions of the earth,” which he classifies as the Asiatics, the Africans, and the Europeans, respectively (6). But while Van Amringe argues that these post-deluvian patriarchs sired distinct species of humans, Garnet provocatively maintains that “these men being children of the same father, they were originally of the same complexion” and that it remains unclear “by what law of nature his descendants became dissimilar to him” (7). Ultimately, Garnet’s reclamation of monogenesis and his transnational history of revolutionary thought collaborate to elevate Black intellectual production to the level of its white European and American counterparts. Juan Placido, then, provides a compelling

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<sup>72</sup> Van Amringe, *Investigation*, 217.

<sup>73</sup> “Natural History of Man,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, Apr. 1850, 328, original emphasis. For an example of the periodical’s skepticism regarding polygenesis, see “Do the Various Races of Man Constitute a Single Species?” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, Aug. 1842, 113-139.

addition to Garnet's canon, evidencing not only the emancipationist ethics that the reverend associates with modernity, but physically resembling the "mixed race" man who is destined to govern the Americas according to Garnet's rhapsodic projections.

### ***Blake, or the Reanimation of Juan Placido***

While a number of scholars have intimated that the character of Placido who appears in Delany's *Blake* may have been influenced by Madden's *Poems by a Slave*, I submit that the influence of Manzano's memoir was mediated through "The Black Man," which exerted a demonstrable influence the novel.<sup>74</sup> *Blake* has become something of an Ur text in transnational approaches to nineteenth-century US American literature, variously serving as an exemplar of Black nationalism, the Black Atlantic, Black cosmopolitanism, and, most recently, Black geographic and cartographic imaginaries.<sup>75</sup> Contextualized within the uses of the deceased Cuban poet expounded upon above, Juan Placido's resurgence in *Blake* adds a new layer to the novel's vision of Black transamerican revolution. By refusing to rehearse the poet's execution yet again, and, instead, reanimating as an actively insurgent figure in the 1850s setting of the

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<sup>74</sup> See Martin Delany, *Blake, or the Huts of America*, ed. Floyd Miller (1970), 319; Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (1993), 209; and Anna Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth Century Public Sphere* (2004), 128. Notably, near *Blake*'s conclusion, Delany mentions, "Dr. M----n, the British consul" who was imprisoned for inciting a "Negro insurrection in Cuba" (294); this is almost certainly a reference to Dr. Richard Robert Madden. All further references to *Blake* will be made parenthetically.

<sup>75</sup> See Wilson Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993); Robert Carr, *Black Nationalism in the New World: Reading the African-American and West Indian Experience* (Durham: Duke UP, 2002); Nwankwo, *Black Cosmopolitanism* (2005); Martha Schoolman, *Abolitionist Geographies* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 2014); and Judith Madera, *Black Atlas: Geography and Flow in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (Durham: Duke UP, 2015).

novel, Delany argues that Juan Placido's symbolic capacity to influence the political present exceeds his sentimentalized death's affective impact on white USAmerican voters. Instead, the revitalized Juan Placido of *Blake* challenges the fundamental assumption of "The Black Man": that the poet must die in order to catalyze meaningful political change.

Delany's familiarity with Plácido's execution dates back, at least, to his years co-editing the *North Star* with Frederick Douglass. During his final year at the paper, Delany penned an essay imploring that "[t]he blood of the murdered Placido and his brave compatriots, still cries aloud for justice, and vengeance must sooner or later overtake their guilty oppressors and inquisitors of that memorable event" ("Redemption of Cuba"), and shortly after Delany departed for Harvard Medical School, Douglass published "extracts from Whittier's '*Stranger in Lowell*' among several other literary selections ("Juan Placido"). Several years later, Delany insisted in *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852) that "the remembrance of the noble mulatto, Placido, the gentleman, scholar, poet, and intended Chief Engineer of the Army of Liberty and Freedom in Cuba [...] is still fresh and indelible to the mind of every bondman of Cuba", not to mention the minds of USAmerican abolitionists, free people of color, and perhaps even literate "bondmen" in the South, thanks to the widespread circulation of Whittier's text.<sup>76</sup> This claim was confirmed in 1853, when Julia Griffiths and Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society published *Autographs for Freedom*, which

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<sup>76</sup> Martin Delany, *The Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States*, ed. Toyin Falola (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2004), 215-216. Delany's brief inclusion of the Cuban poet in his political treatise is noteworthy because of its location within the rigidly structured book. Although Delany includes detailed, international catalogues of black achievement in his chapters on "Literary and Professional Colored Men and Women" and "Late Men of Literary, Professional and Artistic Note," Placido is noticeably absent from these sections; instead, Placido appears in the final chapter, "A Glance at Ourselves—Conclusion."

likely attracted Delany's interest because it included Douglass's novella *The Heroic Slave*.<sup>77</sup>

Within the ornate binding of this gift book, he found much inspiration for *Blake*, including Harriet Beecher Stowe's poem "Caste and Christ," which became the novel's epigraph, and James Whitfield's poem "How Long?," an adaptation of which Delany attributes to Placido in part two.<sup>78</sup> The final essay in *Autographs for Freedom* is William Allen's "Placido," a biographical portrait of the Cuban poet liberally adapted from "The Black Man."<sup>79</sup>

Allen, a Black classics professor from New York, freely adapts Whittier's account, but also leaves more direct and concrete traces of its source text.<sup>80</sup> For example, Allen excerpts the translation of "Prayer to God" that appears in "The Black Man" and reproduces one of Whittier's idiosyncratic errors: "Placido was born a slave on the island of Cuba, on the plantation of Don Terribio de Castro."<sup>81</sup> There are, however, a number of noteworthy changes to the narrative of

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<sup>77</sup> On *Autographs for Freedom* and abolitionist politics and print culture, see Meagan M. Fritz and Frank E. Fee Jr., "To Give the Gift of Freedom: Gift Books and the War on Slavery," *American Periodicals* 23 (2013): 60-82.

<sup>78</sup> The poem that Placido recites after Henry returns from Africa (259-260) clearly mimics the titular anaphora of Whitfield's "How Long?" This poem is one of several that Delany borrows or adapts from Whitfield without attribution; see Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 203-4. I am grateful to Ben Fagan for bringing this connection to my attention.

<sup>79</sup> See William G. Allen, "Placido," in *Autographs for Freedom*, ed. Julia Griffiths (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1853), 256-263. All future references to this text will be made parenthetically. The traces of "The Black Man" are concrete in "Placido."

<sup>80</sup> For more on Allen, see Richard J. Blackett, "William G. Allen, the Forgotten Professor," *Civil War History* 26 (1980): 39-52.

<sup>81</sup> Like Whittier, Allen explicitly compares the poet to Toussaint L'Ouverture, and he even reproduces one of Whittier's idiosyncratically erroneous sentences, almost verbatim: "Placido was born a slave on the island of Cuba, on the plantation of Don Terribio de Castro" (259). This last trace unambiguously points to "The Black Man" because Whittier's transformation the plantation-owner's name from "Toribio de Castro" (as appears in *Poems by a Slave*) into the wonderfully Dickensian "Don Terribio de Castro," also marks a dramatic misinterpretation of Madden's text: Toribio de Castro was actually Manzano's father, a slave on the plantation of the

Juan Placido's life and death that appear in *Autographs for Freedom*. Allen excises any reference to the formative scene in which a pre-adolescent Juan Placido fights back against the *mayoral* who beats his mother. The absence of this scene is glaring not only because Whittier cherry-picks it from among the many formative episodes detailed in *Poems by a Slave*, but also because it represents the single scene from "The Black Man" in which Placido's hatred of slavery manifests in actual physical violence aimed at his oppressors: if Whittier's Juan Placido is impotent in the face of an oppressive Cuban plantocratic regime, then Allen's Juan Placido is wholly castrated. And yet where Whittier intentionally fosters skepticism about Juan Placido's actual involvement in planning an insurrection, Allen confidently asserts that "there is not a doubt" that the poet masterminded the conspiracy (262). Placido's potency as a revolutionary figure, for Allen, lies not in his willingness to respond to the violence of slavery in kind, but rather in his "intellectual and moral nature" and, more specifically, his biography's capacity to show that "God hath not given to one race alone, all intellectual and moral greatness" (259, 263).

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Marqués Don Manuel Manzano and the Marquesa Doña Beatriz de Jústiz. Moreover, Allen excerpts the translation of Plácido's poem "Prayer to God" that appears in "The Black Man," which is significant because there were several different translations circulating at the time. A Spanish version of the poem appeared in the *British and Foreign Antislavery Reporter* (28 August 1844), with two English translations (evidently submitted by readers) printed in the following issue (4 September). Each of these is distinct from Whittier's, which an anonymous "friend" translated for him (58). Following the publication of "The Black Man," there were no fewer than three other translations of this poem in circulation: Maria Weston Chapman's version in the *Liberty Bell* (1845), William Henry Hurlbert's translation in the *North American Review* ("The Poetry of Spanish America," 1849, 129-160), and H.G. Adams's translation in *God's Image in Ebony* (1854). Allen most likely became familiar with Juan Placido while clerking at Ellis Gray Loring's Boston law firm in the 1840s. Loring owned Madden's *Poems by Slave* and almost certainly read it through the lens of "The Black Man": his personal copy (held in the Houghton Special Collections Library at Harvard University [Sum 128]) was a gift "from his friend J.G. Whittier," according to an inscription on the title page. In 1856, Allen published *The African Poets, Horton and Placido* in Dublin, an anthology collecting the poems of George Moses Horton and the poems that Whittier attributes to Juan Placido.



Put differently, Placido is more effective as a representation of a revolutionary spirit than as an actual revolutionary; or as Allen pithily remarks, “Great was Placido in life,— he was greater still in death” (258). The depiction of Placido in *Autographs for Freedom* thereby reveals, with startling clarity, the double bind of narrating the poet’s biography originally encoded into “The Black Man.” Whittier, as I argue above, champions the emotional capital contained within gory scenes of subjection as a means of persuading slavery apologists about the immorality of slavery and the intellectual capacity of mulattoes. In doing so, however, he needs to evacuate the slave’s suffering in order to detail the suffering of slavery’s (white) witnesses. For Allen (and to a certain extent Garnet), Placido’s utility lies in his ability to embody a Black revolutionary spirit without occupying a physical body; they require a static and, more to the point, *dead* revolutionary poet in order to make their claims about racial equality, a Black intellectual tradition, and the growing discontent with the institution of slavery.

Significantly for Delany’s refamiliarization with Juan Placido vis-à-vis *Autographs for Freedom*, Allen makes a number of noteworthy changes to Whittier’s narrative, including the excision of any reference to Juan Placido’s fight against the *mayoral* discussed above. This absence is glaring because it represents the single episode from “The Black Man” in which Juan Placido’s hatred of slavery manifests in actual physical violence aimed at his oppressors. Placido’s potency, for Allen, lies not in his willingness to respond to the violence of slavery in kind, but rather in his “intellectual and moral nature” and, more specifically, his biography’s capacity to show that “God hath not given to one race alone, all intellectual and moral greatness” (259, 263). Narratives of Placido’s death embody a radical spirit at the site of his textual body thereby rendering any political actions he committed while living (e.g. grappling with the *mayoral* or machinating a slave rebellion); or, as Allen pithily remarks, “Great was Placido in

life,— he was greater still in death” (258). The depiction of Placido in *Autographs for Freedom* thereby reveals, with startling clarity, the double bind of continuously rehearsing the poet’s martyrdom: these accounts require a static and, more to the point, *dead* revolutionary poet in order to make their claims about racial equality, a Black intellectual tradition, and in order to imagine the emancipation of enslaved African Americans.

Delany’s resurrection of the Cuban poet fifteen years after *La Escalera* literally presented readers with competing narratives of Placido. An intratextual reading of *Blake* in the 29 March 1862 issue of the *Weekly Anglo-African* reveals that Chapters 30-33 from part two of *Blake* (chapters 64-67 in Floyd J. Miller’s 1970 critical edition) filled three columns of the front page, while a lengthy excerpt from Allen’s “Placido” ran alongside the “Poetry” section on back cover.<sup>82</sup> This interpretative context helps us to understand Delany’s reanimation of Placido as a living activist whose vivacity counters the sentimentally moribund representations of Placido circulating simultaneously and adjacently. Given the repetitive rendering of Juan Placido within a backward extending lineage of deceased Black insurrectionists (e.g. Gabriel, Turner, L’Overture, Pétion, etc.), Delany’s decision to revive and rescript him as the long-lost cousin of the novel’s hero, Henry Blake, becomes a powerful recuperation of Black subjectivity within the strategic imagination of Black emancipation. Delany thereby critiques Whittier’s strategy of mobilizing Juan Placido’s tragic martyrdom to instigate the legislative abolition of slavery: shifting the burden of emancipation onto white voters prescribes and limits the possibility (death

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<sup>82</sup> For more on reading *Blake* intratextually within its periodical contexts, see Katy Chiles, “Within and Without: Raced Nations and *Blake; or the Huts of America*,” *American Literature* 80 (June 2008): 323-352. For other material studies readings of *Blake*, see Patricia Okker, *Social Stories: The Magazine Novel in Nineteenth-Century America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003); Benjamin Fagan, “The Black Newspaper and the American Nation, 1827-1862” (Dissertation, University of Virginia, 2011).

and posthumous, sentimentalized representation) for educated Black men to effectuate their own liberation. In a commentary on these limitations, Placido's first interactions with Henry reveal the poet's underdeveloped revolutionary potential; he admits to his cousin that "I've done but little, and had just finished the last word of the last stanza of a short poem" (195). While the poem that Placido then performs is apparently one of Delany's invention (it is neither Plácido's nor Manzano's), the repetition of *last* in this introduction to the poet stresses that his representational power has heretofore been restricted to reproductions of his *last* poem ("Plegaria a Dios"). In a prelude to later poetry recitation, Delany similarly recreates both the moribund mood that characterized Juan Placido's execution and the affection for the poet that grew out of this affective account: "At the signal of the Chief, the poet, stepping upon the elevation on which were seated the orchestra, amidst a deathlike silence of anxious listeners and fond admirers, read in a loud, impressive, and solemn manner" (259). Riffing on Juan Placido's grave performance of "Plegaria a Dios" along the *via dolorosa* in "The Black Man," this scene testifies to the continued impact of the poet's verses on the assembled audience: not the horrified primary (Cuban) and secondary (white Northern) spectators of Whittier's story, but rather the Grand Council of the Afro-descended men and women who comprised the "Army of Emancipation" (258). In this way, Delany reorients the rhetorical, emotional, and organizational potency of Juan Placido's poetry and execution away from white, USAmerican voters and toward a diverse, multinational Black diasporic community.

*Blake's* efforts to recuperate the flexible symbolism of a fictionalized historical figure also grapple with racial/national diversity within the Black diaspora, offering a counter to the transnationalizing and homogenizing gestures of "The Black Man." For instance, while *Blake* does not rehearse Placido's parentage as Whittier does, the initial description of the poet

accentuates the physiognomic manifestations of his *mulatez*, his “orange-peel complexion, black hair hanging lively quite to the shoulders, heavy deep brow and full moustache, with great expressive black piercing eyes” (192-193). This sketch sharply contrasts the profile of his cousin Henry, “a black – pure Negro” who is “African born... and Spanish bred” (16, 200). Where Juan Plácido’s partial whiteness serves to signal his intellectual capacities, differentiate him from the so-called Black masses, and render him worthy of white audiences’ sympathy in “The Black Man,” his *mulatez* operates quite differently in *Blake*. As Nwankwo observes, the range of lived experiences within the racial category called Blackness—realities that became all the more striking and significant when moving across national borders—forced Delany to wrestle with Plácido’s *mulatez* in order to make claims about the possibilities of Black transamerican emancipation. “By acknowledging differences between racial infrastructures while simultaneously emphasizing common political action,” Nwankwo argues, “Delany situates Plácido as part of a transnational Black freedom network that cuts across racial infrastructures... Blackness is more about politics than about purity of blood” (68). *Blake*’s narration of consanguinity and collaboration between the “mulatto” Plácido and the “pure Negro” Henry theorizes an insurrectionary praxis of Blackness grounded in a politics of emancipation, rather than the racist epistemologies that catalogue gradations of whiteness and Blackness, epistemologies designed to foster in-fighting and internal racism among the Black diaspora. Notably, though both Henry (General-in-Chief) and Plácido (Director of Civil Government) ascend to positions of leadership in the Army of Emancipation, such nominations were arrived at through a multi-layered democratic process. “We have had our gatherings, held our councils, formed our legions, chosen our leaders,” Plácido tells us, resulting in the appointment of men and women from the US and Cuba to positions of authority (241). “Thus organized” and

unencumbered by anti-Black or USAmerican exceptionalist in-fighting, “the oppressed became a dangerous element in the political ingredients of Cuba” (257).

The democratizing gestures notwithstanding, *Blake* nevertheless relies on politicized violence against Placido as the proverbial last straw that catalyzes the transnational racial revolution that lies just beyond the novel’s horizon. Instead of rehearsing the historically momentous government-sanctioned killing though, Delany restyles Placido’s “execution” within the mundane routine of attempting to purchase a book. Placido refuses to remove his hat upon entering a bookstore owned by a USAmerican, who fails to recognize Placido’s privileged status in Cuba as “an educated fellow who visits among the first white families in Havana and even attends the levees of the Captain General” (203). To the white USAmerican, however, “[h]e was known to have Negro blood; it was enough to know that he was a mulatto,” and Placido’s recalcitrance registers as an intolerable insult (307). The shopkeeper responds by thrusting himself upon the poet and “dealing him a well aimed blow he sent the bard of Cuba staggering prostrate upon the pavement of the street” (307). This public display of violence sounds a muted echo of Juan Placido’s execution. The unjust nature of the white man’s retribution, the “well aimed blow” that strikes the poet down, and the “sacred eloquence” of a prayer that the injured Cuban recites from the gutter all recall Whittier’s narration (308). But true to *Blake*’s counterfactual premise (expunging the poet’s death from the historical record), Placido survives this public assault, though it leaves him “mutilated and crippled” (308). Whereas “The Black Man” radically reorients readers’ attention away from the victim’s suffering, Delany foregrounds his painful “corporeal abuse” that the poet experiences. Placido lies “stunned and bleeding upon the earth,” while “[t]he wounded part immediately inflaming and swelling, became discolored and painful”; the poet experiences “lightness of head and dimness of vision,” and Delany, a

doctor, includes the strangely specific detail that his “left molar bone [was]badly wounded” (308). By leaving Placido alive, yet maimed, Delany simultaneously acknowledges and critiques the immense violence perpetrated against the character in “The Black Man” and its afterlives. If we read the graphic beating of Placido in *Blake* as what Alexander Weheliye calls *habeas viscus*—“an articulated assemblage of the human (viscus/flesh) borne of political violence”—then this rewriting of Whittier’s account challenges not only draws our attention to the more routinized forms of political violence that white supremacist epistemologies authorize in a slaveholding society (e.g. the shopkeeper’s “know-your-place aggression” against Placido), but also positions “suffering and enfleshment as integral to humanity” (11, 14).<sup>83</sup> As a result, where Whittier offers an extended analysis of Juan Placido’s poetry as evidence of his humanity, a claim partially undermined by the radically disembodiment of the poet in the moment of his martyrdom, the emphatic attention to the horrendous thrashing that Placido’s flesh incurs in *Blake* validates his humanity by emphasizing the bodily vulnerability that transcends racial difference.

Furthermore, *Blake* makes clear that the poet’s survival detracts nothing from the scene’s sentimental or political potency. As in “The Black Man,” Placido’s poetical recitations in response to physical violence are deeply moving and persuasive to the white onlookers, especially his assailant: “The divine aspirations escaping the poet’s lips reached his oppressor’s ears, and the wretch who with perfidy had just stricken him to the earth, was now touched with sympathy at the outrage perpetrated by his own hand” (308). In addition to impelling his assailant to a sympathetic stance, the spectacle and aftermath of Placido’s beating also incite

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<sup>83</sup> I am grateful to Koritha Mitchell for introducing me to the term “know-your-place aggression” during her talk at the American Studies Association convention in 2015.

passion among the conspiratorial constituency that he and Henry had been fostering. At the same time though, the viciousness exacted against the powerful and persuasive orator, whose previous function had been “industriously disseminating the great principles” of emancipation, renders him silent (238). Henry too remained “grave and sober, having nothing to say” during the convention of conspirators at the poet’s bedside (238). Once more, Delany’s theorization of Black transamerican revolution departs from the vision articulated in “The Black Man.” Whittier can successfully imagine how an educated class of mulattoes could be successfully incorporated into a post-slavery American political landscape, but they falter when trying to account for the role of the Black masses in his abolitionist vision. While *Blake* also outlines an organizational and ideological function for the educated class of Afro-descended men like Henry and Placido, emancipation requires collaboration among the free and the enslaved, the lettered and the uneducated, the light-skinned and the dark-skinned. It is no accident, for example, that in the 29 March issue of the *Weekly Anglo-African* that includes Allen’s “Placido,” the plot of *Blake* describes Blake and Placido being harassed by two Irish “gendarmes” who ask them, “An’ who do yez e’long to?” (274). Whatever status Henry’s adopted USAmerican nationality and Placido’s light-skin may have afforded them, they are still greeted as slaves by the police, who attempt to arrest them for being out after curfew. The men are surprised and silent in response to this aggression. They are only saved by “a powerful unknown source” who breaks the officers’ holds on them (274); after “recognizing the person of their assailant” as Gofer Gondolier, a Black chef who “b’longs to de palace!” the police apologetically abandon the scene (275). While these two men of status were harassed, apprehended, and nearly incarcerated by the authorities, Gofer’s links to the palace and his in-roads forged with “the police and the keepers of the public houses” through his occupation as a chef ultimately position him to challenge more authority

more effectively: “[h]is position,” Delany informs readers, “gave him a license throughout the city which probably no other black enjoyed” (275). Fittingly then, the cathartic call to action at the novel’s conclusion comes not from the titular hero (Henry) or the fictionalized historical figure (Placido), but rather from the lips the council’s women and Gofer himself, who famously concludes the surviving chapters by alighting from the conspirators’ final meeting to “spread among the blacks an authentic statement of the outrage: ‘Woe be unto those white devils, I say!’” (313). By imagining the fateful call to arms as an unambiguous endorsement of anti-white violence from the mouth of a Black cook rather than persuasive poetry of Placido or the elegant oratory of Henry, the novel radically democratizes emancipation and restores Black men and women from throughout the African diaspora into imaginative, organizational, and functional roles within the project of determining the forms and objectives that their own liberation.

### **Conclusion: From “The Black Man” to *The Black Man***

In the London chemist H.G. Adams’s edited volume *God’s Imagine in Ebony: Being a Series of Biographical Sketches, Facts, Anecdotes, etc., Demonstrative of the Mental Powers and Intellectual Capacities of the Negro Race* (1854), a short, Whittier-inspired biographical entry on “Placido” begins, “[w]henver an anti-slavery martyrology is written, as one day we hope it will be, Placido, the Cuban Poet, will assuredly have a place therein.”<sup>84</sup> The history that Adams hoped for had been written and rewritten many times in the previous decade, and Juan Placido was indeed central to it. Still, I find his odd term “anti-slavery martyrology” useful for unpacking the ideological operations of Juan Placido’s fictionalized life and death in the antebellum period.

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<sup>84</sup> *God’s Imagine in Ebony: Being a Series of Biographical Sketches, Facts, Anecdotes, etc., Demonstrative of the Mental Powers and Intellectual Capacities of the Negro Race*, ed. H.G. Adams (London: Partridge and Oakey, 1854), 90.



It asserts martyrdom—that is, death—as a necessary condition for the Cuban poet’s contribution to the political objectives: Whittier’s transnationalization and cultural decontextualization of Juan Placido fashion him into a symbolic race man, but it is the maudlin, sentimentalized narration of his premature death that truly immortalizes the Cuban poet in the abolitionist imaginary. While there is much that is adulatory and memorializing about “The Black Man” and the political sensibilities of a Black martyrology, the reanimation of Juan Placido in *Blake* poses a number of important questions regarding the stakes and limits of such a violent repetition. Political expediency and affective efficacy of his martyrdom aside, such gratuitous recurrences of the poet’s execution through reprinting entail an ironic disregard for Black life, the loss of which becomes more symbolic than human. At the same time, however, we must also recognize that Black writers continuously innovate new ways to make sense of this violence and to cope with the psychic toll of consistently confronting images of Black death. While I want to be careful not to romanticize Delany’s revisions of Whittier as an undoing or complete rectification of the routinization of Juan Placido’s graphic death (not to mention Plácido’s actual execution), because the Black body, in Hortense Spillers’s famous formulation is, “in its material and abstract phase, a resource for metaphor” where “the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography” are not only a site of dispossession, but a site of signifyin(g) and resignification.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, Spillers’s argument, and my own, rely on a careful and nuanced distinction between the textual Black body and what she calls *flesh*, modalities which, while often productively conflated, require differentiation. Put differently, it matters in important ways that reprinting the graphic scene of Juan Placido’s execution enacts a different kind of violence against his *body*

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<sup>85</sup> Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17.2 (1987): 67.

than the repeated lashings against his *flesh* during the interrogations that led up to that execution, even as we must recognize that the textual repetition of the former facilitates and enables the physical repetition of the latter.<sup>86</sup>

Debates over the utility of such scenes of racial subjection, particularly in the hands of white allies in the struggle against anti-Black racism, are as urgent today as they were for Whittier and Delany. While “The Black Man” certainly went “viral” by mid-nineteenth-century standards, social media sharing functions in the age of digital nativism allow images of Black death to circulate at rates and across distances that even Whittier’s tremendous technological savvy could not have imagined.<sup>87</sup> Our newsfeeds filled with the video of Eric Garner gasping “I can’t breathe” from the clutches of an illegal and eventually fatal chokehold, and 24-hour news stations replayed the video of a white police officer fatally shooting Walter Scott, an unarmed Black man, in the back as a background to a soundtrack of clinical voiceover analysis and reckless speculation. Whittier’s biographical sketch, to his credit, does aver that Black Lives Matter, but Delany’s eventual recuperation of Black Life through a literal, albeit literary resurrection of Placido shifts our attention away from the symbolic capital of Black martyrs and toward the potential for Black activism among the living, away from “Great Men” histories and toward the insurgent potential of the men and women Whittier dismisses as the “dark, dumb,

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<sup>86</sup> Spillers writes, “Even though the captive flesh/body has been ‘liberated,’ and no one need pretend that even the quotations do not matter, dominant symbolic activity, the ruling episteme that releases the dynamics of naming and valuation, remains grounded in the originating metaphors of captivity and mutilation so that it is as if neither time nor history, nor historiography and its topics, shows movement, as the human subject is “murdered” over and over again by the passions of bloodless and anonymous archaism, showing itself in endless disguise” (68).

<sup>87</sup> For more on “viral texts” in the nineteenth century, see Ryan Cordell, “Reprinting, Circulation, and the Network Author in Antebellum Newspapers,” *American Literary History* 27.3 (2015): 417-445.

inert masses.” More pithily, where Whittier claimed that Juan Placido’s life mattered, Delany imagined how his life continued to matter.

By the time William Wells Brown published his encyclopedia of Black achievement in December 1862, Placido was an obvious choice for inclusion, and as its title—*The Black Man*—suggests, Whittier’s essay on Juan Placido and the many afterlives thereof that I have documented throughout this chapter exerted no small influence on brief entry that appears in Brown’s anthology.<sup>88</sup> Against the backdrop of the Civil War, Brown’s encyclopedia of Black attainment is transnational in scope placing L’Overture, Dessalines, Pétion, Christophe, Dumas, Washington, Cinque, and Placido alongside laudable Black figures from the United States, including Benjamin Banneker, Phillis Wheatley, Crispus Attucks, Nat Turner, and Denmark Vesey. Most notably, however, Brown includes sketches of deceased martyrs, poets, and heroes alongside prominent Black abolitionists at the height of their careers: Garnet, Delany, Whitfield, and Douglass join Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Samuel Ringgold Ward, James Pennington, James Redpath, James Theodore Holly, and Alexander Crummell. Drawing on the best elements

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<sup>88</sup> Although the text carries the imprint “1863,” it was published in December 1862; see William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President’s Daughter*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2000), 40. Thanks to a number of rigorous archival studies, Brown now enjoys an infamous reputation for borrowing liberally from his own earlier writings and the writings of others without attribution; see John Ernest, *Resistance and Reformation in Nineteenth-Century African American Literature* (Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 1995), 20-54; and Levine, introduction to *Clotel*, 3-28. Accordingly, it is perhaps unsurprising that a number of critics have pointed to Brown’s *The Black Man* as a conflation of Manzano’s and De la Concepción Valdés’s biographies, though none of these cite Whittier’s text as the origin of this confusion. Nwankwo provides the most thorough analysis of this conflation; see *Black Cosmopolitanism* (2005), 49-80. See also Stimson, *Cuba’s Romantic Poet*, 99-102; Miller, “Notes to the Text” in *Blake, or the Huts of America*, 319; Edward J. Mullen, introduction to Juan Francisco Manzano, *The Life and Poems of a Cuban Slave* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1981), 12; and Anna Brickhouse, “Manzano, Madden, ‘El Negro Mártir,’ and the Revisionist Geographies of Abolitionism,” in *American Literary Geographies: Spatial Practice and Cultural Production, 1500–1900*, ed. Martin Brückner and Hsuan L. Hsu (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007), 209–235.

of the long-view revolutionary genealogy of Whittier's "The Black Man" and the resurrectionary presentism of Delany's *Blake*, Brown's *The Black Man* presents a tome of Black achievement that historicizes Black revolutionary thought, recognizes its manifestations in the present, and projects it forward into the future.

The desire to historicize Black revolutionary thought beyond celebrating the past became more urgent than ever in the moment that Brown's publication hit the presses. Its December release came less than three months after President Abraham Lincoln issued his Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation (September 22, 1862), warning the Confederacy that their continued rebellion would result in the abolition of slavery, and only a few weeks before the official Emancipation Proclamation took effect on January 1, 1863. While the initial Proclamation tolled the first death knell for slavery in the United States and marked an unprecedented step toward political enfranchisement for Black men and women, it also included the curious clause that "the effort to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this continent, or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the Governments existing there, will be continued."<sup>89</sup> This clause, expressing a commitment to removing the formerly enslaved outside of the United States "with their consent" (whatever that might be supposed to mean without citizenship or legal rights), was eventually struck from the document that we now know as the Emancipation Proclamation, but it indexes the continuing need for Black leaders to participate in national and transnational discourses about their future in the Americas. As we shall see in the next chapter, Black emigration from the United States could serve Black liberation projects just as easily as it could serve the white supremacist mission of Manifest Destiny.

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<sup>89</sup> "Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation," *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. 5, ed. Roy P. Basler, Mation Dolores Pratt and Lloyd Dunlap (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1953), 434.

## CHAPTER II

### LIBERIA THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: HARRIET BEECHER STOWE, DANIEL H. PETERSON, AND MANIFEST DESTINY EAST

In the previous chapter, I explored how the international print cultural circulation of Juan Placido exposed and put pressure on various national and transnational articulations of racial identity, racial solidarity, and strategies for Black liberation. In the current chapter, I turn to the ways in which the circulation of actual people (Black USAmericans who migrated to Liberia) were narrated and understood through the literary and political writings of the 1850s. The colonization movement's stated intentions of resolving USAmerican slavery through the "repatriation" of the formerly enslaved to Africa are typically understood as a more "moderate" albeit overtly anti-Black alternative to the emancipation, integration, and enfranchisement of Black USAmericans proposed by radical abolitionists. I read the mid-century debates over Black emigration within a different context: Manifest Destiny. The white supremacist project of Manifest Destiny unequivocally proscribes Black USAmericans from its expansionist vision of Modern America, which, according to its georacial logic, was the providentially preserved purview of the Anglo-Saxon race. Although the racist and imperialist dimensions of Manifest Destiny are typically understood to be bound within the geographical borders of the Americas (or, even more conservatively, within the borders of North America), however, the debates over Black emigration in the 1850s unsettle this longstanding perception. Throughout this chapter, I argue that the relocation of Black USAmericans to West Africa represents more than simply a convenient deportation scheme aimed at preserving the racial purity of the United States. Using

Harriet Beecher Stowe's unprecedented best-seller *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or Life among the Lowly* (1852) as a literary touchstone for mid-century emigration debates, I map out a discourse that frames Liberia as opportunity for Black USAmericans to participate in the expansion of the USAmerican Empire by spreading the nation's republican ideology and ethos into and throughout Africa. I call this georacial mythology *Manifest Destiny East*. Because the logic of Manifest Destiny sets aside North America for the Anglo-Saxon race, it also requires that Afro-descended people must return to the land from which their ancestors were taken and to which they, in turn, rightly "belong." Colonizationists in the 1850s recognized this requisite repatriation as an opportunity. The project of Manifest Destiny East posits that although formerly enslaved Blacks could never be fully assimilated into the USAmerican nation-state in North America, slavery and emancipation could function as an edifying process that prepares the formerly enslaved for participation in the spread of USAmerican Empire: these men and women could be effectively indoctrinated into the political, religious, and economic mores of USAmerican culture and thereby deployed as agents of empire *outside* of North America (i.e. Africa). In doing so, expansionists could preserve the supposed racial integrity of the USAmerican republic in the New World while also extended the ambit of that nation-state into Africa through colonization. Here, Black USAmericans' successful interpellation into the ideologies of democratic republicanism and Protestantism would serve to aid in USAmerican empire building beginning in Liberia and extending throughout Africa.

Rhetorically and narratively, the ideology of Manifest Destiny East relies on the racialization of Afro USAmericans as essentially distinct from both native Africans and African Americans from outside the United States. Because the hallmarks of USAmericanness included Western education, Protestant morality, and republicanism, the exposure of Black USAmericans

to these programs through the capitalist logics of slavery and emancipation allowed writers to apply the markers of USAmerican exceptionalism to these men and women without affording them equal rights to Anglo USAmericans. Their edification within the political value systems of the USA made them exceptional in comparison to non-USAmerican Blacks and Africans, even as they were simultaneously denied equal status with their white counterparts. Moreover, the white supremacist georacial mythology of Manifest Destiny naturalized the idea that North America could not accommodate Black citizens, however exceptional they may be. Manifest Destiny East proposes a means of resolving the tension between recognizing USAmerican exceptionalism and proscribing USAmericanized Black men and women from the nation-state. By mobilizing these exceptional Black USAmericans as missionaries and colonists in Africa, Manifest Destiny East simultaneously incorporates them into the project of USAmerican imperial expansion and excludes them from the metropolitan nation-state in North America. In doing so, Manifest Destiny East affirms the pretensions of USAmerican exceptionalism while also preserving the racial purity of the white USAmerican imperial expansion in the Americas that Manifest Destiny providentially prescribes.

This chapter opens with a history of colonization discourse, contextualizing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* within a broader debate about the practicality, morality, and potential sites of Black emigration in the 1850s. In particular, I explore the rhetorical juxtapositioning of Haiti and Liberia as competing destinations for Afro USAmericans, wherein the white desire for expelling Black populations from the Americas more broadly comes sharply into focus. The chapter then expounds more fully on the concept of Manifest Destiny East, documenting the ways in which political and literary commentators on the subject of colonization helped to shape and enact this georacial project. I return to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the character of Topsy in particular, who

provides a fictional case study for what the edifying process of interpellation should look like prior to deploying formerly enslaved USAmericans as agents of empire abroad. I then unravel this narrative by offering an alternative reading of Topsy's journey to Africa to demonstrate how, as much as the discourses of Manifest Destiny East worked to conscript Black bodies (whether fictional or actual) into its project, they often failed to do so and, in turn, provided opportunities for disenfranchised citizens to empower themselves and direct their own narratives. I conclude by examining the autobiographical narrative of a Black traveler to Liberia as evidence of the ways in which Black citizens, following Topsy's examples, took advantage of the racist optics of Manifest Destiny East in order to engage in the essential labor of self-fashioning.

### **Manifest Destiny and the Destination for Afro USAmericans: Haiti or Liberia?**

The turn to Liberia at the conclusion of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* may at first seem anachronistic or belated, since American Colonization Society and its fervor for Black relocation are traditionally associated with the organization's heyday in the 1830s. Founded in 1816 and quickly supported by a number of local and regional auxiliaries, the ACS raised funds and propagated propaganda in support of relocating free Afro-descended men and women from the United States to a settler colony in West Africa, which they named Liberia and began settling in 1822. Although this political project marked the first organized venture of its kind in the United States, the idea of deporting free Afro USAmericans as a means of ameliorating racial tensions and/or effectuating the gradual emancipation of slavery had its roots in the thinking of eighteenth-century intellectuals like Thomas Jefferson, John Thornton, St. George Tucker,



Ferdinando Fairfax, and Samuel Hopkins.<sup>1</sup> From its inception, though, many were skeptical of the ACS mission. Citing the racist intellectual origins of the movement, Black abolitionists, in particular, recognized the white supremacist ethos undergirding the philanthropic patronage of the colonization movement and they almost universally condemned its mission as racist, impractical, or some mix of the two. Damning criticisms like David Walker's incendiary *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829) and William Lloyd Garrison's *Thoughts on African Colonization* (1832) combined with the financial impracticality of relocating hundreds of thousands of US Americans across the Atlantic to prevent the colonization movement from ever achieving mainstream popularity. By the mid-1830s, a number of administrative changes in both the ACS and the American Anti-Slavery Society resulted in a dramatic decline in support for the colonizationist project.<sup>2</sup> Still, between 1820 and 1860 more than 10,000 free Black men and women migrated to Liberia with the hopes of finding better prospects than they imagined they could in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In the summer of 1847, the colony declared itself an independent republic and Liberia began to receive renewed attention from the colonizationist contingent. The *African Repository*,

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<sup>1</sup> See Winthrop Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (New York: Norton, 1968), 542-569. On Jefferson's colonizationist thinking in particular, see David Kazanijan, *The Colonizing Trick: National Culture and Imperial Citizenship in Early America* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003), 89-138.

<sup>2</sup> Enthusiasm for Liberia dropped off significantly after 1835. For Charles Foster, this decline in support for colonization resulted from prominent abolitionists like Arthur Tappan, James G. Birney, and Gerrit Smith reconsidering their initial support for the project. The shift was so dramatic that Foster regards it as the ostensible endpoint of the colonization movement; see "Colonization of the Free Negroes, in Liberia, 1816-1835," *Journal of Negro History* 38, no.1 (1953): 41-66.

<sup>3</sup> P.J. Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement* (New York: Octagon Books, 1961), 251.

the official periodical of the ACS, celebrated “the sight of a young republic springing up on that dark and heathen coast,” adding that this development would “uniformly” affect the relationship between the Society and Liberia “in the most favorable manner.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the ACS understood independence as an occasion for the republic to defend the mission of emigration “on new grounds” and called upon its members to “redouble their diligence and their liberality in this work.”<sup>5</sup> Unlike the millennial romanticism of the ACS in the 1820s, a solemn pragmatism and fatalist resignation characterizes the (re)turn to Africa in the 1850s, a phenomenon that Martha Schoolman describes as “*postcolonizationist* Liberian emigrationism.”<sup>6</sup> According to this line of thinking, the expanded ambit of slavery following the USA-Mexico War, the crippling divestment of free Black civil rights that resulted from Fugitive Slave Act (1850) and *Strader v. Graham* (a legal precursor to the Dred Scott Decision), and the overwhelming spirit of legislative compromise in the early 1850s, portended grim prospects for abolition and Black political enfranchisement. In reaction, a number of white abolitionists began to promote Liberia as a last bastion of hope for Black USAmericans who could never allay the prejudices of white supremacy. Its philanthropic gloss notwithstanding, the relocation rhetoric of the 1850s shares its characteristic pessimism about the future of race relations in the USA with some of the earliest articulations of colonization schemes, including Thomas Jefferson’s famous fatalism in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785):

It will probably be asked, Why not retain and incorporate the blacks into the state, and thus save the expense of supplying, by importation of white settlers, the

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<sup>4</sup> “Independence of Liberia,” *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, December 1847, 383.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

<sup>6</sup> Schoolman, *Abolitionist Geographies*, 158.

vacancies they will leave? Deep rooted prejudices entertained by the whites; ten thousand recollections, by the blacks, of the injuries they have sustained; new provocations; the real distinctions which nature has made; and many other circumstances, will divide us into parties, and produce convulsions, which will probably never end but in the extermination of the one or the other race.<sup>7</sup>

Because racial prejudices were so “deep rooted,” this logic contends that redressing racial antagonism would be impossible, and therefore proposes transatlantic segregation as a solution. Jefferson’s skepticism regarding the practical mechanics of emancipation in the eighteenth century differs little from the pessimism of antislavery activists in the 1850s. The setbacks at mid-century gave renewed credence to the perceived insurmountability of culturally pervasive anti-Black prejudices and institutional racism. Echoing the pessimism of Jefferson and Birney, for example, Edward Blyden describes free Blacks in the USA as “sojourners in a land of strangers” and “menials in a land of oppressors.”<sup>8</sup> Proponents of postcolonizationist Liberian emigrationism employed this pessimism to reinvigorate interest in Black expatriation to Africa, where the former settler colony was now an independent republic.

Running parallel to the ACS promotion of Liberia was another Black emigration project which sought to relocate free Black USAmericans to the republic of Haiti. The success of this movement stemmed from Black investment in developing a solution to slavery independent from the problematic institutions of antislavery activism and the overwhelming whiteness of corporate

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Notes on the State of Virginia,” in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 264. Interestingly, colonization societies were not shy to rehash Jefferson’s arguments explicitly in the 1850s. See, for example, “President Jefferson on Colonization,” *New York Colonization Journal*, June 1852.

<sup>8</sup> “Letter from Mr E.W. Blyden,” *African Repository*, August 1854, 238-239.

abolitionism. Much like the Liberian movement, the Black promotion of Haiti as a site for emigration saw its heyday 1820s, followed by a resurgence of interest in the 1850s.<sup>9</sup> Black-led programs for Haitian emigration, while often founded upon arguments not dissimilar to those of the ACS, were scripted in the register of Black empowerment and Black nationalism, objectives which aimed to expose the dubious motives of colonizationists.<sup>10</sup> “Emigrationism,” as Ousmane K. Power-Greene describes it, “was more than colonization minus white control. The key issue here was black agency.”<sup>11</sup> The rekindled interest in Haiti owed in no small part to Black USAmerican concerns regarding the ACS’s renewed investment in colonization and the almost immediate dividends: the ACS raised nearly \$100,000 in 1851 (its largest annual receipts ever) and from 1848 to 1854 they sponsored more Black emigrants to Liberia than in the previous thirty years of the organization’s existence combined.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, writings promoting emigration to Liberia in the late 1840s and early 1850s began to define the world’s newest Black republic against the New World’s first Black republic. In February 1847, for example, a “Citizen of the South,” asked of the readers of the *National Era*,

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<sup>9</sup> Heeding the encouragement of Haitian President Jean-Pierre Boyer, some 13,000 free Blacks took advantage of land grants from the Haitian government and sought new opportunities on the island throughout the antebellum period. For a history of Black USAmerican consideration of Haiti, see Sara Fanning, *Caribbean Crossings: African Americans and the Haitian Emigration Movement* (New York: New York UP, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> For a comparative reading of these two movements in the 1850s, see Chris Dixon, *African America and Haiti: Emigration and Black Nationalism in the Nineteenth Century* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 61-86.

<sup>11</sup> Ousmane K. Power-Greene, *Against Wind and Trade* (New York: New York UP, 2014), 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 97-98

Why, then, should not the Liberty party encourage that cause - the cause of Liberia? Is it because the work of emancipation by colonization is too slow? Do they desire to bring the curse and calamities of Hayti upon the whole South, by giving freedom at once to millions of “Degraded and imbruted slaves,” who are unprepared for freedom? Colonization is slow, but that is the very thing that commends it. If thousands of slaves had been liberated every year, and crowded into Liberia, it would have endangered the success of the colonization enterprise. We dread the influx of a foreign population into this country, lest they should endanger the Government. Much more ought the friends of Liberia to dread the too rapid increase of an ignorant population in that infant nation.<sup>13</sup>

Although the African colony appears progressive and promising in contrast to the purportedly retrograde Haitian republic, the necessity of removing free Blacks from the USA remains a driving assumption and, it is suggested, should become the official position of the abolitionist Liberty Party.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, this “Citizen of the South” betrays the deeply xenophobic ethos undergirding white endorsements of emigration—readers are asked to imagine how much they

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<sup>13</sup> “For the National Era,” *The National Era*, 11 February 1847.

<sup>14</sup> Several important works by Black abolitionists and proponents of Haitian emigration offered sketches of the island republic in the 1850s that sharply contrast this and other portraits of Haiti’s supposed barbarism. See William Wells Brown, *St. Domingo: Its Revolutions and Its Patriots. A lecture, Delivered before the Metropolitan Athenaeum, London, May 16, and St. Thomas’ Church, Philadelphia, December 20, 1854* (Boston: Bela Marsh, 1855); James Theodore Holly, *A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro Race for Self-Government and Civilized Progress as Demonstrated by Historical Events of the Haytian Revolution and the Subsequent Acts of That People Since Their National Independence* (New Haven: William H. Stanley, 1857); James Redpath (ed.), *A Guide to Hayti* (Boston: Haytian Bureau of Emigration, 1860); and Benjamin S. Hunt, *Remarks on Hayti as a Place of Settlement for Afric-Americans, and on the Mulatto as a Race for the Tropics* (Philadelphia: T.B. Pugh, 1860).

would “dread the influx of a foreign population into this country” in order to empathize with the Liberian colonists and to tolerate the gradual pace of Black emigration. Combined with the undisturbed presupposition that Black emigration represents the more prudent solution to slavery, the xenophobic rhetoric in this passage strongly implies that USAmericans of African descent mark another “foreign population” whose citizenship white citizens should “dread.”

Extreme though this last example may be, the side-by-side consideration of Haiti and Liberia in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, which appeared in the same periodical four years later, promulgates a similar message. For example, whereas Liberia’s declaration of independence in 1847 “drew only minor interest from black America” and “improved only marginally” the perception of the former colony in the eyes of Black USAmericans, Stowe’s George Harris regards this transformation as essential to Liberia’s promise.<sup>15</sup> After fleeing from slavery in Kentucky and reuniting with his family in Canada, George quickly becomes disenchanted with African American prospects in the free British territory, which remained, nevertheless not fully welcoming of Afro USAmerican expatriates. By delivering these deliberations through the conceit of George’s letter to a friend, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*’s stylistically underscores that his repudiation of the United States is his own carefully considered decision rather than an externally imposed ideology. He proclaims, “Liberia may have subserved all sorts of purposes, by being played off, in the hands of our oppressors, against us,” but by 1852, “this republic has, at last, become an acknowledged nation on the face of the earth,—acknowledged by both France and England.”<sup>16</sup> Liberia was not only free from the oppressive influence of the ACS, but its capacity

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<sup>15</sup> Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, 65.

<sup>16</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or Life among the Lowly* (New York: Penguin, 1981), 609. All further references will be made parenthetically. George’s previous and repeated disavowals of the USAmerican nation-state thoroughly foreshadow his decision. For example,

for self-government had received votes of confidence from the U.S., Great Britain, and France—the western world’s leading constitutional democracies. Characterizing Liberia as a newly formed democratic republic committed to liberty and eager for the approval of European trading and military powers deepens the reader’s perception of that nation-state as an African political descendant of the United States. Significantly though, George also defines Liberia’s future against that of Haiti:

The desire and yearning of my soul is for an African *nationality*. I want a people that shall have a tangible, separate existence of its own; and where am I to look for it? Not in Hayti; for in Hayti they had nothing to start with. A stream cannot rise above its fountain. The race that formed the character of the Haytiens was a worn-out, effeminate one; and, of course, the subject race will be centuries in rising to anything. (609)

Racial pride and a desire to participate actively in the processes of state-building motivate George’s migration to Liberia. He articulates a sense of Black nationalism consistent with the ideals of that political philosophy: rather than geography or language, the basis of Black nationalism, according to Wilson Moses, is “the nebulous concept of racial unity” rooted in and routed through the shared history of dehumanization, racial oppression, and geographical and cultural deracination.<sup>17</sup> This is the common ground upon which George aims to foster the fledgling Liberian state.

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when confronted during his flight from Kentucky by a white friend, Mr. Wilson, George passionately entreats his interlocutor, “Do you call these the laws of my country? Sir, I haven’t any country, anymore than I have any father. But I’m going to have one. I don’t want anything of your country, except to be let alone, – to go peaceably out of it” (187; original emphasis).

<sup>17</sup> Wilson Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988), 17.

But in looking to “the shores of Africa” as the site for his venture into Black nationalist state-building, George also makes the seemingly superfluous gesture of rejecting nearby Haiti in the process. I read this writing off of Haiti as a direct mode of addressing the contemporary debate about the preferred destination for Black emigration. George adds a new element to this debate which had yet to be so bluntly articulated in the pro-emigration/pro-colonization rhetoric—Anglo American exceptionalism. As narrated in George’s letter, the perceived stagnation of Haiti and the promise of Liberia present as “natural” manifestations of the distinct lines of “white blood” that course through the veins of the mulatto population in each site. Because Blackness is the common denominator between these two Black republics, the novel argues that the white Huguenot and WASP lineages distinguish the fates of Haiti and Liberia, respectively. The emasculated and enervated “subject race” that currently governs Haiti stands in sharp contrast with the “picked men, who, by energy and self-educating force, have, in many cases, individually, raised themselves above a condition of slavery” (609) that migrate from the USA to Liberia. Apart from the hierarchy implied by the patriarchally gendered glossing of the French and Anglo-Saxon races, George’s description positions the “energy and self-educating force” of the Liberian settlers as an implied juxtaposition to the violent insurgence of the Haitian Revolution. This contrapuntal comparison echoes the gradual republicanism of Liberia and the abrupt revolutionary change in Haiti touted in the aforementioned *National Era* article. Moreover though, the defining characteristics of the Liberian settlers privileged in George’s letter—autodidacticism, diligence, and self-reliance—are strongly associated with a nascent sense of (Anglo) USAmerican national identity during this period. The promise of cultivating a Black nationality and a Black republic in Africa, then, owe to Liberia’s independence from the political, cultural, and racial influences of the European continent—non-Anglo-Saxons—and



dependence on the political, cultural, and racial influences of Anglo USAmerica. Thus, although Black men and mixed-race *gens de couleur* forged the Haitian republic in the geographical crucible of the New World, George's letter argues that their "worn-out, effeminate" character stems from their French blood and the attendant influences of Old World politics and culture.

George's weighing of Haiti and Liberia as potential sites for forging "an African *nationality*" resolves a larger drama that plays out throughout the novel. In an earlier debate between St. Clare and his brother Alfred, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* suggests that the USAmerican mulatto's revolutionary spirit emanates from his "infusion of Anglo Saxon blood" (392). As St. Clare explains to his brother, "If ever the San Domingo hour comes, Anglo Saxon blood will lead on the day. Sons of white fathers, with all our haughty feelings burning in their veins, will not always be bought and sold and traded. They will rise, and raise with them their mother's race" (392). The gendered language of this theory of race, which indirectly acknowledges the ubiquitous sexual abuse of enslaved women by their white masters, attributes the masculine heroics of George Harris to his biracial parentage. It amplifies the gendered logic of race—the effeminate African and the masculine Anglo-Saxon—but it also distinguishes between the different veins of white blood. Where the "infusion" of French blood destines the Haitian republic to decadence and failure, the Anglo-Saxon blood in USAmerican mulattoes like George portends a different result. "The Haytiens were not Anglo Saxons," Alfred retorts, "if they had been there would have been another story. The Anglo Saxon is the dominant race of the world, and *is to be so*" (392; original emphasis).<sup>18</sup> In this single moment in which *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

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<sup>18</sup> The irony of this passage, as Carolyn Vellenga Berman notes, is that both Alfred and Augustine are French creoles without any claim to part of "the dominant race of the world"; see "Creole Family Politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* 33, no.3 (2000): 338.

unsilences the racial violence that transformed the colony of Saint-Domingue into the free republic of Haiti, the passage also strips the agency of revolutionary action from the Afro-descended freedom fighters.<sup>19</sup> Instead, it attributes Haitian independence to a predictable drama of racial essentialism: white blood inspires the Haitians to liberate themselves, but because that blood is French, the Haitian republic inevitably devolves into the same violent excesses, moral depravities, and political failures of the Jacobins in the early in the nineteenth century.

While the “infusion of Anglo-Saxon blood” in George’s own veins is precisely what prepares him to be a race leader in the endeavor of Liberian nation-building, it is also the key to the novel’s ascription of black outmigration to Africa to georacial destiny.<sup>20</sup> George’s letter, with its attribution of Liberia’s promise to its Anglo USAmerican sanguinary and political influences, echoes the ACS framing African colonization as part of Manifest Destiny. In the same way that the North American continent was pre-ordained for the conquest of Anglo USAmericans, Africa was pre-ordained for colonization by “picked men”: Black USAmerican immigrants. Put differently, Black and mulatto USAmericans, once familiarized with the republican and religious ideologies of their nation of birth, could be activated as agents of USAmerican Empire in Africa. The Afro USAmerican body and body politic, then, become vehicles for spreading Anglo USAmerican ideology in Africa. At the same time though—and this is important—it removes the

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<sup>19</sup> My verbiage here summons Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s watershed *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> George himself has mixed Anglo American and African ancestries, which manifest predictably in the novel’s physiognomic description of his physical appearance: he possesses “a dark, Spanish complexion, fine, expressive black eyes, and close-curling hair, also of a glossy blackness” signify his African heritage, while his “well-formed aquiline nose, straight thin lips, and the admirable contour of his finely-formed limbs” signify his Anglo-Saxon heritage, the combination of which allow him to pass successfully as a Hispanic dandy during his escape from slavery (180).

Afro-descended population from the USA, thereby whitening the USAmerican nation. The deportation of biracial individuals played an especially vital role in this project, since their “Black blood” did not always present phenotypically and therefore had the potential to “adulterate” the whiteness of the nation surreptitiously. That George has internalized both racial essentialism and Anglo USAmerican exceptionalism crystallizes as he emulates Alfred’s rhetoric of racial destiny toward the conclusion of his letter:

To the Anglo-Saxon race has been intrusted [sic] the destinies of the world during its pioneer period of struggle and conflict. To that mission its stern, inflexible, energetic elements were well adapted; but, as a Christian, I look for another era to arise. On its borders I trust we stand; and the throes that now convulse the nations are, to my hope, but the birth-pangs of an hour of universal peace and brotherhood. (610-611)

By describing the 1850s as the “borders” of a new era, George also figures Liberian colonization as a method for Afro USAmericans to participate in the expansion of the USAmerican Empire’s political borders. He acknowledges his capacity to operate as an Anglo USAmerican imperialist with his admission that “full half the blood in my veins is the hot and hasty Saxon” and highlights the “stern, inflexible, energetic elements” of his own character with references to his “enthusiasm,” his “determination,” and his “confidence” (610-611). But although these characteristics and the “veins” are his own (“my”), the definite article “the” confirms that the Anglo-Saxon blood is not properly his own. Similarly, he recognizes that “the Christian calling and mission of our race” is not in the USA, but rather in “*my country*, – my chosen, my glorious Africa!” (611; original emphasis). The possessive pronouns mark a distinct shift here—“our race” and “*my country*.” Rather than questioning Anglo-Saxon superiority or challenging the

republican political ideology of the United States (which he fashions as “the furnace of injustice and oppression”), George accepts these epistemologies as dogma and vows to spread these ideologies not just in Liberia, but “over the continent of Africa” (611). His vision of nation-building in Africa exceeds the current political boundaries of the Liberian republic and suggests that the Black and mulatto USAmerican migrants from the “are to conquer” Africa (611). Because George’s particular vision of “another era” depends upon “universal peace and brotherhood,” his role in the development of Africa is to mold a Black nationality and a republican government in cooperation with (rather than in defiance of) the USA. His conciliatory message details a plan for Black and mulatto expatriates in Africa to participate in the imperial expansion of Anglo USAmerica without compromising their own nascent racial nationalism.

While *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* has traditionally been read as deeply imbricated within the racist logic of Manifest Destiny, I argue here that the novel also expands that logic into the field of Africa. As George carefully considers Haiti and Liberia as potential sites for a Black future, recreating a heated public debate in the United States at the time, his disavowal of the former affirms both his own investment in the USAmerican imperialist ethos. As a result, he comes to believe that no nation in the Americas can provide suitable refuge for the African diaspora and that the only option for Black USAmerican political enfranchisement is to undertake their own imperialist project in Africa.

### **Manifest Destiny East and the Invention of Afro USAmerican Imperialism**

The resurgence of Liberian emigration in the 1850s is also indebted to the increasingly imperialism ethos of the USA, and if we return to the earlier literature of the ACS, we quickly see that such thinking comprises an essential component of its project. There is perhaps no more

concise or poetic evidence of how deeply this ethos penetrated the colonization movement than the naming of Liberia’s capital city—Monrovia—after the author of the eponymous doctrine that undergirded USAmerican neocolonialism in the Western Hemisphere, President James Monroe. In the 1820s, the newly appointed colonial agent to Liberia, Jehudi Ashmun, began transforming the rhetorical deployments of empire into political practices. He recalibrated the colony’s mission by shifting the emphasis away from Christian education and toward the annexation of adjacent territories, instigating tribal conflicts to benefit Liberia, and developing a mercantile infrastructure for international trade.<sup>21</sup> Supporters of colonization in the USA enthusiastically embraced Ashmun’s initiatives as an opportunity to remarket the ACS project and garner more support for their cause. “Indeed, it would be a strange anomaly of our character,” the Reverend Thomas H. Gallaudet reasoned at a public fundraiser for the ACS in 1829, “if while Providence is inviting the enterprise of American citizens to this profitable field of labour, they should delay to foster their infant colony, and elevate it quickly to a station of extensive commercial influence.”<sup>22</sup> The unmistakable language of colonial mercantilism— “enterprise,” “profitable,” “commercial,”—narrates the marriage of imperial expansion and Liberian colonization as a lucrative venture. But taking advantage of this occasion, for Gallaudet, becomes a religious and national imperative as well. Much like Manifest Destiny relied on the idea that the North American continent was the providential purview of Anglo USAmericans, Gallaudet stresses that ACS-sponsored settler colonialism in Africa comes at the “invit[ation]” of “Providence.” This

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<sup>21</sup> For more on Ashmun and the ACS efforts to expand the Liberian colony in West Africa, see Staudenraus, *The African Colonization Movement*, 150-168; for a contemporary biography of Ashmun by a fellow colonizationist, see Ralph Gurley, *Life of Jehudi Ashmun* (Washington: James C. Dunn, 1835).

<sup>22</sup> American Colonization Society, *The Proceedings of a Public Meeting, Held in the Middle Dutch Church* (New York: Protestant Episcopal Press, 1829), 11.

likening of Liberian colonization to the English colonization of North America was a common strategy for justifying the ACS settlement of West Africa. After all, this model of settler colonialism in which oppressed social outcasts seek asylum in a transatlantic frontier colony mimics the USA's own origin story. Writers in the *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, consistently compared colonizationists' confrontations with the hostile native population and the devastating spread of illness to the "much worse result" at Plymouth and Jamestown in the seventeenth century, for example.<sup>23</sup> Conceptualizing Liberian colonization as a strategy for expanding the USAmerican Empire into Africa hardly required exponents of the cause to strain their imaginations.

The function of Liberia for the ACS and other white colonizationists, then, was twofold. On the one hand, it provided a relocation site for free Blacks whose very presence within USAmerican borders laid bare the inherent contradictions between the nation's republican philosophy and the culture of racial slavery. On the other hand, it provided an opportunity for the USA to begin expanding its empire eastward by joining Europe in the earliest stages of the so-called "Scramble for Africa." As Samuel Knapp remarked at the ACS's annual convention in 1827, "[t]he tide of empire and of intellect has been westward for centuries: and now let us flash back the rays of our glory and our liberty upon the darkened lands of the East."<sup>24</sup> The conceit of illumination gestures toward the intimate ties between Enlightenment thought and colonialism, but it also links imperial expansion to religious conversion. In this way, the ACS envisions Liberian emigration as a Black corollary to Manifest Destiny, a providential opportunity for free

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<sup>23</sup> "South-western Coast of Africa," *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, February 1827, 369.

<sup>24</sup> "Annual Meeting of the American Colonization Society," *African Repository and Colonial Journal*, January 1827, 333.

Blacks to “return” to Africa and take up the labor of nation-building and imperial expansion. These aspects of Liberian colonization, however, shift the emphasis away from the benefits of the project for the deported Black community and toward the benefits for Anglo USAmericans. “American citizens,” after all, is a designation from which free Black USAmericans were ideologically, legally, and now, potentially, geographically excluded.<sup>25</sup>

The geographical displacement of Black ambition became especially important in the wake of the USA-Mexico War. For many, the USAmerican military victory and the successful annexation of a large portion of the North American continent. A huge victory for USAmerican expansionists and seemingly incontrovertible evidence of Manifest Destiny’s truth, the rapid expansion of the USAmerican nation-state following Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in February 1848 marked the apparent beginning of the triumphant Anglo-Saxon conquest of the Americas. It also represented new possibilities for free Black citizens, as we saw in Henry Highland Garnet’s “The Past and the Present Condition, and the Destiny, of the Colored Race,” in the previous chapter, a speech delivered to the Female Benevolent Society in Troy, New York less than two weeks after the Treaty. To review, Garnet pointed to the significant “colored” population throughout Mexico as evidence that “[t]his western world is destined to be filled with a mixed race” and that the USAmerican conquest of Mexico would result in rampant racial amalgamation

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<sup>25</sup> Although enthusiasm for colonization slowly faded after the 1820s, there is still much evidence that this conceptualization of Liberia as an extension of USAmerican Empire persisted well into the 1850s. Several critics hold up Sarah Joseph Hale’s novel *Liberia; or Mr. Peyton’s Experiments* (1853) as an exemplar of this lingering discourse; see Susan M. Ryan, “Errand into Africa: Colonization and Nation Building in Sarah J. Hale’s *Liberia*,” *New England Quarterly* 68, no.4 (1995): 558-583; Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” *American Literature* 70, no.3 (1998): 581-606; and Etsuko Taketani, “Postcolonial Liberia: Sarah Joseph Hale’s Africa,” *American Literary History* 14, no.3 (2002): 479-504.

throughout the hemisphere.<sup>26</sup> These claims not only challenge Anglo USAmerican claims to hemispheric dominion, but also remain at odds with African colonization. This may at first seem strange, since Garnet is frequently accused of renegeing on his previously vociferous disapprobation of Liberia in a public letter to Frederick Douglass's *North Star* in January 1849, less than a year after delivering "Past and Present Condition": "My mind, of late, has greatly changed in regard to the American Colonization scheme. So far as it benefits the land of my fathers, I bid it God-speed; but so far as it denies the possibility of our elevation here, I oppose it. I would rather see a man free in Liberia, than a slave in the United States." While many historians typically cherry-pick this quotation as evidence of the changing tides of Liberian discourse at mid-century, Garnet's letter, read as a whole, remains entirely consistent with his ideas in "Past and Present Condition" when read in the context. Aptly entitled "The West – the West!" his letter allows that "[e]migration is often the source of wealth, prosperity, and independence," but laments that Black USAmericans "generally wait until [white migrants] have had the first choice, and then we come in for the scraps." He concludes that "[t]he brightest stars of our people on this continent, will arise in the West and South," adding wistfully, "I would to God that we were scattered over the entire West and South-west: then should we have had homes in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa and Illinois."<sup>27</sup> Taken together then, Garnet's change in thinking and tremendous influence posed an imminent threat to the realization of Manifest Destiny. His writings and speeches reveal the ways in which the expansion across the North American continent could also facilitate the further incorporation of Black USAmericans into the

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<sup>26</sup> Henry Highland Garnet, *The Past and the Present Condition, and Destiny, of the Colored Race: A Discourse Delivered at the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Female Benevolent Society of Troy, N.Y. February 14, 1848* (Troy, NY: J.C. Kneeland and Co., 1848), 26.

<sup>27</sup> "Communications. The West – the West!" *The North Star*, January 26, 1849.



USAmerican nation-state and, if Garnet's racial theories about Mexico were to be believed, even the further amalgamation of the Black and white races.

In response to such challenges to Manifest Destiny's racial exclusions, proponents of colonization doubled down on promoting Liberia as a means of displacing the surge in Black nationalist energy, especially those veins of it which, like Garnet's, might have competed with the westward march of USAmerican expansion.<sup>28</sup> At the anniversary of the ACS in January 1853, amid intensifying "Uncle Tom Mania" in both the USA and Europe, Secretary of State Edward Everett addressed the Society to express his renewed hope in the organization's mission. Revitalizing the analogy between the colonizations of Liberia and colonial North America, Everett confronted critics of the ACS with "the first twenty-five or thirty years of the settlement of Jamestown" in defense of Liberia's slow national development, and asked hypothetically what might have happened if "any one had gone in 1630 to the more important company of Gov. Winthrop, the great founder of Massachusetts; had tried to excite their feelings against the projected emigration; had told them that England belonged to them as much as it did to their oppressors."<sup>29</sup> More than simply confirming the corollary between the persecuted English colonists of North America and the oppressed Afro USAmerican settlers of West Africa, Everett explicitly argues that the colonization and the civilization of Africa are the divine mission of Black USAmericans. Having received thorough moral, religious, and intellectual instruction in the United States, free Black USAmericans, according to Everett, are set to achieve their destiny:

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<sup>28</sup> This included countering the westward migrations of free Blacks, as seen in a broadside circulated in the state of Illinois soliciting donations and emigrants for the ACS by one of the Society's general agents; see *To the Friends of Colonization* (Springfield, IL: n.p. 1853).

<sup>29</sup> *Address of the Hon. Edward Everett, Secretary of State, at the anniversary of the Am. Col. Society, 18th Jan., 1853.* (Washington: n.p., 1853), 1, 3.

Thus you see, at the very moment when the work is ready to commence, the instruments are prepared. Do I err in supposing that the same august Providence which has arranged, or has permitted, the mysterious sequence of events to which I have referred, has also called out and is inviting those chosen agents to enter upon the work?<sup>30</sup>

The providential and commercial language of Manifest Destiny is unmistakable in the passage, but the “instrumentality” of Black USAmericans refers to both their service to a providential project and their service in the USAmerican imperial project. Everett elaborates on the divine mission of Black USAmericans by describing the limits of Manifest Destiny: although the Anglo-Saxon race is supposedly destined to conquer and control the entirety of North America, Everett argues that “the white race... cannot civilize Africa” and he launches into a lengthy apostrophe directed at that race:

Sir, you cannot civilize Africa, —you Caucasian, you proud white man, you all-boasting, all-daring Anglo-Saxon, —you cannot do this work. You have subjugated Europe; the native races of this country are melting before you, as the untimely snows of April beneath a vernal sun; you have possessed yourselves of India; you threaten China and Japan; the farthest isles of the Pacific are not distant enough to escape your grasp, or insignificant enough to elude your notice; but this great Central Africa lies at your doors, and defies your power... No, no, Anglo-Saxon, this is no part of your vocation. You may direct the way, you may survey the coast, you may point your finger into the interior; but you must leave it to

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 7.

others to go and abide there. The God of nature, in another branch of his family has chosen out the instruments of this great work—descendants of the torrid clime, children of the burning vertical sun—and fitted them, by centuries of stern discipline, for the most noble work.<sup>31</sup>

While Everett imagines the westward expansion of the USAmerican Empire as unbounded by the California coastline and potentially extended throughout the Pacific Islands and even into continental Asia, Africa presents an insurmountable obstacle to its eastward expansion. Instead, “another branch of his family” —Afro USAmericans who have received “centuries of stern discipline” under the political, moral, and religious tutelage of Anglo USAmericans—have been divinely selected for these imperial labors in Africa. This is precisely the project of Manifest Destiny East. Everett reveals the ACS’s ambitions to spread beyond coastal Africa and into Central Africa; the Liberian republic will become an entree into the African interior and will facilitate nothing short of complete continental conquest. This address makes clear, however, that though Black USAmericans will be the “chosen... instruments of this great work,” it will be Anglo USAmericans who will “point [the] finger into the interior” and thus direct the imperial ventures of Manifest Destiny East. Put differently, the newly independent republic of Liberia would never truly be independent from the United States; nor would any of the subsequent nation-states established by Americo-Liberians in Central Africa.

### **Topsy the Missionary, Topsy the Trickster**

That Everett’s speech before the national anniversary of the ACS, which so explicitly and precisely gives voice to the principles of Manifest Destiny East, occurred in the immediate wake

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

of “Uncle Tom Mania” reflects the novel’s sensational impact on the national, literary, and political imaginaries, but also indicates the novel’s complicity within the imperialist designs of colonization. Through the sentimental and evangelical registers of conversion, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* details the pedagogical mechanics of USAmericanization necessary to prepare Black USAmericans for the imperialist labors of colonization and civilization in Africa. In particular, Topsy’s transformation from an “odd and goblin-like” heathen into a Christian missionary in Liberia provides a compelling case study for how colonizationists imagined this process (352). Topsy’s conversion narrative parallels her transformation from an educated, African slave into an agent of USAmerican imperial expansion in Liberia. Through racist tropes that render her Africanist presence as “unnatural” within Anglo USAmerica, the novel charts how her indoctrination into WASP femininity serves not to *naturalize* her as a citizen of the United States, but to return her to her “natural” place within the georacial logic of Manifest Destiny: Africa.<sup>32</sup> Once there, her Christian education will have prepared her for the evangelical labor of expanding USAmerican Empire in Africa through education and missionary work. As the subtitle of this section suggests, however, reading Topsy’s complicity within the ideological apparatus of Manifest Destiny East is only one way to understand her expatriation to Africa at the novel’s conclusion. Reading her multiply in these ways unveils the limits of interpellation

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<sup>32</sup> As Reginald Horsman notes, the scientific racism of Samuel Morton, Robert Knox, Louis Agassiz, and Josiah Nott and George Gliddon were commonplace in popular understanding of race by the mid-nineteenth century and played a fundamental role in narrations of Manifest Destiny; see *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 116-188. The classic account of scientific racism for this period is William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots: Scientific Attitudes toward Race in America, 1815-59* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960). For an excellent reading of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and its afterlives as a theater for popular cultural understandings of scientific racism, see Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 143-241.

and the frequent failures in the efforts of Anglo-Saxonist narratives to achieve full mastery over their Black characters.

Stowe introduces Topsy as a prop in Augustine St. Clare's contentious and theatrical moral debates with his Northern cousin, Miss Ophelia. He purchases the young girl, "a rather funny specimen in the Jim Crow line," for the explicit purpose of testing the conviction behind his cousin's abolitionist proselytizing and exposing the racial prejudices lurking beneath her Protestant self-righteousness. "You're always preaching about educating," he taunts her, "I thought I would make you a present of a fresh-caught specimen, and let you bring her up in the way she should go" (353). Although Miss Ophelia previously maintains that slaves ought to be educated, converted to Christianity, and treated "like immortal creatures that you've got to stand before the bar of God with", the Northerner's first impressions of Topsy pose a momentous challenge to the fervor and sincerity of her views (271). Moreover, these initial depictions of Topsy with "her mouth half open with astonishment at the wonders of the new Mas'r's parlor," also limn her as a *tabula rasa* for Miss Ophelia's instruction of white, New England, middle-class femininity (352). Despite her skepticism and dismay at the disturbingly playful gambit her cousin has set out before her, Miss Ophelia accepts the challenge of educating Topsy.

The middle chapters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* index Topsy's slow progression under the tutelage of Miss Ophelia. It quickly becomes clear, however, that the young girl is not the clean slate that St. Clare and his cousin preliminarily imagined. Topsy's consistent failures to understand her white mentor's moral instruction are as comedic for readers as they are frustrating for Miss Ophelia. Ultimately, as Jane Tompkins influentially argues, only the "sentimental power" of Little Eva's death occasions a breakthrough in Miss Ophelia's efforts and catalyzes

the enslaved girl's willingness to embrace the obsequious morality of Christianity.<sup>33</sup> Eva's premature death becomes a martyrdom that *inspires* Topsy in the biblical sense of that term – it breathes a soul into her: “Topsy did not become at once a saint, but the life and death of Eva did work a marked change in her. The callous indifference was gone; there was now sensibility, hope, desire, and the striving for good,—a strife irregular, interrupted, suspended oft, but yet renewed again” (443). Eva's martyrdom alone, however, is insufficient to bring Topsy to grace; it only creates the spark that Miss Ophelia's religious instruction must fan in order to foster the primordial fire of humanity in the young enslaved girl.

In the wake of Eva's death, followed shortly by St. Clare's own demise, Miss Ophelia takes custody—that is, *ownership*—of Topsy and continues to educate her through an un-narrated period during which the plot of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shifts to its titular character's time on Simon Legree's plantation. We learn of Topsy's fate and the achievements of Miss Ophelia's instruction in a brief, oft-forgotten entry within the “Results” chapter toward the novel's conclusion:

Miss Ophelia took Topsy home to Vermont with her, much to the surprise of the grave deliberative body whom a New Englander recognizes under the term “*Our folks*.” “Our folks,” at first, thought it an odd and unnecessary addition to their well-trained domestic establishment; but, so thoroughly efficient was Miss Ophelia in her conscientious endeavor to do her duty by her élève, that the child rapidly grew in grace and in favor with the family and neighborhood. At the age of womanhood, she was, by her own request, baptized, and became a member of

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<sup>33</sup> Jane Tompkins, *Sentimental Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986), 122-146.

the Christian church in the place; and showed so much intelligence, activity and zeal, and desire to do good in the world, that she was at last recommended, and approved as a missionary to one of the stations in Africa; and we have heard that the same activity and ingenuity which, when a child, made her so multiform and restless in her developments, is now employed, in a safer and wholesomer manner, in teaching the children of her own country. (612)

This passage once more invokes the motif of oddity in its treatment of Topsy. In this instance, however, “odd and unnecessary” modifies her disruption of New England’s “well-trained domestic establishment” rather than describing her personage. In the same way that St. Clare introduces Topsy to Miss Ophelia in order to expose the prejudices palpitating beneath the Northerner’s self-righteous veneer, Miss Ophelia, in turn, mobilizes Topsy to challenge the views of her New England peers. The young Black woman does not disappoint, and her “intelligence, activity, and zeal,” slowly earn her the “grace and favor” of the Vermont community. This catalogue of characteristics reveals how successfully Miss Ophelia has indoctrinated Topsy in the mores of Northern culture. In *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1853), for instance, Stowe employs the exact same language in her description of New Englanders: “There are in this class of people activity, zeal, unflinching conscientiousness, clear intellectual discriminations between truth and error, and great logical and doctrinal correctness.”<sup>34</sup> It is not through the normalization of diversity, then, but rather through the demonstration of sameness that Topsy wins over the community. Her ingratiation to the “family and neighborhood” depends upon her assimilation into the culture of New England (i.e. white, middle class, and Protestant)

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<sup>34</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *A Key to Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1853), 82.

femininity. The celebration of Topsy's maturation from "multiform and restless" Black child into this particular modality of "womanhood" praises her progress threefold: she grows from a child into an adult, a "thing" into a person, and a "heathenish" Southerner into a Northern Christian. Moreover, the characteristics that the novel celebrates as the benchmarks of Topsy's successful interpellation into New England society, the novel insists, are not essential to her, but rather endowed to her through the philanthropic pedagogy of white, female mentors. By locating the source of Topsy's redemption in the external influence of WASP womanhood rather than an internal process of reflection and introspection, the novel palliates the initial unease that Topsy's appearance produces for Miss Ophelia. The effective practice of these cultural ethics transforms her "restless" resistance to moral instruction into the "safer and wholesomer" enterprise of Protestant proselytizing in Africa.<sup>35</sup>

That the novel makes gestures toward Topsy's acculturation in Vermont only to remove her, finally, to Africa is telling. In the context of Miss Ophelia's efforts to "domesticate" Topsy though, her removal from the domestic sphere in the familial sense *and* in the national sense belies the impossibility of any such incorporation. If, as Yarborough describes the novel's racial

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<sup>35</sup> Gillian Brown recognizes a similar process in Miss Ophelia's attempts to bring order to the frenetic "shiftlessness" of Dinah's kitchen; see Gillian Brown, "Getting in the Kitchen with Dinah: Domestic Politics in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *American Quarterly* 34.4 (1984): 503-523. For Brown, the chaotic and haphazard procedures of Dinah's kitchen result from slavery's collapsing of the partition dividing the domestic economy from the political economy; the disorder of the kitchen portends the "immanence of the dissolution of domesticity's difference from the marketplace" (506) Miss Ophelia, with her New England sensibility and fetishization of order, functions as a stopgap measure to rectify the domestic disarray of Dinah's kitchen. Brown reads her as the mouthpiece for Stowe's attempts at a "revision and purification of popular domestic values—values that Stowe regards as complicit with the patriarchal institution of slavery" (507). Miss Ophelia's rehabilitation of the St. Clare kitchen ultimately fails, however, since Dinah's inextricability from the kitchen propagates the intermingling of the domestic and political economies – as long as Dinah (a slave) remains in the kitchen, the slave economy and the domestic sphere will overlap.



and religious logics, “to be born black is to be born a pagan, but paradoxically close to a state of grace,” then the achievement of grace does little to assuage the Otherness of Blackness within USAmerican racial nationalism, since Manifest Destiny has still prescribed the American hemisphere as the purview of the Anglo-Saxon tribe.<sup>36</sup> Despite the successes of her education and conversion to Christianity, then, Topsy still has no place with the domestic, political, or even religious order of the United States, as *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* imagines these spheres. The final descriptions of Topsy’s new occupation as “teaching the children of her own country” offers a stark reminder that her simulated acceptance among Miss Ophelia’s family and neighbors cannot alter the reality that Africa—not New England—is “her own country.”

Here, we can begin to see the gendered bifurcation of the imperial Manifest Destiny East project and the ways in which George’s emigration manifesto complements and contextualizes Topsy’s own move to Liberia. Although *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* does not explicitly frame her migration as part of a settler-colonial project, the fact that Topsy joined “one of the stations in Africa” suggests that she was participating in a Christian enterprise that exceeded the missionary endeavor of a single USAmerican church. Where George imagines Liberia “not as an Elysium of romance,” but as a “*field of work*,” Topsy, the novel implies, imagines Liberia not as an “Elysium” of Greek (i.e. pagan) romance, but as the Promised Land of Christian theology that was widely adapted in the Negro Spirituals of USAmerican slave culture (611). George’s rhapsody on Liberia thereby contextualizes Topsy’s missionary work as part of a USAmerican colonial venture in Africa. George, as the masculine, mulatto hero, sees nation-building, politics, and governance as his labor, while Topsy, the darker-skinned woman, assumes the labor

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<sup>36</sup> Richard Yarborough, “Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*,” in *New Essays on Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, ed. Eric Sundquist (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986), 50.

associated with the feminine sphere—religious and scholastic teaching.<sup>37</sup> Both *fields of work*—religious instruction and political reorganization—are essential cogs in the machinery of settler colonialism, but religious conversion and colonial education are especially critical for territorial expansion since they aim to enlist the native population into the imperial project. As Frantz Fanon characterizes the function of organized religion in later European colonizations of Africa, “[t]he Church in the colonies is the white people’s Church, the foreigner’s Church. She does not call the native to God’s ways but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor.”<sup>38</sup> Topsy becomes an agent of white Christian theology by enrolling as a missionary because she

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<sup>37</sup> I am careful here to delineate between the femininity of Topsy’s labor and the femininity of Topsy, which, despite her indoctrination into the WASP femininity of New England, is consistently denied throughout the novel. Indeed, the novel narratively circumscribes the sexual maturation of Topsy’s adolescence, transporting her directly from an asexual child in the chapters on St. Clare’s plantation to an asexual missionary in the “Results” chapter. Moreover, the gendering of this colonial labor paralleled the vision of colonizationist labor promoted within institutional organizations. For an example, see Karen Fisher Young, “Philadelphia’s Ladies’ Liberia School Association and the Rise and Decline of Northern Female Colonization Support,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 134, no.3 (2010): 235-261.

<sup>38</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963), 42. Though Fanon’s writings on religion are deeply historicized in colonial Algeria in the mid-twentieth century, his observation no doubt transcends historical and geographical contexts. I apply it here to refer to a broader ethos of settler colonialism in the imperial expansion of Christian nations, as the particular histories of innumerable colonies throughout the world and throughout the post-Colombian period no doubt corroborate. Contemporary commentators on Liberian colonization were certainly well aware this proclivity. James G. Birney’s *Letter on Colonization* (1834), for example, cites the genocidal realities of European settler colonialism in the Western Hemisphere, which was also couched in Christian ethics and millennialism, as a portentous model for Liberian colonization: “Can the imagination bring before us circumstances more favorable than those which were here realized by the colonists, for the exhibition of the Christian character? And where, after an experiment of 300 years, are all these people? Civilized?—Christianized? Of the South Americans, there are miserable, abject remnants; of the Islanders, there is scarcely a human being left, to testify to the Christian efforts of this Christian colony” (original emphasis); see James Birney, *Letter on Colonization, Addressed to the Rev. Thornton J. Mills, Corresponding Secretary of the Kentucky Colonization Society* (Boston: Garrison and Knapp, 1834), 36.

herself has been called to “the ways of the white man” through Miss Ophelia’s education. Though Topsy, born in the USA, is most certainly a “foreigner” in Liberia, Stowe’s classification of Africa as “her own country” avers the reconciliation of this diversity under the aegis of George’s Pan-Africanism, which attempts to consolidate distinct Black diasporic communities within the Liberian nation-building project. By collapsing the difference between African and Afro USAmerican, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* masks the violence inherent in the missionary labor of settler colonialism. Following the Christian arc of Topsy’s character, her migration to Africa represents the exile’s fateful return to her homeland. Because Africa is “her own country,” Topsy is not an imperialist bringing Christian enlightenment to the so-called Dark Continent, but rather a prophet bringing the Word of God to her own people.

But there is a different arc to Topsy’s character: the trickster. While Topsy’s seemingly willful misunderstandings of Miss Ophelia’s instructions and the comedic failures of language that her purportedly ignorant interpretations of language render visible have long been associated with the Afro USAmerican trope of the trickster.<sup>39</sup> In one such scene of failed religious tutoring, St. Clare imputes the comic communication breakdown to Miss Ophelia’s overestimation of the young girl:

“Our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the state wherein they were created.”

Topsy’s eyes twinkled, and she looked enquiringly.

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<sup>39</sup> The idea of Topsy as a trickster became even more prominent on the minstrel stage, most famously in George L. Aiken’s dramatic adaptation *Uncle Tom’s Cabin; or, Life among the Lowly. A Domestic Drama in Six Acts* (New York: Samuel French, 1858). For more Topsy as a minstrel figure in the years following the novel’s publication, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993), 211-233; Sarah Meer, *Uncle Tom Mania: Slavery, Minstrelsy, and Transatlantic Culture in the 1850s* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 2005).

“What is it, Topsy?” said Miss Ophelia.

“Please, Missis, was dat ar state Kintuck?”

“What state, Topsy?”

“Dat state dey fell out of. I used to hear Mas’r tell how we came down from Kintuck.”

St. Clare laughed.

“You’ll have to give her a meaning, or she’ll make one,” said he. “There seems to be a theory of emigration suggested there.” (368)

I take seriously St. Clare’s joke that Topsy’s misunderstanding suggests a “theory of emigration.” Topsy’s misreading of “state” charts the vertical orientation of heaven and earth onto the cartographic orientation of USAmerican geography—Kentucky, like grace, becomes a state that one can “fall out of.” This pun, on the one hand, asserts that geographical emigration becomes a manner by which one can return to a state of grace that one fell out of. This, of course, is also Stowe’s theory, as Topsy’s migration to Vermont and then Liberia finalizes her transubstantiation from “thing” into Christian missionary. On the other hand, Topsy’s wordplay also suggests that the road to grace provides an avenue by which one could return to a geographic location that one “fell out of.” Though Topsy asserts in this passage that “ar state” is Kentucky, she clarifies later that this is not her claim, but rather St. Clare’s supposition—“I used to hear Mas’r tell how we came down from Kintuck.” Given her young age, the Mississippi River’s connections to the illegal slave trade through the Gulf of Mexico via Cuba, it is possible that Africa, rather than Kentucky, is “her own country.” St. Clare’s initial description of her as a “fresh-caught specimen,” for example, also intimates this reading. Moreover, St. Clare’s cold, scientific language stems from the exaggerated catalogue of her phenotypic markers of

Blackness. The cataloguing of Topsy's extremely dark skin, her "woolly hair... braided in sundry little tails," her "round shining eyes, glittering as glass beads," and her "white and brilliant set of teeth" reiterates the intrusive probing of the auction block as Stowe limns St. Clare's latest "purchase" for her readers, but this visual violation of her character also discloses that she is "the blackest of her race" and therefore, it is implied, likely of direct African descent, if not from the continent itself (351-2).

If we return to Miss Ophelia's inaugural assessments of the young woman, my reading of Topsy as African finds even more traction. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, in many ways, attempts to project Topsy as a *tabula rasa* upon which her New England mentor can impress the ideals of WASP femininity, a common trope in white fiction of the period and, as Henry Louis Gates observes in his landmark study of tricksters, "[t]he notion that the Middle Passage was so traumatic that it functioned to create in the African a *tabula rasa* of consciousness is as odd as it is a fiction, a fiction that has served several economic orders and their attendant ideologies."<sup>40</sup> Whereas later adaptations of Topsy would emphasize the humor in her inability to understand that instruction, these early scenes occur in a markedly different tone. The tension between the vacuousness that Topsy's glassy eyes and half-open mouth suggest, on the one hand, and the underlying archness that the "shrewdness and cunning" in her facial expressions and the "cunning glances which she shot askance from the corners of her eye" belie, on the other, generate a great deal of uneasiness for Miss Ophelia (351, 352). Beneath the narrative lacquer of

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<sup>40</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford UP, 1988), 4. Gates refers here to Orlando Patterson's famous notion of "social death," a critical term whose theoretical purchase remains paramount despite the important challenges to its scope posed by historians of the African diaspora. For an indispensable critique of "social death," see Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114, no.5 (2009): 1231-1249.

racist physiognomy protrude unwelcome intimations of Topsy's acumen and disobedience, intimations of interiority and deliberate recalcitrance. Sass and misbehavior were, of course, common modes of opposition for enslaved Black women confined to the domestic sphere, but Miss Ophelia recognizes something decidedly sinister and deeply unsettling at work in Topsy's resistance to instruction.<sup>41</sup> Once more, these troubling aspects of her character stem from her "Africanness": as Richard Yarborough observes, the "grotesque freakishness of Topsy's strange performance" signals Stowe's emphasis on the young girl's "unredeemed African nature" and presage the remedial effects of education on Topsy's behavior.<sup>42</sup> More than simply marking Topsy's Blackness and paganism as "darkly magical and faintly sinister," Miss Ophelia's "utter dismay" when confronting the young girl stems from her inability to evaluate the person before her independently of the ontological schemata that scientific racialism had naturalized.<sup>43</sup> The emphasis on Topsy's "odd and goblin-like" physical features and the "odd and unearthly" song she performs at St. Clare's capricious behest suggest that Topsy is not only "non-human," but properly belongs to the realm of the *supernatural* (352). Because the heuristics of biological race fail to account for the disjuncture between Topsy's appearance (which suggests she is African and therefore an empty vessel awaiting Christian instruction) and her underlying discernment (which contradicts the image of her as a *tabula rasa*), these introductory sketches produce an

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<sup>41</sup> For more on talking back and refusing to work as modes of resistance for enslaved black women, see Joanne M. Braxton, *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition within a Tradition* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1989), 1-80; and Harryette Mullen, "Runaway Tongue: Resistant Orality in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, *Our Nig*, and *Beloved*," in *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America*, ed. Shirley Samuels (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992), 244-64.

<sup>42</sup> Yarborough, "Strategies of Black Characterization," 49.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

uncanny sensation for Miss Ophelia.<sup>44</sup> Rather than attributing the tension between the stereotypes and the individual to the inadequacy of racist typologies, Miss Ophelia ascribes her “utter dismay” to a confrontation with the supernatural—Topsy’s “shrewdness and cunning” could not possibly be indications of African humanity, so they are attributed to some atavistic, dark magic.

One of Miss Ophelia’s images, in particular, provides insight into an alternative understanding of Topsy’s seemingly supernatural capacity for machinations and defiance. The New England woman, in her first encounter with Topsy, “approached her new subject very much as a person might be supposed to approach a black spider, supposing them to have benevolent designs toward it” (354). Likening the young Black woman to a spider reiterates both her perceived non-humanity and the latent threat that she potentially poses to the white family. For USAmerican readers, this syllogism readily invokes the deadly black widow spider, including the *Latrodectus mactans* or Southern Black Widow, endemic to the southeastern region of the United States. If we approach this passage from the perspective of what Vèvè Clark terms “diaspora literacy,” however, another reading surfaces.<sup>45</sup> For Afro-diasporic readers in the

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<sup>44</sup> I deploy “the uncanny” here in the traditional Freudian sense; see Sigmund Freud, “The ‘Uncanny,’” in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. James Strachey, with Anna Freud, Alix Strachey, and Alan Tyson, vol. 17 (1917-1919), *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works* (London: Hogarth Press, and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955; reprint, 1986), 217-256. For an important and relevant reading of slavery, thing theory, and the uncanny, see Bill Brown, “Reification, Reanimation, and the American Uncanny,” *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Winter 2006): 175-207.

<sup>45</sup> Responding to the USAmerican academy’s pronounced resistance to Afro Caribbean writings, Clark suggests that these texts are only inscrutable insofar as they require “a command from indigenous, cultural perspectives beyond the field of Western or westernized signification... It is a skill for both narrator and reader which demands a knowledge of historical, social, cultural, and political development generated by lived and textual experience” (41-42); see Vèvè A. Clark, “Developing Diaspora Literacy and Marasa Consciousness,” in *Comparative American*

USAmerican South, the Caribbean, and even Liberia, for examples, Stowe's comparison of Topsy to a "black spider" might also readily recall Anansi, the Ashanti god who takes the form of a spider and operates as a trickster in both West African and Afro West Indian folklore.<sup>46</sup> This association more closely links Topsy to Africa and deepens our understanding of her operation as a trickster in the novel. Though Anansi is most strongly associated with the West Indies (and Jamaica, in particular), the figure is widely acknowledged as an influence for the USAmerican trickster figure Br'er Rabbit, born on southern plantations and eventually canonized in Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings, The Folk-lore of the Old Plantation* (1881).<sup>47</sup> For instance, "The Tar-Baby" story ("The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story" and "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox" in *Uncle Remus*) derives directly from an Anansi tale. The story, in Harris's telling, involves Br'er Fox creating a statue out of tar as a means of ensnaring Br'er Rabbit. When Br'er Rabbit misrecognizes the statue as a living thing, he becomes irritated

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*Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text*, ed. Hortense J. Spillers (New York: Routledge, 1991), 40-61.

<sup>46</sup> For more on Anansi (also spelled "Ananse" or called "Aunt Nancy"), see Daryl C. Dance, *Folklore from Contemporary Jamaicans* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1985); Harry G. Lefever, "Unraveling the Web of Anansi the Spider: The Trickster Figure in West African Diaspora," *Journal of Caribbean Studies* 9, no.3 (1993/1994): 247-265; Gerald McDermott, *Anansi the Spider: A Tale from the Ashanti* (New York: Henry Holt, 1986); and Pietro Deandra, "Ananse," in *Encyclopedia of the African Diaspora: Origins, Experiences, and Cultures*, ed. Carole Elizabeth Boyce Davies (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Inc., 2008), 84. For an excellent modern take on Anansi and the folkloric tradition surrounding this figure, see Neil Gaiman, *Anansi Boys* (New York: Morrow, 2005).

<sup>47</sup> Harris, in his introduction to the story collection, argues against the opinion of J.W. Powell that these tales were "borrowed by the negroes from the red-men" and instead, aligns himself with H.H. Smith (author of *Brazil, the Amazons and the Coast* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1879]), who asserts that "One thing is certain. The animal stories told by the negroes in our Southern States and in Brazil were brought by them from Africa" (qtd. in Harris); see *Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings, The Folk-lore of the Old Plantation* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881), 5, 8.



that the statue won't greet him and assaults it, getting stuck in the thick tar just as Br'er Fox intended. Br'er Fox returns to collect his prized prey, but the crafty Br'er Rabbit outsmarts him. He pleads with Br'er Fox, "don't fling me in dat brier-patch," and thereby entices the sadistic Br'er Fox to do precisely that. The joke, of course, is that Br'er Rabbit lives in the briar patch, and this flinging facilitates his escape from his predatory foe and effectively returning Br'er Rabbit to his home.

Combined with her stark Africanness, the idea of Topsy as an Anansi figure in the tradition of Br'er Rabbit allows for the possibility that Topsy's emigration from New England is actually also a *return* to Africa, a means of getting flung back into the briar patch, as it were. What are understood on the surface as obtuse misunderstandings of religious and moral instruction can simultaneously operate as misdirection and deception. After all, Topsy's resistance to Miss Ophelia's religious instruction anchors the New England woman's conviction to her cause, and, in turn, occasions the conditions of her sponsored voyage to Liberia.<sup>48</sup> This kind of subversive ingenuity defines Anansi, as Nadine George-Graves observes:

Anansi was/is a god, man, sometimes a woman and spider... he is at times a trickster but at other times the one tricked. He rarely works for his food, which leads some to call him lazy. Yet he always manages to eat, which leads some to call him resourceful. In most of his tales, Anansi manages to procure food and shelter by deceiving unwitting animals and humans. And even in those tales where his plans backfire, Anansi manages to survive to play his games another day... This complex character is at once a revolutionary hero and a petty thief. He

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<sup>48</sup> It is also worth noting that reading Topsy as an Anansi figure recuperates a viable, politically efficacious femininity for her. Tales of Anansi originate with the Ashanti people, a sub-population of the Akan people, whose social structure is matrilineal.

does not always represent the morally correct path and moves readers/audiences to consider him beyond binaries of good and evil. However, his saving grace is that he uses ingenuity rather than brute force and more often than not triumphs.<sup>49</sup>

Anansi tales provide a script for interpreting Topsy's clumsy catechisms and often stunning misinterpretations of basic instructions—these actions are not manifestations of laziness or stupidity, but rather part of a larger, brilliantly resourceful deception. Where Anansi tales focus on the acquisition of food and the endurance of flawed machinations, Topsy's trickery aims at what these symbols rather overtly represent: survival.

By recognizing the Topsy as a trickster in the Anansi tradition, an alternative narrative of her migration to Africa emerges, one that challenges the anti-Black and imperialist ideologies of Manifest Destiny East at the same time that it occurs within them—this is precisely the morally ambivalent space that Anansi tales often probe and muddy. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* holds Topsy up as an exemplar of how “one of the blackest of her race” could become culturally “white” in all but phenotypical markers of race, and then participate in the segregated imperialism of Manifest Destiny East. But Topsy's own “theory of emigration” cuts sharply against the novel's attempts to narrate her as an empty vessel for Miss Ophelia to fill with WASP femininity. If we understand Topsy as an Anansi-type trickster, her usages of language and narrative embrace the reductive racist projection that the novel maps onto her character, allowing her to manipulate those who underestimate her. Her power lies in Miss Ophelia's recognition of her as “multiform”: like Anansi, she is part human, part nonhuman (spider), and part supernatural (superhuman/god). As such, she not only defies the prescriptive, reductive epistemologies of

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<sup>49</sup> Nadine George-Graves, “Diasporic Spidering: Constructing Contemporary Black Identities,” in *Black Performance Theory*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Anita Gonzalez (Durham: Duke UP, 2014), 33-34.

racial stereotypes, she also troubles the more basic binary ontologies of human and nonhuman. This kind of *diasporic spidering*, as George-Graves describes the “complex matrix of networks that maps individual diasporic performativity” and “embraces the multifarious and slippery performances of black identity,” turns the overdetermination and inherent contradictions of racist stereotypes against themselves.<sup>50</sup> As their flawed, inconsistent, and degrading logics fall apart, a space opens up for Topsy to define or to refuse to define herself, and, in doing so, she develops a ploy to engineer her emancipation, her emigration, and her repatriation.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that Stowe’s turn to the image of the black spider or Miss Ophelia’s anachrophobic recognition of Topsy as such are intentionally signifyin(g) Anansi – she was almost certainly unfamiliar with this folkloric tradition. I also have no interest in recovering Topsy’s agency, dogmatically assigning her a speculative identity (African), or claiming to uncover her “true” motives in migrating to Africa. Instead, I want to emphasize that many of her many readers, especially the Afro-diasporic readers in the USA, the Caribbean, and West Africa, *would have* read Topsy as Anansi and *could have* imagined her obtuseness as a performative long con that would engineer her return to Africa. What this ambiguous reading of Topsy renders visible, then, is what Gates calls the “protracted argument of the nature of the sign itself, with the black vernacular discourse proffering its critique of the sign as the difference that blackness makes within the larger political culture and its historical unconscious.”<sup>51</sup> For me, as a white critic, to assert this reading as a *correct* one is to conscript Topsy into the trickster tradition and to narrate her as an agent of resistance against the racist, imperialist ethos of Manifest Destiny East, would illuminate more about my own desires and investments than the ideological

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>51</sup> Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 45.

labor of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a material text with many afterlives; it would align me with the narratological violence that I dedicate this study to critiquing and it would too significantly downplay the extent to which her character is neatly choreographed within the ideological apparatus that I outline in this chapter. Instead, we need to hold both these readings in hand at the same time. If we embrace an open, uncertain, *multiform* reading of Topsy and we acknowledge the manifold ways in which the novel's diverse audiences would have encountered her character, then a fuller, richer portrait of *Uncle Tom's Cabin's* impact begins to emerge. Afro-diasporic audiences could have read Topsy as Anansi, but this possibility does not allow for us to dismiss wholly the reality that she exemplified the possibility of Black uplift through white mentorship for the novel's primary audience of Anglo USAmericans.

### **Liberia through *The Looking-Glass***

Topsy provides a fictional example of how complicity within the discourses and practices of Manifest Destiny East could provide a means toward empowerment for the otherwise disenfranchised, but she certainly had historical corollaries. While many free Blacks from the USA knowingly and even enthusiastically participated in the neoimperialist aspects of Liberian state-building, others recognized that the white-authored script of Manifest Destiny East could provide a means for self-making apart from their typecast roles in that expansionist drama.<sup>52</sup> The African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Reverend Daniel H. Peterson provides one such example. In late 1853, the New York Colonization Society (NYCS) collaborated with the ACS to sponsor passages to Liberia for 53 free-born Black passengers from the Northern States, including

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<sup>52</sup> For a history detailing the lives of Black settler colonists in Liberia during this period, see Tom W. Schick, *Behold the Promised Land: A History of Afro-American Settler Society in Nineteenth-Century Liberia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1977).

Peterson. The winter voyage of the *Isla de Cuba*, a small barque formerly outfitted for trade between New York and the Caribbean, marked part of the renewed financial and ideological investment in Liberia discussed above, though this particular voyage stands out from many similar voyages for several reasons. First, this vessel received unprecedented coverage in the colonizationist press, both before its departure and after its return. In September 1853, for example, the *New York Colonization Journal* (the official periodical of the NYCS) ran an announcement that openings on the vessel were filling quickly, warning that “[w]e will not assure a passage to any one whose name is not on our list as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of October.”<sup>53</sup> Three months later, the paper published a full roster of the *Isla de Cuba*’s passengers, including their ages, relations, and states of birth.<sup>54</sup> The *Colonization Herald* (the official paper of the Pennsylvania Colonization Society) even tried to organize a party of supporters to send off the emigrants, “see them safely and pleasantly on ship-board, and, if possible, remain till they sail.”<sup>55</sup> After the barque returned the following spring, the *Herald* sustained its pre-voyage hype by publishing “Advices from the Pennsylvania Emigrants by the *Isla de Cuba*,” while the *New York Spectator*, the *African Repository*, the *Journal of Commerce*, and the *Virginia Colonizationist* all published letters from its passengers detailing their journeys.<sup>56</sup> This post-voyage coverage evidences the second reason for all of the fanfare surrounding the *Isla de Cuba*:

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<sup>53</sup> “Emigration to Liberia,” *New York Colonization Journal*, Sep. 1853.

<sup>54</sup> “Emigrants Vessels for Liberia,” *New York Colonization Journal*, Nov. 1853.

<sup>55</sup> “The *Isla de Cuba*,” *Colonization Herald*, Nov. 1853, 162.

<sup>56</sup> “Advices from the Pennsylvania Emigrants by the *Isla de Cuba*,” *Colonization Herald*, Apr. 1854, 182; “Later from Africa,” *African Repository*, May 1854 (reprinted from *New York Spectator*); “*Barque Isla de Cuba*,” *The Virginia Colonizationist*, May 1854 (reprinted from *Journal of Commerce*).

the passengers themselves, all of whom were freeborn and many of whom were members of the Black middle class in the North. The emigrants were accomplished and respected members of the free Black community, including renowned daguerreotypist Augustus Washington and the Reverend Samuel Williams.<sup>57</sup> According to a table included in the ACS annual report for 1854, the *Isla de Cuba* was unique in this regard, as each of the other five society-sponsored voyages during the previous year included at least a few formerly enslaved passengers; it was also the only vessel to depart from a Northern port and bearing exclusively Northern travelers.<sup>58</sup> In this regard, the voyage represented the national and state societies' investments in sending the "best and brightest" of Afro USAmerica to Liberia as the future leaders of the nascent republic, the kinds of men and women that W.E.B. DuBois would later coronate as the "talented tenth."<sup>59</sup>

As an accomplished tailor and an esteemed AME preacher with a respectable congregation in Oneida County, New York, Peterson fit this "best and brightest" billing. In the months preceding the barque's embarkation, Peterson wrote to a number of newspapers to announce his intentions of documenting the conditions of the colonies and soliciting funding for his passage in addition to that which the NYCS had already provided. In March 1853, both the *African Repository* and the *Colonization Herald* reprinted a notice from the *New York Journal of Commerce* describing Peterson as "proceeding to Liberia, for the purpose of investigation and

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<sup>57</sup> The travel narratives of both Washington and Williams are collected along with Peterson's in Wilson J. Moses, *Liberian Dreams: Back-to-Africa Narratives from the 1850s* (University Park: Penn State UP, 1998).

<sup>58</sup> "Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the American Colonization Society," *Colonization Herald*, Mar. 1854, 177.

<sup>59</sup> For more on the "talented tenth," see W.E.B. DuBois, "The Talented Tenth," in *The Negro Problem: A Series of Articles by Representative American Negroes of To-day* (New York: Jams Pott and Co., 1903), 31-76.

inquiry”; the *Herald* even editorializes that “[h]is report will be looked for with interest by those whose decision depends upon its character.”<sup>60</sup> During his three months in West Africa, Peterson did travel extensively, exploring not only the Liberian capital of Monrovia, but also Sierra Leone and Gambia. Upon his return, as promised, he published a report on his travels: *The Looking-Glass: Being a True Report and Narrative of the Life, Travels, and Labors of the Rev. Daniel H. Peterson, a Colored Clergyman; Embracing a Period of Time from the Year 1812 to 1854, and Including His Visit to Western Africa* (1854). This publication, in many ways, blends smoothly into the discursive field of Manifest Destiny East, a field circumscribed by many of the corporate colonizationist periodicals that anticipated the volume’s composition and created hype around the *Isla de Cuba*’s voyage. Peterson repeatedly praises the colonization project as “the most important and beneficial philanthropic movement in the United States of America” and concludes that “the salvation of the whole colored population depends” upon “this noble enterprise of settling Liberia.”<sup>61</sup> His account is also replete with the fatalistic rhetoric of inevitability that characterizes the post-colonizationist emigration philosophy of mid-century, arguing that “[t]here is no other way than this by which the colored people can obtain their deliverance and return to their own land—no other way by which they can arrive at self-government” (100). Furthermore, Peterson characterizes a sharp contrast between the educated

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<sup>60</sup> “A Colored Clergyman for Liberia,” *African Repository*, Mar. 1853, 84; “For Liberia,” *Colonization Herald*, Mar. 1853, 129. Though the *Herald* article drastically truncates the original article in order to fill a column and does not cite the *New York Journal of Commerce*, its source is still clear from verbatim excerpts.

<sup>61</sup> Daniel H. Peterson, *The Looking-Glass: Being a True Report and Narrative of the Life, Travels, and Labors of the Rev. Daniel H. Peterson, a Colored Clergyman; Embracing a Period of Time from the Year 1812 to 1854, and Including His Visit to Western Africa* (New York: Wright, 1854), 100, 124. All further references will be made parenthetically and refer to this edition.

Black settlers from the USA and the natives of West Africa. The former, for Peterson, “look as respectable as the best colored people in the United States, while they enjoy five times as much liberty, as ladies and gentlemen in the possession of all the comforts of life, and this in a nation of their own” (96). By contrast, he glosses the so-called Gambians (most likely Mandingos) that he encounters outside Liberia as a “wild and uncultivated” people who “wore charms about their person,” and walk about “half naked” (118, 110). They are, according to Peterson, “the blackest persons that I ever saw” (118). By articulating the juxtaposition between Afro-descended settler colonists from the USA and native West Africans in this way, Peterson reinforces a white supremacist epistemology that strongly associations civilization with whiteness and savagery with blackness.

While this pigmentocratic distinction echoes Stowe’s characterization of Topsy against her lighter-skinned counterparts in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, in *The Looking-Glass* the conflation of color and moral/intellectual capacity helps to reify a hierarchy wherein Black USAmerican settlers in Liberia understand themselves as superior to their native African counterparts. This hierarchy proved essential to justifying the Black USAmerican domination of (rather than collaboration with) Africans. In the propagandistic novel *Liberia; or, Mr. Peyton’s Experiments* (1853), for example, Sarah Josepha Hale’s Black settler colonists confirm this divide and implicitly underscore the importance of such rhetoric for the colonization movement. After providing detailed descriptions of the diverse and flourishing Liberian agricultural economy, one settler assures a prospective one that “I never do any thing but give my opinion now and then. There are plenty of natives that are glad to help us, and think a shilling a day a great deal.”<sup>62</sup> The

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<sup>62</sup> Sarah Josepha Hale, *Liberia; or, Mr. Peyton’s Experiments* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1853), 217.

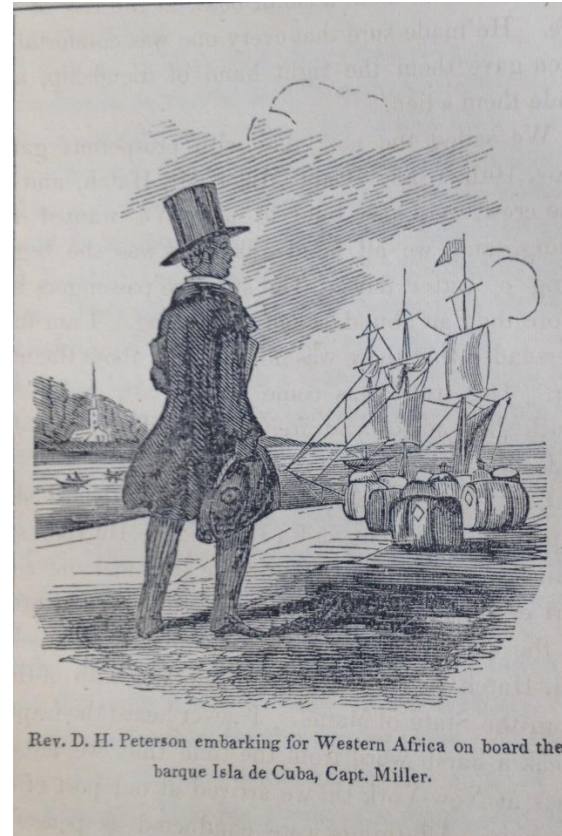
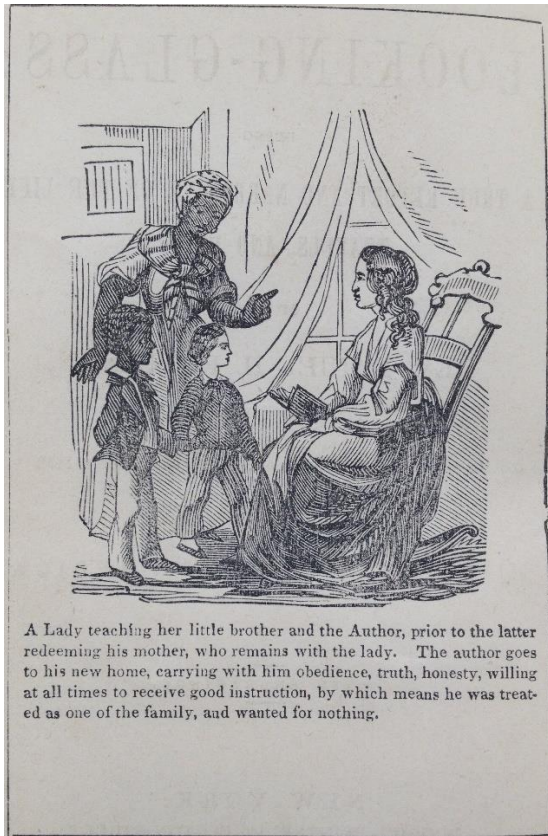


imagined division of labor is as clear as it is ironic: Black USAmericans, educated through the experience of chattel slavery, have graduated to possess and oversee their own estates, while the native Africans will provide the cheap, perhaps involuntary agricultural labor that will make those plantations and estates profitable. Put differently, Black settler colonists could now lay claim to a radical individualism since they were understood to be exemplars of their race, while the fungibility of West African labor is consistently rehearsed in the repetition of the monolithic, undifferentiated, unindividuated moniker “natives.” The master’s tools, as it were, were being employed to erect houses in which the formerly disenfranchised could themselves become masters. This fantasy of USAmerican exceptionalism and African inferiority reinforced Black settlers’ commitments to the USAmerican republicanism, Protestantism, and, in turn, Manifest Destiny East, all of which had previously occasioned the means of their dispossession, but were now underwriting their self-possession. As a result, this fantasy more securely moored Afro USAmerican settler colonists to the metropole and thereby undercutting other potential means of understanding their relationship to native West Africans, such as a Pan-Africanist political project founded upon affinity, familiarity, shared ancestry, and diasporic reconsolidation. In this way, the socioeconomic power dynamics of plantation slavery provided the means of Manifest Destiny East’s reproduction and expansion.

Unsurprisingly, the generated gap between the Afro USAmerican and the native West African plays out explicitly in *The Looking-Glass*’s custom wood engravings. Still very much a luxury in the 1850s, illustrations often served to market books more broadly, targeting audiences who wanted to appreciate the materiality of the publication or even appealing to consumers who could not actually read (especially free Blacks in the North). Indeed, in size, length, and ornateness, *The Looking-Glass* quite resembles a nineteenth-century gift book, elaborately

ornamented and illustrated publications that provided that both disseminated literature and served as art objects for display in middle class parlors; as its flexible uses and the moniker “gift book” suggest, these publications were often gifted as thoughtful favors, representing a relation or hoped for relation (they were a common fixture of middle class courtship) as much as their content. As both constitutive and distinct elements of *The Looking-Glass*, then, these lavish custom illustrations offer a sense of how the book aims to convey this message to a plurality of audiences. Among the eight woodcuts reproduced within the publication, two feature Peterson as a young domestic servant, one features him as an adolescent steward on the Delaware docks, four feature him as a well-dressed adult prior to his departure for Liberia, and one image features a landscape of West Africa.

Figures 1 and 2.



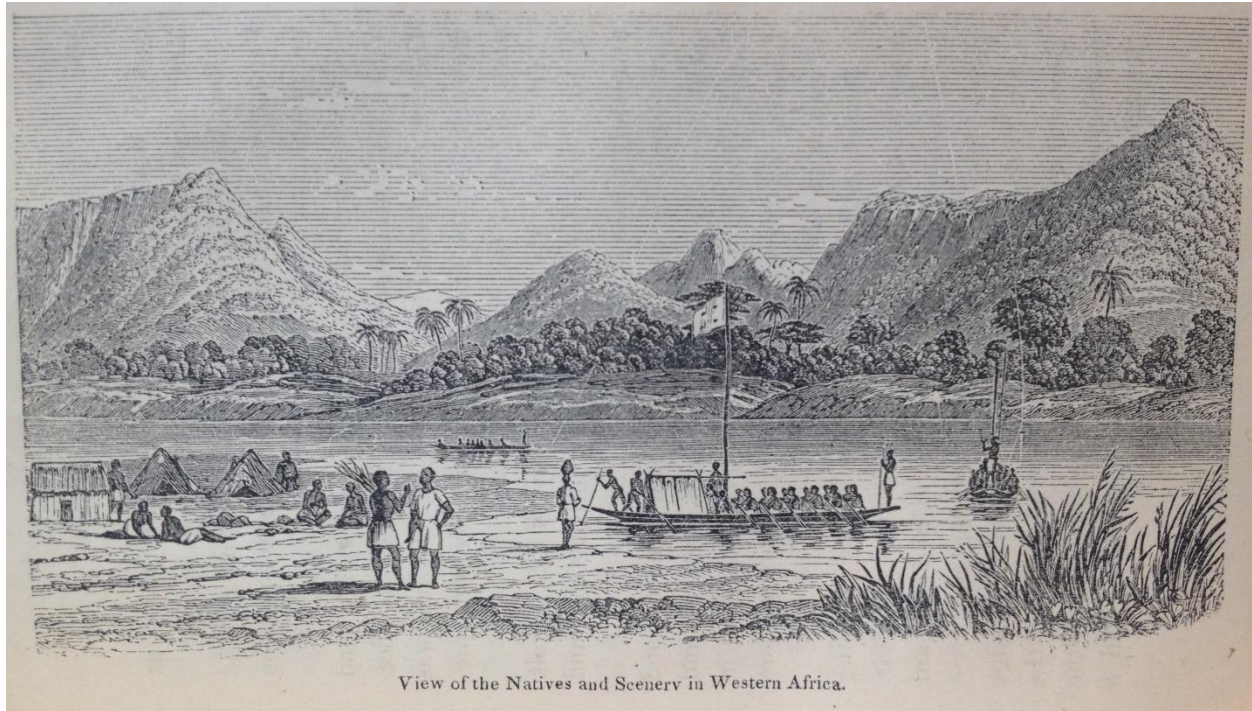
Source: Daniel Peterson, *The Looking-Glass* (New York: Wright [printer], 1854), 1, 79. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

These first seven images affirm the progress narrative inherent to the plot of the autobiography. In Figure 1, we see Peterson as a small child, standing well-groomed, clean, and erect beside the white brother of his mistress. His posture and sartorial presentation confirm the catalogue of traits that the caption assigns to him (“obedience, truth, honesty”). Moreover, the locked gaze of his white eyes on his white teacher confirms that he was, indeed, “willing at all times to receive good instruction,” while his white classmate evades her eyes, perhaps looking distractedly out the window in the background. The Black servant woman looming over the children seems to be scolding the latter for precisely this inattention. Peterson is not only “one of the family” here and a “Good Negro” who knows to appreciate the fortune of his access to education, but he is shown

to be the better behaved child of the interracial pair. Over the course of *The Looking-Glass* Peterson grows and changes throughout the series of portraits, with each adding a new layer to his development into a gentleman of the free Black middle class: we see him attending to a wealthy white family, his promotion to a paid steward, his joining the AME church, his wedding, his professional and ascension to the role of reverend, and, finally, his hopeful departure for Liberia. In this visualization of his embarkation (Figure 2), Peterson, now an adult, stands similarly erect in the foreground, adorned in a top hat, long overcoat, and tall boots, and though he carries a small bag of personal effects in his right hand, the majority of the cargo and luggage sits before him at the dock's edge, suggesting someone else has carried his baggage for him. The details collectively code as material testaments to his privileged position within the free Black middle class. The *Isla de Cuba* sits in the background in diminished scale and only its sails are wholly visible in the frame, privileging the depiction of the author over the depiction of the vessel, privileging his personal journey over the colonizationist project that occasioned the voyage.

If Figure 2 offers a punctuation mark in the author's personal progress narrative, it also serves as a sharp contrast with *The Looking-Glass's* final woodcut, entitled "View of the Natives and Scenery in Western Africa" (Figure 3). This image is notable for several reasons: it is the only woodcut that does not feature the author, it is the only woodcut that appears in the landscape orientation (horizontal) as opposed to the portrait orientation (vertical), and it is the only woodcut that depicts Africa and Africans.

Figure 3.



Source: Daniel Peterson, *The Looking-Glass* (New York: Wright [printer], 1854), 105. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

Similar to the final portrait of Peterson, this image represents people in the foreground and a ship, flag unfurled, behind them. Whereas the *Isla de Cuba* appears in diminished scale because of the portrait's perspective and a visual obstruction (the pier), the African vessel appears in full view, emphasizing the dramatic technological differences between the US American barque and the West African canoe. The latter's lack of sails, the hypervisibility of the manual labor required to move the vessel, and the tent which presumably serves as a cabin all underscore the technological pre-modernity of African transportation. Moreover, where Figure 2 foregrounds Peterson's middle class apparel, the many native Africans depicted in this view are humbly dressed or naked to the waist, much like the "half-naked" Gambians that Peterson derides in the accompanying prose. Similarly, Peterson's bag of personal effects is replaced by a bundle of sticks held by the topless man center-left, the figure closest to the viewer. Finally, the church

overlooking the harbor in the background of Figure 2 finds its Figure 3 corollaries in the humble tents and thatch structures on the shore, and the thick, fecund, uncleared jungle across the water. The accumulative effect of the contrasts between these corresponding focal points is the overwhelming sense of underdevelopment in West Africa. Tellingly, although Peterson's narrative tends toward precision in its documentation of place and geography, especially once it turns to Africa, this landscape's generic title "Views of the Natives and Scenery in Western Africa" suggests the universality of this vista, asserting its capacity to simulate or to substitute for any of the specific sites that Peterson visited. This sense of interchangeability applies to the human subjects of the illustration as well: whereas the first seven woodcuts highlight Peterson's radical individualism and chart his progressive evolution into an accomplished member of the Black middle class, the undifferentiated bodies that mill about the scene of silent labor in utter anonymity lay claim to no geographic or tribal (nevermind individual) identity apart from the historically and rhetorically loaded label of "Natives."

The contrast between USAmericanized Blacks and the natives of West Africa gestures toward the political, entrepreneurial, and moral labor awaiting free Blacks in Liberia. *The Looking-Glass* expands the intended division of labor between these groups vis-à-vis agriculture that we saw in Hale's *Liberia* into the realm of moral education through the conceit of cultivation:

The only way to redeem Africa is to settle it as soon as possible. Take hold of the land, cultivate it, and in employing the natives, cultivate their minds at the same time that the land is rendered fruitful. Set good examples before them, and treat them well. In that way, we should soon gain both themselves and the land, and should all become one people in manners, habits, and religion. Then we should all

become full citizens, and enjoy all the privileges of other nations. The minds of the natives and the land are just alike while uncultivated. The lands want ploughing up and sowing down with grain, and the different kinds of herd grass, and it is necessary to cross the breed of their flocks and herds. The minds of the natives must be broken up with the ploughshare of the Gospel, and the seeds of grace, love, and unity must be planted in their minds, and they will bring forth much fruit to the glory of God, and be a blessing to the human family. I see that the Law and Gospel must work together in unity for the improvement of this country; and when brought to bear upon it, they will carry everything before them. Darkness and heathen principles will flee away, and wisdom and light must follow. (120-121)

The slippage between the physical labor of cultivating the West African soil and the pedagogical labor of cultivating West African minds betrays these two operations to be twin sides of the same coin. The wordplay here also seems to reveal Peterson's embrace of the more violent aspects of colonization. Whereas the land becomes a complicit agent in its own cultivation – it “*want(s)* ploughing up and sowing down,” *The Looking-Glass* slips into the imperative mood when describing the “cultivation” of West Africans themselves: “the minds of the natives *must be broken up* with the ploughshare of the Gospel.” The imperative here underscores the sense that this missionary work is the Lord's work, a divinely directed project, but it also denotes the need for force when confronting the natives' unwillingness to convert to Christianity. Indeed, the violent turn when the ploughshare becomes metaphoric rather than literal translates directly into the scenes of violent encounters between the settler colonists and the indigenous peoples of coast



that are frequent across similar accounts of Liberia at mid-century.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Peterson suggests that only through the cultivation of both “themselves and the land... should all become one people in manners, habits, and religion.” Unlike his better known Pan-Africanist contemporaries like Edward Blyden and Alexander Crummell, Peterson clearly regards the native Africans and the Afro USAmericans as divergent peoples rather than *already* “one people.” The sense of the labor and fortune awaiting Black emigrants in Liberia that *The Looking-Glass* nourishes, then, stems from the sense of Afro USAmerican exceptionalism and, more generally, USAmerican exceptionalism that characterize the georacial mythology of Manifest Destiny more broadly.

Despite the publication’s fine aesthetics (more on these below), pertinent subject matter, and the apparent anticipation waiting its issuance, however, *The Looking-Glass* received almost no attention from colonization societies following its publication. Indeed, shortly after Peterson’s return to New York in February 1854, a number of colonizationist papers continued to hype the arrival of his travel narrative. The *Virginia Colonizationist*, for example, recommended his

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<sup>63</sup> Although Peterson’s travel narrative makes no mention of conflicts between natives and settlers (further evidence of its complicity within corporate colonizationist interests), tensions were salient along the republic’s borders and exacerbated by the religious, political, and racial ideologies of Manifest Destiny East. According to Bell I. Wiley, “Territorial expansion was largely responsible for the chronic conflict between natives and settlers that occurred in the years preceding the American Civil War. The tribesman regarded the newcomers with suspicion from the beginning, and apprehension was intensified as the immigrants increased in number, acquired more land, cut forests, killed the game, interfered with the slave trade, and sought to impose Christian religion upon them. Relations were also strained by the attitude of superiority manifested by blacks from America. The immigrants referred contemptuously to the natives as savages and heathens”; see *Slaves No More: Letters from Liberia, 1833-1869* (Lexington: U of Kentucky P, 1980), 4. For a detailed, contemporary account of missionary work and native-settler conflicts, see George S. Brown, *Brown’s Abridged Journal, Containing a Brief Account of the Life, Trials and Travels of Geo. S. Brown, Six Years a Missionary in Liberia, West Africa, a Miracle of God’s Grace* (Troy, NY: Prescott and Wilson, 1849).



account of Liberia strongly, claiming that “Mr. Peterson has had a good opportunity of seeing the effects that the different religious sects have had in civilizing Africa, and from him I suppose you will learn what is necessary.”<sup>64</sup> *The Daily Atlas* simply reported *in toto* that “The Rev. D.H. Peterson, a colored gentleman, has just arrived at New York, from Monrovia, Sierra Leone and Gambia, Western Africa, bringing favorable reports from those places.”<sup>65</sup> Similarly, the *African Repository* reprinted an article that had already appeared in the *New York Spectator*, the *Alexandria Gazette*, the *Washington Sentinel*, and the *Charleston Courier*, in which Peterson, “full satisfied with the appearance of things” in Liberia, announces that “[i]t is my intention to publish some notice of what I have seen, with my views of the country, its people, &c., in pamphlet form. I want to show that many things I have heard and read against the noble cause of colonization are utterly untrue.”<sup>66</sup> This announcement, however, lifted from another paper, is the only mention of *The Looking-Glass*—oblique as it is—in the official publication of the ACS, the society that helped finance the voyage that made this publication possible. Put differently, the ACS was quite literally invested in the production of Peterson’s travel narrative. References to the volume become even more difficult to find after the *Isla de Cuba*’s immediate return in spring 1854. By June, *The Looking-Glass* was in print, and the *Trenton State Gazette* described it as “a neat volume of 150 pages,” which “will be read with interest, especially by all who feel an interest in the success of the colonization of Western Africa,” and although the *Gazette*’s copy was “handed to us by the author,” the paper also advertised its availability at two local

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<sup>64</sup> “Barque Isla de Cuba,” *Virginia Colonizationist*, 12 February 1853.

<sup>65</sup> “Liberia,” *The Daily Atlas* 14 March 1854.

<sup>66</sup> “Later from Africa,” *African Repository*, 1 May 1854, 154.

bookstores.<sup>67</sup> Almost a year later, Peterson was still trying to promote *The Looking-Glass* by traveling town to town throughout the Northeast and “soliciting subscriptions for his book.”<sup>68</sup>

The dissonance between the anticipation for Peterson’s report and its lack of traction with the same colonizationists who, either directly or indirectly, underwrote its publication is befuddling. It would be understandable if these organizations were unsatisfied with the quality of Peterson’s account and chose to summarize it instead of excerpting it. It would also be understandable if they were displeased with the content of the report and chose to rebut or repudiate his findings.<sup>69</sup> Neither of these became the case though. Peterson’s report on the conditions of West Africa is overwhelming positive, and his conclusions unambiguously validate the colonizationist agenda and the settler colonial ethos of Manifest Destiny East, and yet still there is no substantive reception of the text itself among the colonizationist periodicals, or among the annual reports produced during the ACS and NYCS anniversary meetings. So why, then, did the colonizationist societies who had sponsored Peterson’s exploratory mission to Liberia not support the pro-colonization publication that resulted from said mission?

There are two primary reasons for what can only be understood as corporate colonizationists’ willing refusal to endorse *The Looking-Glass*. First, its glowing report of the colony notwithstanding, the fact that Peterson *returned* to New York significantly undermined

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<sup>67</sup> “The Looking Glass,” *Trenton State Gazette* 26 June 1854.

<sup>68</sup> “THE REV. D.H. PETERSON,” *New-London Weekly Chronicle*, 12 April, 1855.

<sup>69</sup> The ACS was especially particular about its image during this time. After expressing disappointment with a commissioned daguerreotype of the Monrovia cityscape by Peterson’s shipmate Augustus Washington, the ACS demanded a new daguerreotype and refused to circulate the first one; see Dalila Scruggs, “‘Photographs to Answer Our Purposes’: Representations of the Liberian Landscape in Colonization Print Culture,” in *Early African American Print Culture*, ed. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2012), 203-230.

the text's capacity to persuade free Blacks in the USA to expatriate to Liberia. Could Liberia really be the geography of hope that Peterson promised if he himself elected to return to and then remain in the USA? Although the details of Peterson's final years before his death (sometime prior to 1863) are difficult to ascertain, it is almost certain that he never made the transatlantic voyage again.<sup>70</sup> In light of the press fanfare and his own savvy self-promotion accompanying his first crossing, his decision to emigrate permanently would have almost certainly been covered in the colonizationist papers, especially since he would have likely required additional financing from the national or state societies. Secondly, and more importantly, Peterson's account of Liberia was not strictly a report on the conditions of Liberia. In fact, the lengthy full title of his book (*The Looking-Glass: Being a True Report and Narrative of the Life, Travels, and Labors of the Rev. Daniel H. Peterson, a Colored Clergyman; Embracing a Period of Time from the Year 1812 to 1854, and Including His Visit to Western Africa*) mentions neither Liberia nor emigration and, in service of the first point, actually underscores the planned impermanency of Peterson's "Visit" to West Africa. Moreover, as the title suggests, fully half of the book comprises the "Life, Travels, and Labors" of Peterson in the USA prior to his journey abroad. He details his childhood, including his efforts to purchase his mother's freedom and his apprenticeships for a number of wealthy, white gentlemen in the Mid-Atlantic states. He also offers an in-depth overview of the religious and social landscape of several Black churches in the North, including issuing lengthy, highly personal condemnations of particular congregations or sects.

The girth and content of these early chapters greatly complicate Peterson's endorsement of Liberia, which Wilson Moses regards as "superficial and fleeting," because they "have little to

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<sup>70</sup> A notice in the *Christian Recorder* in 1864 reports the death of his daughter and refers to him as "the late Rev. D.H. Peterson," adding that she was buried in a family plot in Camden, New Jersey just after Christmas 1863; see "Died," *Christian Recorder*, 9 January 1864, 7.

do with emigration, but they do provide unusual insights into the mind of a man who passed up few chances to deride African Americans or to praise paternalistic whites.”<sup>71</sup> If we take seriously that Peterson’s colonizationist commitments were, in fact, ephemeral rather than dogmatic, then *The Looking-Glass* becomes a fascinating case study for how the discourses Manifest Destiny East provided routes to Black empowerment that defied the attempted conscription of Black voices and Black bodies into the imperial labors of conquering Africa. For example, although colonizationists who helped finance Peterson’s exploratory voyage to West Africa expected a favorable report on the conditions of the Liberian colony (if not an unapologetic propaganda piece), *The Looking-Glass* defies easy classification. More than simply an eye-witness account of colonial progress and the successes of Black nationalism in Africa, Peterson’s account shares much in common with contemporary travel narratives, describing the quotidian happenings aboard the *Isla de Cuba* and then offering his more ethnographic observations of colonial and native cultures in West Africa. Between his ruminations of the state of the Black Church in the Northeast and his arguments for the necessity of missionary labor, Peterson’s book reads as a kind of religious treatise. The University of North Carolina’s *Documenting the American South* digital archive (<http://docsouth.unc.edu/>) even catalogs *The Looking-Glass* under its collection of “North American Slave Narratives,” implicitly arguing that its many stylistic resonances with that genre, (e.g. a detailed personal recollection of the author’s conversion to Christianity, his journey out of the South, and his unambiguous condemnation of slavery) outweigh the fact that Peterson “was never actually enslaved.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Moses, *Liberian Dreams*, xxviii.

<sup>72</sup> Erin Penrod, “Daniel H. Peterson, *The Looking-Glass: Being a True Report and Narrative of the Life, Travels, and Labors of the Rev. Daniel H. Peterson, a Colored Clergyman; Embracing a Period of Time from the Year 1812 to 1854, and Including His Visit to Western Africa*, New-

The materiality of *The Looking-Glass* as a book-object further confounds its categorization, but also sheds light on how Peterson imagined its functionality. Significantly, Peterson seems to have published the book himself. J.P. Wright, listed as “Wright, Printer” on the volume’s title page, was, significantly, a printer and not a publisher. During the late 1830s and early 1840s, Wright fostered close connections with Wiley and Putnam, printing their publications of Anna Jameson’s *Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada* (1839), *A Winter in the West Indies and Florida* (1839) by “an invalid,” Henry P. Tappan’s *The Doctrine of the Will* (1840), and William Burke’s *The Mineral Springs of Western Virginia* (1842).<sup>73</sup> Peterson, therefore, likely financed the publication of the book himself and commissioned Wright to print it. This printing job marks a radical departure from Wright’s typical projects in

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York: Wright, 1854. Summary,” *Documenting the American South*, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/peterson/summary.html>. Although no primary or secondary source I have encountered contradicts the fact of Peterson’s free birth, the conditions of his freedom and that fact itself are peculiar. Peterson details laboring in his youth to earn wages sufficient to purchase his mother’s freedom, but according to the legal codification of *partus sequitur ventrem* (meaning “the child follows the condition of the mother”), Peterson too would normally have been born into slavery. Because his mother was a house servant and Peterson himself goes to great lengths to describe the privileged status and education he enjoyed during his youth, the most likely explanation is that Peterson’s mother’s master was also his father. This parentage perhaps explains why Peterson, who would normally have been born into slavery, was born free.

<sup>73</sup> While Wright appears to have been a mainstay of New York publishing, his printing services were largely itinerant and seem to have been based on commissions from publishers. From 1843 to 1854, publications for which Wright served as printer variously list three different addresses on Fulton Street: *Proceedings of the New York Historical Society. for the Year 1843* lists Wright’s address as 122 Fulton St., while *Selections from the Speeches and Writings of Prominent Men in the United States, on the Subject of Abolition and Agitation, and in favor of the Compromise Measures of the last session of Congress, addressed to the People of the State of New-York by the Union Safety Committee* (1851) lists it as 74 Fulton St. *The Looking-Glass* was printed from 146 Fulton St. Whereas these and many other publications list Wright as a “printer” at the bottom of the copyright page, *The Looking-Glass* is relatively unique in listing him prominently on the title page, though still as “printer,” suggesting that Peterson likely published the volume himself.

the 1850s, however. An outlier from the predominantly cheaply bound pamphlets in Wright's oeuvre, *The Looking-Glass* more closely resembles a gift book: at a compact 16cm, it is a well-bound volume bearing a gilded inlay of an olive-branch-bearing dove framed by the words "A Land of Rest Peace and Unity; A Government of Wisdom and Equality"; its ornate binding features latticework under its title, a complement to its gold-trimmed pages and eight custom-made, wood-cut illustrations. Not to put too fine a point on it, *The Looking-Glass* is a fancy publication, which, like many gift books, often functioned as an art object for display in middle class parlors or as a thoughtful favor in middle class courtship more than as a book for reading.

More to the point, however, the ostentatious materiality of *The Looking-Glass* appears to have been a deliberate request from Peterson, since the book, aesthetically speaking, delineates uncharted territory for Wright's publishing outfit. Peterson's choice to self-publish *The Looking-Glass* as a well-manicured, chic volume complements his incorporation of a report on Liberia into a more personal narrative. Together, these decisions represent his efforts to refashion the financial and travel that the colonizationist societies afforded to him. Rather than simply becoming an agent of Manifest Destiny East as his requests for and acquisition of colonizationist funds might suggest or, indeed, require, Peterson goes off-script and improvises: without actively undercutting the colonizationist project or the imperial directives of Manifest Destiny East, he takes advantage of the opportunity for financing and travel in order to publish a visually stunning, originally illustrated autobiographical narrative. This kind of self-fashioning and self-making is, of course, a common reading how the assembly and publication of the slave narrative functioned for fugitive slaves and emancipated individuals. That Peterson, a freeborn Black man, undertakes a similar project bespeaks the liminal, partial, and tenuous citizenship to which members of the free Black middle class had access. At the same time, however, this mode of

subjectivity challenges the totalizing vision of Manifest Destiny East and detracts from its power to explain, contain, and arrange Black lives.

## **Conclusion**

Despite the dramatic surge in Black emigration from the USA to Liberia in the 1850s, the project of Manifest Destiny East never fully materialized, most likely and ironically because of the very thing that gradual emancipation through colonization had been intended to avoid: a Civil War. As I discussed at the conclusion of the previous chapter, Abraham Lincoln's Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation on 22 September 1862 avows the federal government's commitment to "the effort to colonize persons of African descent, with their consent, upon this continent, or elsewhere, with the previously obtained consent of the Governments existing there." While the language allowing the formerly enslaved to consent to their colonization and determine their own destinations appears to mitigate the segregationist logic of Manifest Destiny and Manifest Destiny East, the parallel requirement of foreign governmental consent dramatically complicates the colonization of Black USAmericans elsewhere in the Americas. With the exception of Haiti, few existing governments in the Americas would have welcomed large swaths of Black immigrants. By contrast, that same year, the USA finally established diplomatic relations with Liberia, at last recognizing the republic's independence fifteen years after its Declaration. In tandem with the unwillingness of American governments to receive free Black migrants, this shift in foreign policy implicitly established Liberia as the most practical site for post-emancipation colonization. Additionally, the federal recognition of Liberian independence and autonomy also registers the ways in which the Civil War interrupted the imperialist expansion of the USA into Africa. The redirection of nationalist efforts toward reconsolidating the House

Divided, the postbellum USA could not assert its imperial will through its Black avatars in West Africa. While the USA turned inward, Europe turned to Africa, quickly staking their own colonial claims in the regions of West Africa that Liberia might have claimed for the USA had the Civil War not jarred the nation awake from the oneiric fantasy of Manifest Destiny East.

Throughout this chapter, I have suggested how the prevailing discourses of Manifest Destiny East aimed to racialize and re-racialize diverse Black bodies in their attempts to narrate the providentially segregated labor of USAmerican imperial expansion. By situating fictional characters like Topsy and historical figures like Peterson as both within and against this ideological apparatus, this chapter documents methods of reading diasporically that recognize indeterminacy within the overdetermination of Manifest Destiny East's racial scripts and recognize subjectivity within the subjectivation of state-sponsored white supremacy and Black eviction. To be clear, it is not my intention to have "recovered" agency for these individuals within a system that would deny them it, nor is it my intention to suggest that their practices of resistance successful rebut the prescriptions and politics of Manifest Destiny East. Quite the opposite, this chapter demonstrates the immense and continuing influence of the racial ideologies that undergirded this mid-nineteenth century project. Instead, by charting how Topsy and Peterson operate beyond the reductive racialist typologies that Manifest Destiny East maps onto them, this chapter models a reading strategy that can begin to chip away at the kinds of representational mastery over Black bodies that such racial mythologies would claim. It is perhaps fitting, then, that we know nothing of Topsy's ultimate fate in Liberia or Peterson's final years in the USA—to know or to claim to know would be to assert just such a kind of ownership over their symbolic utility. Recognizing their multiform subjectivity and the indeterminate resolutions of their narratives preserves what Edouard Glissant calls the "right to opacity" and



allows them to continue to resist the ideological labor of representation that Manifest Destiny East or any number of other racially circumscribed geopolitical projects might demand of them.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997), 189-194.

### CHAPTER III

#### NONHISTORICAL FICTION AND THE FUTURES OF COLOURED TRINIDADIAN IN *ADOLPHUS AND THE SLAVE SON*

*The pages of history, which unfold to us the barbarities of past ages, are not intended to throw us back into barbarism; on the contrary, it is by reading and meditating upon the evils of the past, that we find the most enriching lessons of wisdom. The past is the parent of the present, and to whom can the youthful turn for instruction with more sanguine hope of success, than to a father whose mind is ripened by age and experience? Therefore it is we disclaim any desire to arouse bitter feelings; all we wish is, that the past, however disgraceful it may appear to one party, and however painful to another, be not entirely buried in forgetfulness, because it is a source of lessons pregnant with utility.*

— *Adolphus, a Tale* (1853)

Where the previous chapter considered how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* participated in and furthered the georacial mythology of Manifest Destiny East, this chapter explores the immense literary, social, and political impact of that novel in colonial Trinidad. Though the novel exerted tremendous influence throughout the Atlantic world, in the unique historical and geographic context of Trinidad, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* provided a particularly fruitful cultural reference point for imagining, nuancing, and articulating other georacial mythologies. A former Spanish colony that the British had claimed as their own around the turn of the century, Trinidad is the southernmost island in the Lesser Antilles, located immediately off the coast of Venezuela.

Situated in a politically strategic position at the intersection of colonial empires and trade routes, the island was thought by many to be the future of the British Empire in America because of its relative lack of dependence on the plantation economy and slavery. Even after the British abolished slavery throughout the West Indian colonies in 1834, Trinidad remained nonetheless preoccupied with the legacy and future of the institution, preoccupations fanned by the circum-Atlantic wake of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In addition to reprinting articles from the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* (the official periodical of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society), colonial newspapers attentively documented the debate over slavery in the USA, including Harriet Beecher Stowe's international literary sensation. Local papers ran reviews of the novel and its dramatic adaptations in London (reprinted from metropolitan papers), incredulously indexed its domestic and foreign sales figures, and even translated the preface to a new German edition of the novel. They also published a number of articles that detailed "An Incident for another *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" or "A Parallel to 'St. Clair,'" with several papers even including excerpts from *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853) or the novel itself in their columns.<sup>1</sup>

Emergent Trinidadian literature in the 1850s marks an additional layer of the colony's response to Stowe's bestseller. In particular, the anonymously published *Adolphus* (1853) and Marcella Fanny Wilkins's *The Slave Son* (1854) look back at Trinidadian slavery in the earlier

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<sup>1</sup> "Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Trinidadian*, November 24, 1852; "The Drama," *Trinidadian* January 19, 1853; "An Incident for another *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," *San Fernando Gazette*, January 14, 1853; "Anti-Slavery Literature," *San Fernando Gazette*, November 12, 1853; "A Parallel to 'St. Clair'" *Trinidadian* March 2, 1853; "Uncle Tom's Cabin," *Trinidadian*, January 1, 1853; "Uncle Tom's Cabin," *San Fernando Gazette* January 28, 1853; "Illustrations of Slavery," *San Fernando Gazette*, August 19, 1853. According to Selwyn Cudjoe, the literary-minded *Trinidad Free Press* reprinted the first three chapters of the novel from March to May 1853; see *Beyond Boundaries: The Intellectual Tradition of Trinidad and Tobago in the Nineteenth Century* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2003), 115.

part of the century through the lens of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. While Stowe's novel certainly impacted these works stylistically and thematically, "the mulatto hero and heroines of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" were particularly influential on the formation of what Belinda Edmondson calls the "brown hero" novel in Trinidad—works of fiction featuring educated *Coloured* protagonists who struggle against the anti-Black prejudices of West Indian society.<sup>2</sup> As I argue in this chapter, however, the greatest influence of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son* was not the centrality of its mulatto characters, but rather the destiny/destination of those mulatto characters. Where Stowe's novel famously concludes with George, Eliza, and Topsy all expatriating from the USA to the newly independent West African republic of Liberia, each of these Trinidadian novels follow suit: their respective mulatto heroes flee from Trinidad and seek refuge in nearby Venezuela.

My analysis of these works unpacks the ideological and political motivations of *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son* as works of historical fiction. Published in the post-emancipation 1850s and set during the pre-1834 era of slavery, these novels meditate on the past, present, and future of race relations vis-à-vis the legacy of slavery in colonial Trinidad. Each text racializes key characters as what Georg Lukács, in his seminal work on the European historical novel, calls "historical-social types"—characters that serve as demographically representative figures and

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<sup>2</sup> Belinda Edmondson, *Caribbean Middlebrow: Leisure Culture and the Middle Class* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009), 62, 63. Although Edmondson does not include *The Slave Son* in her analysis, it falls squarely within the genre she describes. Throughout this chapter, I adopt the geographically and culturally specific language of the nineteenth century, which often includes uncomfortable and politically charged racial terms like "mulatto" and "Coloured." In the case of the latter, I preserve the English spelling "Coloured" throughout this chapter to signal my usage of this term as a locally and historically accurate term for the Trinidadian population of mixed African and European descent. I use a capitalized version of Edmondson's term "Brown" interchangeably with "Coloured." I also use the more modern term "Afro-Trinidadian" as a blanket term for Trinidadians of varying degrees of African descent.

therefore embody historically particular epochs or cultures.<sup>3</sup> By indexing how these symbolic types signify along the racial and temporal axes of transnational Trinidadian history, this chapter exposes how these novels attempt to narrate that history in such a way that naturalizes the relocation of Coloured Trinidadians to postcolonial Venezuela. Both texts, for example, invoke the tropology of the tragic mulatto so common to USAmerican literature, defining their Coloured protagonists in relation to other ostensibly representative racial figures (e.g. the “white mulatto” or the Black maroon) in order to demonstrate their unresolvable placelessness within the socioracial order of colonial Trinidad. Because these characters operate narratively in the past and symbolically in the present of their publication dates, they synchronically conflate the institutional racism of the pre- and post-emancipation periods into a single, continuous phenomenon. In doing so, they normalize these racial power structures as characteristic features of Trinidadian society rather than historically, temporally contingent features of slavery. Furthermore, because these works of fiction explicitly invoke history to justify Coloured emigration, they also introduce external Venezuelan characters who affirm the Brown heroes’ decisions to expatriate to the Spanish Main by embodying-typifying the opportunities for Coloured Trinidadians unique to that geography, possibilities that stand in sharp contrast to their perceived placelessness on the island. In *Adolphus*, this personage is none other than *El Libertador* himself, Simón Bolívar, whose figurative resurrection (he died in 1830) and radical deracialization literally embody the postracial ideal that his republic promises to Trinidadian exiles. *The Slave Son*, by contrast, introduces a *mestizo* fisherman who guides the protagonist, a fugitive slave, to Venezuela and freedom. In doing so, Wilkins’s novel symbolically tethers

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<sup>3</sup> Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1969), 35.

together the *mestizo* and the mulatto as representatives of “vanishing” populations from Trinidad by associating each with the Spanish American colonial past rather than the Anglo American protonationalist present/future.

Naturalizing the institutional racism of colonial Trinidad through the dynamics between racially representative types helps to underscore the pessimistic fatalism of these pro-emigration novels: if the island’s systematic political and economic disenfranchisement of Coloured Trinidadians mark intractable, *natural* aspects of that society, then Coloured expatriation to Venezuela emerges as the only viable solution. Although these novels are similarly motivated by a cynical disillusionment with the future possibilities for Coloured Trinidadians under colonial British rule, their points of emphatic optimism reveal other ideological baggage: whereas *Adolphus* invests in an ahistorical, atemporal reading of Bolivarian racial democracy in order to justify Brown emigration, *The Slave Son* bespeaks the misguided benevolence of white paternalism at the same time that it whispers about the promise of potentially “whitening” colonial Trinidad under its breath. Race in these historical novels performs a temporalizing function: the persistence of racial categories from slavery to emancipation serves as a constant across time, while the exacerbation of colony/metropole relations and the purported placelessness of the Coloured middle class mark modern problems that need be narrated into the pre-1834 past. In order to unravel this complex narrative fabric, this chapter offers diachronic and multilocal readings of *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son* that interrupt the ideological, narratological machinery that naturalizes white supremacy and, in turn, Brown emigration from Trinidad. I recuperate the historical and racial specificity of 1850s Trinidad and Venezuela in order to render visible the fault lines in these texts’ representational politics and the erasures in their efforts to historicize the present. By toggling between transnational and local optics of race,

as well as the temporal optics of past, present, and future, this chapter ultimately exposes the ways in which these demographically symbolic types finally fail to perform the representational labor these historical novels require of them and, instead, continue to challenge the racial power structures of colonial Trinidad and Venezuela.

### **Nonhistorical Fiction: A Theory**

Amid an explosion of historical fiction in both Europe and the United States in the first half of the nineteenth century, *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son* exemplify the post-1848 European historical novel that Georg Lukács describes in his seminal *The Historical Novel* (1937) in significant ways.<sup>4</sup> For Lukács, the 1848 Revolutions across Europe reoriented the ideological function of historiography and historical fiction from elaborating a progress narrative linking the past and the present to flattening the differences between yesterday and today in order to mystify history and thereby justify imperialist, capitalist exploitation in the present:

Where it is not the ‘uniqueness’ of earlier events that is presented, history is *modernized*. This means that the historian proceeds from the belief that the fundamental structure of the past is economically and ideologically the same as that of the present. Thus, in order to understand the present all one has to do is to attribute the thoughts, feelings and motives of present-day men to the past.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For more on the explosion of the historical novel in mid-nineteenth century Europe, see Avrom Fleishman, *The English Historical Novel: Walter Scott to Virginia Woolf* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1971); Brian Hammett, *The Historical Novel in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Representations of Reality in History and Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011); Nicolas Rance, *The English Historical Novel and Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Vision P, 1975); and Andrew Sanders, *The Victorian Historical Novel, 1840-1880* (New York: St. Martin’s P, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, 209. Original emphasis.

In both *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son*, the historical settings are virtually indistinguishable from the moments of their publication, resulting in precisely this mystifying conflation of past and present. As works of historical fiction set during the epoch of slavery (the 1810s and 1832, respectively), these novels feature well-educated mulatto protagonists who challenge the cultural, socioeconomic, and civic disenfranchisement associated with racial slavery in order to demonstrate how little emancipation had ameliorated those conditions of social injustice in the decades that had transpired since the temporal settings of the novels. To adopt Lukács's register, these works of fiction do not argue for the existence of modernity in the present as a means of distinguishing it from a pre-modern past, but rather project the modernity of the present *into* the past in order to illuminate the historical continuities between past and present. In this formulation, slavery is not an extraordinarily oppressive institution whose power has dissipated since its abolition. By projecting the color-based class struggle of the 1850s back into the pre-1834 period, these novels mark that struggle as a monotonous, ubiquitous feature of Trinidadian colonial society, not an emergent feature of the post-slavery period. Emancipation, then, becomes an incidental rather than transformative moment in the *longue durée* of Trinidadian history. Its material impact on the lives of the enslaved becomes invisible beneath the privileged narrative of color-based class prejudice, which endures in the present. Simply put, the historical-narratology of these novels suggests that slavery existed as merely another iteration of white bourgeois oppression of the darker-skinned, poorer classes of Trinidadians, not a uniquely violent mode of dispossession and dehumanization.

Their resonances with the post-1848 European historical novel notwithstanding, *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son* also diverge from the generic conventions outlined above in two instructive ways. First, these novels treat the much more recent past than the Middle Ages of



Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels, James Fennimore Cooper's colonial America, or even the Restoration of William Thackeray's popular *History of Henry Esmond* (1852). Secondly, these Trinidadian novels draw almost no material from transformative, landmark historical events. Where Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-1848) occurs against the backdrop of the Battle of Waterloo or where Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) opens with the storming of the Bastille, the defining historical context of *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son* is simply the culture of slavery. This last divergence from the post-1848 European historical novel marks an especially significant revision of the generic form and ultimately leads me to argue that these works constitute a more geographically specific mode of cultural production that I will call *nonhistorical fiction*. My turn to "nonhistory" here grows out of Édouard Glissant's coinage of this term in "History-Histories-Stories" (1989). He argues that projecting a modern economic, sociocultural, and political present onto the past poses a greater challenge when endeavoring such ideological labors in the Caribbean. The traumas of the Middle Passage and racial slavery have disrupted the formation of a "historical consciousness" or a "totalitarian philosophy of history" that Marxist historians describe and which remain central to Lukács's theory of the European historical novel. Glissant, in response, posits that "this discontinuity of the continuum, and the inability of the collective consciousness to absorb it all" constitute a *nonhistory*. At the same time that these Trinidadian novels synchronically conflate the past and present as a means of normalizing Brown subjugation and white supremacy, the moments of "shock, contraction, painful negation and explosive forces" constitutive of lived experiences of slavery, the very moments that the modernization of the past would seek to elide, continue to haunt the plots of

these novels and 1850s Trinidad.<sup>6</sup> The recognition of human pain, loss, mourning, and suffering in response to historically specific modes of oppression disrupts the mystification of history and the simulated continuity that the backwards projection of modernity attempts to inscribe. Writing on the tensions between the painful past (“feeling backward”) and a promising future (“looking forward”), Heather Love argues that the disruptive power of reckoning with past cultural and individual traumas can expose the power structures of the simulated progressivism of the present: “[t]he idea of modernity,” she writes, “is intimately bound up with backwardness. The association of progress and regress is a function not only of the failure of so many of modernity’s key projects but also of the reliance of the concept of modernity on excluded, denigrated, or superseded others.”<sup>7</sup> Although these novels erase historically specific experiences of suffering, replacing such experiences with a generalized sense of oppression defined against ahistorical structures of power, by reading these novels as works of nonhistorical fiction, we can disembed the alternative narratives of Trinidadian history that the coursing stream of “color-based class oppression” has buried. Read in this way, the absence of defining or transformative historical events in the Trinidadian novels I examine below assumes a different significance: these Caribbean historical novels regard the routine violence of slavery *as* a formative event or a historical signpost on par with the definitive battles and uprisings of European history. Thus, at the same time that a Eurocentric reading of these works as post-1848 historical novels might

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<sup>6</sup> Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1989), 61-62.

<sup>7</sup> Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2007), 5. Though Love’s analysis addresses “the specific histories of homophobic exclusion and violence,” her criticism of modernity narratives and the affective power of “feeling backward” while “looking forward” resonates within the histories of racist exclusion and violence as well (30, 27).

unintentionally overlook or, more likely, actively obfuscate the “shock, contraction, painful negation and explosive forces” of slavery, approaching these novels as nonhistorical fiction as well privileges the exceptional, historically specific conditions of slavery and emancipation in order to unsettle, challenge, and complicate the totalizing narrative of Trinidadian history that a Eurocentric ideology critique might espouse. Unlike the “romantic historicism” of James Chandler or the “melancholic realism” of Ian Baucom, modes of historical fiction that seek to lionize or resurrect the past, respectively, nonhistorical fiction seeks to mourn the past and the present in order to imagine a better future.<sup>8</sup>

More a mode of interpreting the nineteenth-century Trinidadian historical novel than a coherent genre or conscious act of narrative construction, then, nonhistorical fiction names a method of reading. Like many modes of ideology critique, reading nonhistorically is to read symptomatically so as to demystify the hidden labors of ideology within a text. At the same time, however, reading nonhistorically requires that we recognize that our capacity as critics to “unveil” embedded ideologies within texts depends upon our assumptions about the authors, texts, and readers involved in the act of interpretation. As Ian Baucom argues (with the help of James Chandler), historical novels stage a particularly vexed site for historicist interpretation because they require the critic to imagine both the representative types and the moments/situations of which those types are representative. “Historicism,” he writes, “thus entails not only the two-way production of situations but the two-way generation of types.”<sup>9</sup> Our

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<sup>8</sup> See James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998); and Ian Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (Durham: Duke UP, 2005), 42-46, 344n15.

<sup>9</sup> Baucom, *Specters of the Atlantic*, 45.

efforts as critics to name the typical within a historical novel as such, then, depends upon our interpretation of history, an interpretation, as I argue above, that is more often than not circumscribed by the assumptions of Eurocentrism or anti-Black racism.

With this in mind we might elaborate on Frederic Jameson's insistence that the every text that sits before the critic has been "always-already-read" by adding that it has been "always-already-read" by a diverse range of readers, not all of whom we as critics can or would readily imagine.<sup>10</sup> Reading nonhistorically calls for a recognition of not only the multiple audiences that might have encountered a work, but also the multiple histories, multiple sites of reading, and multiple literacies a symptomatic reading (or surface reading, for that matter) might overlook. In the last chapter, I demonstrated the ways in which reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin* diasporically rescripts Topsy as an Anansi-figure who engineers her own return to Africa rather than a cog in the ideological machinery lurking beneath the surface of Stowe's novel. In the same way that the psychic and physical violence of slavery interrupts the continuity of Caribbean history for Glissant, nonhistorical reading privileges the moments of rupture in an ideological reading of *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son*. Wherever the historical-social types fail to signify properly within the situation/moment they are intended to represent, an alternative narrative of Atlantic history or racial power relations stands to be expounded upon by a reader. At the same time, though, this is not to downplay the material impact of dominant readings and the dominant ideologies at work in these novels. As we saw with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a diasporic reading of Topsy did little (in the 1850s) to allay the growing enthusiasm and increasing rate of Black deportation from the USA. In what follows, *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son* are shown to collapse the historical distance

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<sup>10</sup> Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981), 9.

between past and present through the embodiment-typification of the educated mulatto in order to naturalize the placelessness of Coloured Trinidadians, and, moreover, the embodiment-typification of Venezuelan characters as scions of hope, thereby justifying Coloured expatriation to Venezuela. By considering the ways in which these types fail to function properly as demographically representative symbols, though, this chapter highlights the ways in which these ideological narratives' attempts to normalize a single version of history also fail.

### **Trinidad in the Age of Emigration**

Despite the seeming exceptionality of George Numa Des Sources's vision for Trinidadians of color to colonize eastern Venezuela, emigration discourses were ubiquitous in 1850s Trinidad, and the diverse residents of the island understood his prospectus through a long and complex history of mass relocation. In the early 1780s, while Trinidad was still a Spanish colony, King Carlos III incentivized the settlement of Trinidad by issuing generous land grants to Europeans and West Indian creoles. This period of liberalization and the resulting influx of people, Spain hoped, would jumpstart the colony's stagnating economy. Waves of immigrants from throughout the West Indies and Europe responded to these inducements, with French creole planters (and their enslaved laborers) fleeing the nascent revolution in Saint-Domingue leading the way. When the British eventually pried the island from Spain in 1797, even more settlers swarmed to Trinidad in search of cheap estates and the tropical soil's promised fecundity. Despite the infusion of transplanted planters, an insufficient labor force continued to hinder the island's economic growth. As in all West Indian colonies, Africans who were unwillingly wrested from their homelands and enslaved comprised the majority of the agricultural labor force, but because the British acquired Trinidad so late in their Caribbean conquests, the forced

migration of enslaved Africans to the colony remained minimal compared to the sugar islands and it ceased altogether with the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in 1807. Disinclined to depend on the informal intra-Caribbean slave trade, the colonial government continued its aggressive campaigns to lure white laborers from other nations and colonies.

By mid-century, however, the paucity of workers on the island reached a crisis. Many estates sat idle and the local papers were flush with ads from absentee landowners looking to unload their property. Accordingly, the colonial administration and the island's planting class sought creative solutions to this population problem. One such resolution involved partially sponsoring the immigration of free Blacks from the USA to work the plantations of Trinidad as waged laborers. In the fall of 1839, the prospect of Trinidadian emigration "excited much inquiry" in the USA, and in November, a Colored Convention in Baltimore agreed to send a delegation to survey the island as a prospective site for relocation.<sup>11</sup> The following spring, *The Colored American*, a US American abolitionist newspaper that had "come to no settled conclusion as to the utility of the measure," nevertheless published a notice from a government agent of Trinidad announcing "free passage" to the island for "men of character with families, recommended for honesty, industry and sobriety."<sup>12</sup> Six months later, the *Emancipator*, another New York abolitionist paper, advertised a call for "free, industrious persons of color" seeking passage to Trinidad and promised that "[l]aborers are in great demand, and can meet with

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<sup>11</sup> The findings of this expedition were published as Nathaniel Peck and Thomas C. Price, *Report of Messrs. Peck and Price, Who Were Appointed at a Meeting of the Free Colored People of Baltimore, Held on the 25th November, 1839, Delegates to Visit British Guiana, and the Island of Trinidad for the Ascertaining of the Advantages to be Derived by Colored People Migrating to Those Places* (Baltimore: Woods and Crane, 1840).

<sup>12</sup> "Emigration to Trinidad and British Guiana," *The Colored American*, March 7, 1840; "Notice to Colored Emigrants to the British Island of Trinidad," *The Colored American*, March 7, 1840.

permanent employment immediately on arrival, at very high wages.”<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile in London, socialist entrepreneurs Johann Adolphus Etzler and Conrad F. Stollmeyer founded the Tropical Emigration Society, which boasted some 1,500 members and sponsored two voyages to Trinidad in the mid-1840s aiming to establish a utopian commune on the island.<sup>14</sup> Around this same time, the colonial administration in India legalized emigration to the West Indies and the British began trafficking “voluntarily” indentured laborers from India and China to toil on Trinidadian estates.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to Trinidad’s own multilayered settlement by a global array of migrants, the colony’s newspapers thoroughly document the international ebbs and flows of people catalyzed by US American and British imperialism in the 1850s. Every few weeks, an incoming steamer would arrive in Port of Spain or San Fernando with a packet of periodicals from Great Britain, the USA, and the British West Indies. Trinidadian presses drew liberally from these materials to supplement their own original content, and the selections that editors chose to reprint in politically-minded papers such as the *Trinidadian*, the *Trinidad Free Press*, and the *San*

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<sup>13</sup> “For Trinidad,” *Emancipator*, September 24, 1840, 88.

<sup>14</sup> For a prospectus of the Tropical Emigration Society, see Johann Adolphus Etzler, *Emigration to the Tropical World for the Melioration of All Classes of People of All Nations* (Ham Common/Surrey: n.p., 1844). For more on the history of this movement, see Ulrike Kirchberger, “German Overseas Interests in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Britain,” in *Transnational Networks: German Migrants in the British Empire, 1670-1914*, ed. John R. Davis, Stefan Manz, and Margrit Schulte Beerbuhl (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2012), 59-78. For an excellent work of historical fiction about this movement, see Robert Antoni, *As Flies to Whatless Boys* (New York: Akashic Books, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> For more on forced Asian emigration to the West Indies, see Walton Look Lai, *Indentured Labor, Caribbean Sugar: Chinese and Indian Migrants to the British West Indies, 1838-1918* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993); and Hugh Tinker, *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas, 1830-1920* (London: Oxford UP, 1974), 61-115.

*Fernando Gazette* reveal much about how Trinidadians understood themselves in relation to the Atlantic world.<sup>16</sup> In most standard four-page issues of these papers, the front and back covers were almost entirely dedicated to advertisements; the inside left page typically provided detailed coverage of town council meetings, legal proceedings, the editor's contributions and commentaries, while the inside right page almost always comprised reprinted excerpts and articles from the international packet. These periodicals are flush with reports of gold strikes in California, Australia, and Peru, and infected with accounts of yellow fever outbreaks in the Caribbean or Central America; they republished British documentaries of settling South Africa and surveys of the African continent's "previously uncharted" interior; and they anxiously indexed the USAmerican imperial lust for Cuba and Mexico. By printing local happenings side-by-side with news from throughout the Atlantic world, Trinidad's newspapers assumed a remarkably cosmopolitan posture and thereby contextualized local politics within international discourses.

The migrations that these explorations and conquests set in motion mark a particular preoccupation in the Trinidadian press: "The Emigration from England is beginning to attract the attention it deserves," the *San Fernando Gazette* writes on October 22, 1852, "and thinking people are contemplating with much anxiety the possible results." But while the colony's planting class crafted strategies to lure migrants *to* Trinidad as a means of solving the labor crisis, many of the "thinking people" of Trinidad also began to contemplate the potential advantages of emigrating *from* the island and seeking greener—or, more appropriately, more

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<sup>16</sup> Edmonson singles out these newspapers as making a concerted effort to appeal to the emergent Coloured middle class in Trinidad. "Topics that came up with regularity," he observes, "were education and the end to exclusivity of schools, an end to Indian immigration from the subcontinent (the burgeoning Indian population was seen as a threat to black and brown power), and the opening up of Crown lands"; see *Caribbean Middlebrow*, 30.



golden—pastures.<sup>17</sup> The *Trinidadian*, for instance, documents how many West Indian territories were “affording the opportunity to that portion of their surplus population which is fruitlessly struggling in these depressed Colonies to obtain an honorable existence or adequate remuneration for their services, for removing direct to another sphere” such as Australia, “a Country to which may with truth be applied the comprehensive idea applied by Scripture to the promised land of the children of Israel, ‘flowing with milk and honey.’”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, many Trinidadians, particularly the Coloured middle class, grew increasingly disenchanted with their prospects in the colony. After two decades of freedom, Black and Brown Trinidadians still struggled for political subjectivity and financial stability. The impact of imported, unfree Indian labor on Afro-Trinidadians in the mid-1840s, particularly those who had still been enslaved when the British Emancipation Act took effect in 1834, were devastating. This cheap contract labor kept wages down and employment opportunities scarce, effects that systemic racism only exacerbated. At the same time, as Michael Touissaint argues, the rampant disenfranchisement during this period also “brought out greater radicalism, reflective of greater political, ideological, and racial consciousness, as the Coloureds stepped up in search of political office. The period manifested an unusually strong emigration ethos, not a small part of which was Coloured by

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<sup>17</sup> There was, perhaps, more gold in the pages of Trinidadian newspapers than in the Western Hemisphere. An 1853 article in the *Trinidadian* exemplifies this obsession, reprinting a piece from the Valparaiso *Mercurio* which describes Peru as “A New El Dorado” and “A new California and Australia”; “More Gold,” *Trinidadian*, 17 August 1853. The references to those latter territories signified strongly in Trinidad, as their respective gold rushes of had been well-documented for years in colonies presses. For instance, over a year earlier, the *Trinidadian* remarks how “the mania for emigration has at length reached [Australia],” adding that “[g]old in Australia is attracting those whom gold in California failed to tempt”; “Emigration to Australia,” *Trinidadian*, July 19, 1852.

<sup>18</sup> “We are indebted to our able contemporary,” *Trinidadian*, 26 August 1852.

dimensions of ‘black’ and political consciousness.”<sup>19</sup> Many middle class mulattos, for example, pursued political offices to redress racially oppressive colonial policies, and poor Afro-Trinidadians turned to the streets to protest stigmatizing debtor laws.<sup>20</sup> Thus, while the labor crisis of the 1850s left many Afro-Trinidadians disadvantaged, it also led to the development of public discourses and a racial consciousness in urban centers like Port of Spain and San Fernando.

Amid this shifting political landscape, George Numa Des Sources, a Coloured entrepreneur, founded the anticolonial *Trinidadian* in 1849. Relying on £10/year subscriptions from its modest but dedicated readership rather than a government-issued printing contract enjoyed by the official paper of the colony, *The Port of Spain Gazette*, the *Trinidadian* gave voice to Des Sources’s uncensored views regarding colonial and racial politics. In addition to

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Toussaint, “George Numa Dessources, the Numancians, and the Attempt to Form a Colony in Eastern Venezuela, Circa 1850-1854,” in *Beyond Tradition: Reinterpreting the Caribbean Historical Experience*, eds. Heather Cateau and Rita Pemberton (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2006), 198-199, 204.

<sup>20</sup> The anger and unrest of the landless classes of Trinidad came to a head (literally) on October 1, 1849, when approximately 5,000 people incited a riot in Port of Spain to protest a pending reform that would require debtors in the Royal Gaol to shave their heads. The leaders of this uprising were prominent mulatto men, including George Numa Des Sources, who felt that the laws disproportionately targeted the free Coloured population. The racial dimensions of this incident are clear, as one account observed that, “there were clusters of men in the streets armed with sticks and cutlasses who attacked every police constable and white man”; see Great Britain, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1852-53, Vol. 67, 401-409. For more on the riot, see Bridget Brereton, “Haiti and the Haitian Revolution in the Political Discourse of Nineteenth-Century Trinidad,” in *Reinterpreting the Haitian Revolution and Its Cultural Aftershocks*, eds. Martin Munro and Elizabeth Walcott-Hackshaw (Kingston, Jamaica: U of West Indies P, 2006), 142-143; Christopher Taylor, “Empire of Neglect: Caribbean Literature, British Liberalism, and New World Asylums, 1776-1888,” (dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2012), 263-268; Toussaint, “George Numa Dessources,” 206-207; David Vincent Trotman, *Crime in Trinidad: Conflict and Control in a Plantation Society, 1838-1900* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1986), 62-63; and Donald Wood, *Trinidad in Transition: The Years After Slavery* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1968), 175-176.

documenting Great Britain's neglectful treatment of the Crown Colony and advocating for locally-elected representatives in the metropole, the *Trinidadian* also highlighted the anti-Black prejudices and institutional racism that lingered long after emancipation.<sup>21</sup> The periodical gave voice to the disenchantment and unrest of the Brown middle class, and its articles painted a bleak portrait of the economic futures for Afro-Trinidadians of all hues.

As he grew increasingly frustrated with the limits of rhetorical criticism, Des Sources turned to a more concrete solution. His *Trinidadian*, in turn, adopted the slogan "Reform or Emigration!" and began promoting Venezuela as a site of political asylum for Coloured Trinidadians from the "numerous instances" of "[t]yranny, corruption, and oppression" in the colony.<sup>22</sup> Although the newspaper champions Venezuela as a welcoming haven for all of the "homeless Sons of the West," this geography was imagined as a site of refuge for the "West Indian mulatto" in particular.<sup>23</sup> By November 1852, Des Sources attempted to transform this vision into a reality by forming an Association for Emigration and running advertisements in French and English in both the *Trinidadian* and the *San Fernando Gazette* (Fig. 4).

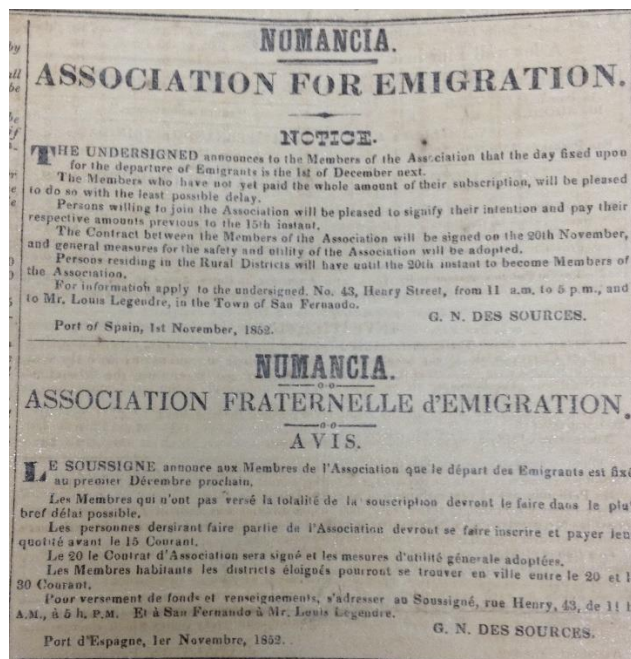
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<sup>21</sup> Crown Colonies were ruled by a governor and colonial administration that the British Crown appointed, meaning these colonies had no direct representation in Great Britain. For more on Trinidad's colonial status during this period, see James Millette, *The Genesis of Crown Colony Government: Trinidad, 1783-1810* (Curepe, Trinidad: Moko Enterprises, 1970), and *Society and Politics in Colonial Trinidad* (London: Zed Books, 1970); and Scott B. MacDonald, *Trinidad and Tobago: Democracy and Development in the Caribbean* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

<sup>22</sup> "OUR readers will find in this number an extract from the European Times of the 16[t]h November, relative to Venezuela," *Trinidadian*, December 20, 1851.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. The *Trinidadian* also imagined that many other recently liberated members of the African diaspora would help to populate its Venezuelan colony: "The stream of emigration will be supplied by the laborers without employ, the young men who have no hope in the future, intelligent laborers, our suffering brothers of the French Antilles, and later by the emigrants of the United States"; "Et nunc intelligite; legislatores!" *Trinidadian*, October 4, 1851.

Figure 4.



Source: “Numancia,” *San Fernando Gazette*, 6 November 1852. Courtesy the National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago.

Framed as “a calm and searching inquiry into the subject” of emigration to Venezuela, the article, in reality, serves as Des Sources’s prospectus for his “Numancia” colony in the Guiana region of Venezuela, east of the Orinoco River.<sup>24</sup> The racial dimensions of his proposal are front and center. Unlike many of the Black emigration movements contemporaneously being debated in the USA and detailed in the previous chapter, the Numancia project focused specifically on the Coloured middle class that suffered under the prejudicial “system of persecution” maintained by the white ruling classes:

<sup>24</sup> “Numancia” probably refer to Des Sources’s middle name, “Numa,” but it may also refer to the ancient Celtiberian city of Numantia, located in the present-day Soria province of Spain and spelled “Numancia” in Spanish. The Roman Empire razed the city in 133BC.

[The mixed race] sprang from the vicious habits of the Europeans—it struggled through a thousand difficulties and obstacles insurmountable—it at present totters on a rotten foundation, and must ultimately succumb to the weight of oppression under which it groans. What are the means by which this doom may be avoided? The answer is Emigration. The Caribbean Archipelago is too narrow a field for the three conflicting races by which they are inhabited. It is the policy of the administration of these colonies to dishearten, grind down, and prostrate the middling class. The pervading desire is, that the officials, planters, and merchants constitute a quasi-aristocracy, and the mechanics and labourers form the labouring population. The middling class or small proprietors *must disappear*.<sup>25</sup>

Des Sources's case for emigration relies on a powerful spatial metaphor. Because the Caribbean archipelago is simply not capacious enough to accommodate the European, Native American, and African races, the "middling class" of mixed-race Trinidadians "*must disappear*." Moreover, the racialized and class-based power structures of white supremacy on the island render the removal of the Brown population seemingly inevitable. Coloured Trinidadians could either dictate the terms of their own migration or potentially suffer the impending "doom" that will inexorably result otherwise. Stated forcefully, the mulatto middle class had the option to disappear or to *be disappeared*. While Des Sources stops just short of suggesting that this portentous demographic disappearance will entail eugenically-motivated genocide, his unsettling, almost Gothic tone—with its references to a "rotten foundation," the "groans" of the

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<sup>25</sup> "Emigration to Venezuela," *Trinidadian*, November 6, 1852, original emphasis. Though Des Sources privileges "race" as an optic for understanding the oppression of the mulatto middle class, he also reverts to the colorblind optic of "class" in order to lump the predominantly darker-skinned community of ex-slaves into the racially homogenous demographic of "the labouring population."

oppressed, and other rhetorical harbingers of “doom,”—unambiguously intimates that anti-Black/anti-Brown violence “must ultimately” be the results of the continued co-occupation of the island.

In contrast to his apocalyptic depictions of race relations in Trinidad, Des Sources limns Venezuela as the site of a utopian future for the Coloured middle class. Venezuela made sense as a colonial destination for a number of reasons. Primarily, its close political and geographical ties to Trinidad had instilled a long tradition of outbound trajectories for the Spanish Main—at its closest, the distance between the island and the mainland is a mere seven miles.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the country’s pragmatic proximity, many commentators understood the newly independent republic to exemplify the ideal of the “racial democracy.”<sup>27</sup> Although slavery would not be officially abolished until 1854, Venezuela was popularly perceived to celebrate racial diversity and to embrace equality among its free citizens. This impression took root during the independence wars in the 1810s and stemmed from the revolutionary rhetoric touting that all South Americans, regardless of race, were united in their opposition to the oppressive Spanish

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<sup>26</sup> Beginning with the Peace of Amiens in 1802, which imposed a brief ceasefire in the Napoleonic Wars, many of the French *gens de couleur* lured to Trinidad during the island’s liberalization in the 1780s took the opportunity to flee to Venezuela with their slaves. Two decades later, Simón Bolívar’s efforts to abolish slavery in independent Gran Colombia prompted a similar movement, as fugitive slaves fled the estates of Trinidad. British West Indian Emancipation in 1834 also sparked a new wave of out-migration among formerly enslaved Afro-Trinidadians who wished to escape the neoslavery of apprenticeship.

<sup>27</sup> The term “racial democracy” first appeared in Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre’s *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (1933); for an English translation, see Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, ed. David H.P. Maybury Lewis, trans. Samuel Putman (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987). Although this concept is most strongly associated with twentieth- and twenty-first-century Brazil, many of its ideological origins can be found in Simón Bolívar’s celebratory writings on *mestizaje*, leading many contemporary and modern commenters to view Gran Colombia as a racial democracy. For an overview of this idea’s influence in Venezuela in particular, see Winthrop R. Wright, *Café con Leche: Race, Class, and National Image in Venezuela* (Austin: U of Texas P, 1990), 1-12.

Empire. Indeed, the political language of decolonization relied on the promise of replacing the inflexible caste system inherited from the Spanish Empire with a colorblind meritocracy that exemplified revolutionary ideals of liberty.<sup>28</sup> As a result, many Americans inside and outside the region developed the perception that in Gran Colombia and later Venezuela, “free persons of color [were] now raceless citizens united under the paternal protection of Bolívar.”<sup>29</sup> In practice, however, the rhetoric of racial democracy did little to ameliorate the hegemony of race and class as determining factors of social mobility and political subjectivity. For a significant number of mixed-race *castas* and *pardos*, especially those who had performed military service and those who became landowners and merchants through the reappropriation of confiscated royalist property, the wars of independence actually did improve their social, political, and economic standing in the new republic. On the whole, however, the promise of racial democracy remained largely illusory, and rampant racism persisted. Despite the legal equality of free citizens from any racial background, the white creole aristocracy forged informal strategies for undercutting the social ascension of Venezuelans of color.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> See Reuben Zahler, *Ambitious Rebels: Remaking Honor, Law, and Liberalism in Venezuela, 1780-1850* (Tucson: U of Arizona P, 2013).

<sup>29</sup> Aline Helg, *Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770-1835* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2004), 218. Although Helg focuses primarily on the region of Gran Colombia that eventually became the nation of Colombia, the rhetoric of colorblindness and its connections to Bolívar also persisted in Venezuela long after its secession from Gran Colombia.

<sup>30</sup> For example, the new Venezuelan republic institutionalized the Spanish colonial *padre de familia* system in which propertied male heads of households were the only people to enjoy full citizenship rights and sociopolitical dominion. Although this more capacious definition of the *padre de familia* title eliminated previous restrictions based on racial and familial lineages, Zahler observes that “the exclusivity of the leading class still had a racial element, as a small proportion of nonwhite[s] had enough property to qualify as *padres de familia*, and most creoles still believed that white were intellectually superior to *pardos* and thus should lead them” (*Ambitious Rebels* 48). For more on this and related means of informal white hegemony, see

Notwithstanding the realities of racial oppression and the continued legality of slavery in mid-century Venezuela, the *Trinidadian* bought wholesale into the presumed liberalism and racial democracy of the nation. In one of the paper's first articles on the prospect of emigration, Des Sources recounts the recent story of three Venezuelan slaves who were instantly emancipated upon their arrival in Trinidad. According to the *Trinidadian*, they quickly and voluntarily returned to their "ferocious owners" on the Spanish Main, however, after finding their previous circumstances "preferable to the liberty of Trinidad."<sup>31</sup> Two months later, in February of 1852, the *Trinidadian* published a report on the agricultural promise of the Guiana region east of the Orinoco River. The survey characterizes the sparsely settled province's "never-failing resources of virgin forests, and of a soil teeming with fertility" as among the many "advantages there afforded to national industry." Like Trinidad, however, this region remained "in need of an increase of population" in order to reach its full potential, an analogy the *Trinidadian* quickly qualifies: "Venezuela wants augmentation of citizens and friends. Trinidad requires slaves." By turning to the racially loaded metaphor of slavery to describe race relations in the colony, Des Sources holds up Venezuela, by contrast, as a site where Trinidadian mulattos could enjoy civic enfranchisement and equality under a republican government that "rests upon the most legitimate foundation that any government can—that is, the sovereign will of the people" rather than the prejudices of race and class that rule in the island colony.<sup>32</sup>

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Elías Pino Itierrieta, *Fueros, civilización y ciudadanía* (Caracas, Venezuela: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> "OUR readers will find in this number an extract from the European Times of the 16[t]h November, relative to Venezuela," *Trinidadian*, December 20, 1851 original emphasis.

<sup>32</sup> "SATURDAY afternoon the inter-colonial steamer came to an anchor," *Trinidadian*, February 7, 1852.



### **The Mulatto in Black and White in *Adolphus***

From December 1852 to March 1853, Des Sources led more than 700 Trinidadians to settle in eastern Venezuela.<sup>33</sup> During the same period, the *Trinidadian* began the serialization of a novella entitled, *Adolphus, a Tale*. Appearing at irregular intervals from January to April 1853, this anonymously-authored romance was most likely penned by Des Sources himself as a propaganda piece for Numancia that he periodically mailed from Venezuela along with updates about the colony's progress.<sup>34</sup> The novella recounts the story of an orphaned mulatto, Adolphus, raised by a Spanish priest in 1810s Trinidad. When his love interest, Antonia, is kidnapped by DeGuerinon, a light-skinned mulatto who passes as white, Adolphus rescues her and non-fatally shoots his dastardly rival in the process. Realizing that his skin color will provide him no legal recourse against DeGuerinon's simulated whiteness and substantial wealth, Adolphus flees the island and seeks asylum in Venezuela, where Simón Bolívar personally welcomes him.

As the two opposing sides on the coin of *mulatez*, DeGuerinon and Adolphus embody-typify two culturally significant kinds of educated mulattos; as foils to one another, they

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<sup>33</sup> Taylor, "Empire of Neglect," 215. Based on ads in the *Trinidadian* and the *San Fernando Gazette*, Des Sources's first journey with members of the Association embarked on December 1, 1852 and his last departed on March 21, 1853.

<sup>34</sup> I join a critical consensus of scholars who attribute authorship of this novella to Des Sources; see Taylor, "Empire of Neglect," 252n450; Edmondson, *Caribbean Middlebrow*, 50; and Brereton et al., "Introduction," in *Adolphus: A Tale & The Slave Son* (Kingston, Jamaica: U of the West Indies P, 2003), xxiv. All references to these two novels will be to this edition and further references will be made parenthetically. For an example of Des Sources sending news from Venezuela back to his former newspaper, see "Emigration to Venezuela," *Trinidadian*, March 16, 1853.

dramatize the inter- and intra-racial tensions that characterize mid-century Trinidad.<sup>35</sup>

DeGuerinon is a self-loathing “white mulatto,” a vulgar local epithet that the novella defines as “one of those extraordinarily stupid animals so commonly met with in the West India Colonies” and “a set of men who, from some blind infatuation, actually fancy themselves that which they are not” (29). Born to a Corsican father and a mother of preliminarily unknown origin (who is later revealed to be Black), he attended the “best of Colleges” in Europe “under the ablest of professors,” though he seems to have learned little and “studied most closely and minutely all the fashions of the day” instead of history, philosophy, and science (29). His “love of dress” would suit him well when he eventually returned to Trinidad and, heeding the advice of his racially conscious father, would hide his “*rather curly*” hair beneath a “glossy wig,” present himself as “a native of Europe” rather than his father’s son, and accentuate the mannered “Corsican *twang*” in his speech (29, 30).

Soon after he arrives in Trinidad, DeGuerinon’s father dies, and instead of continuing his father’s gainful businesses, he liquidates his inheritance to live indolently and salaciously off the profits. As a result, although DeGuerinon’s efforts to pass for a white Mediterranean immigrant are largely ineffective, his inherited wealth and resulting social status insulate him from such critiques. He actively realizes his access to white privilege and acknowledges as much when later

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<sup>35</sup> *Adolphus* historically circumscribes the pernicious race-shame that characterizes DeGuerinon and the intraracial rivalry among the Coloured population. The narrator observes in a footnote that white mulattoes like DeGuerinon, “in the ‘good old days’ of prejudice, were foremost the oppressors of their own class” (29). The ironic temporal qualifier—“the good old days”—bespeaks a certain nostalgia for when internal competition among mulattoes marked the “foremost” challenge to Coloured enfranchisement. Although the *Trinidadian* makes clear that the white “quasi-aristocracy” has since superseded the “white mulatto” as the primary oppressor of the Coloured class, the novella maintains that white supremacy and the desire for whiteness mark a continuity between the “good old days” of the 1810s and 1850s; see “Emigration to Venezuela,” *Trinidadian*, November 6, 1852.

taunting Antonia, whom he is holding captive: “we *whites* (!) do not bother our brains about them. In this country you see, my child, it is all money – money can make the stiff laws to bend – and make you love me too.” (38) The narrator’s intrusive and editorial “(!)” underscores the failure of DeGuerinon’s disguise, while also affirming the largely superficial distinction between class and skin color in Trinidad. In the same way that “money can make the stiff laws bend,” so too can it camber the simulated rigidity of racial identity. His perceived whiteness facilitates his enrichment, and his enrichment authorizes his claims to whiteness; or, as the Spanish American adage goes, “el dinero blanquea” (money whitens). Adolphus, by contrast, is the rape-begotten son of a white estate-owner and an enslaved Foulah woman, the latter of which dies during childbirth among a maroon community in the hills outside Port of Spain. Adopted no sooner than he was orphaned, Adolphus was raised under the tutelage of a Spanish priest. In physical appearance he resembles his foil, and the text takes pains to note that Adolphus too has “rather curly” hair (18). Unlike DeGuerinon, who squandered his cosmopolitan education in Europe, Adolphus makes the most of his modest opportunities, achieving fluency in three languages and excelling in what opportunities for study were available to him. Despite “the prejudice which existed at the time against all persons of his class,” he rose to the station of principle clerk to the Commandant, becoming “the first of his stamp that ever attained so high an office under English Government in this colony” (18). Though the novella and the *Trinidadian* in which it appeared amply reference the intransigence of racial and class markers, both men overcome the disadvantageous “stamp” of their mixed race parentages, albeit by quite distinct means. Still, the extraordinary circumstances which provide DeGuerinon with the occasion to rewrite his identity and the “enterprising genius” of the eponymous hero become the exceptions that prove racism’s influence on socioeconomic and cultural status as the governing rule that defines Trinidadian

colonial society. As such, and in Lukács's register, their exceptionality *typifies* the oppression of the Coloured middle class in both the pre-emancipation setting of the novel and the post-emancipation *situations* of its publication, and, therefore marks these exceptional characters as typical of the educated Brown population.

Though the men share similar parentages, appearances, and social ascensions, DeGuerinon's willingness to embrace the corruption and prejudices of colonial politics ultimately allows him to thrive on the island, while Adolphus, by contrast, must eventually flee to Venezuela. As Adolphus and his comrades rescue Antonia from where she is imprisoned in DeGuerinon's home, he confronts his rival, shooting DeGuerinon with a pistol borrowed from Antonia's father. In his haste to flee the scene, Adolphus literally leaves behind the smoking gun, which bears the surname of Antonia's family (Romelia). The police, upon discovering the pistol at the scene, descend upon the Coloured Romelias' home, arresting all of the men and unceremoniously disturbing the recently deceased corpse of Mrs. Romelia. The novella emphasizes the racism driving this intrusion, making clear that the officers' disregard for the Romelias' humanity and civil rights belies the systemic racial prejudices of the Trinidadian legal system. To execute such injustices with impunity, the narrator tells us, "it was sufficient to possess, as the most essential quality, a white skin – to be deprived of every principle of humanity, and to be, in short, in every respect one of the 'real Yankee slave-catchers,' – such were the men who performed the important functions of police constables" (58). Comparing the Port of Spain police to fugitive slave-catchers in the USA revives the historical language of slavery for a mid-century readership in order to characterize how that institution's legacy of racialized power in Trinidad continues to disenfranchise the Coloured population and presages

Adolphus's own fugitivity: realizing that the colonial justice system will afford him no protections against his "white" accuser, Adolphus flees the island for Venezuela.<sup>36</sup>

The novella, in this way, confirms the apocalyptic imagery of race relations offered in the *Trinidadian*: DeGuerinon blends into the white ruling class, and Adolphus physically leaves the colony, meaning both mulattos, in their own way, finally *disappear* from the island as the newspaper suggests they must. Not only does this confirmation naturalize the placelessness of the Coloured population (of whatever gradation or disposition) in colonial Trinidad, but it marks a salient moment of synchronicity in the text. Read intratextually within the context of the *Trinidadian*, the apocalyptic imagery of the newspaper in the 1850s is actualized in the historical setting of *Adolphus* (the 1810s), producing a sense of belatedness and lending a sense of urgency to the rhetoric of imminent disappearance in the *Trinidadian*.

At the same time that *Adolphus* attempts to collapse the distance between the past and the present, it also portrays the present as an intermediary stage in an incomplete progress narrative. Although its preface apologetically denies that the novella endeavors "to arouse feeling which are supposed dead, and to revive things which some would have entirely erased from memory's tablets" it also states that "[o]ur principal object is to shew the contrast between the resent [[sic?]] position of the coloured people and that in which they stood formerly, that they may see the better the great step that colonial society has made in advance; and to learn that they have only to exert themselves in the same manner as did their fathers to clear from their sight whatever causes of complaint by which they may be surrounded." (5) The temporal dimensions

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<sup>36</sup> It is unclear here whether the word "Yankee" refers to a person from the North or, as is common throughout the Americas, more generally refers to any person from the United States. The latter seems far more likely, as a critique of Northern complicity in US American slavery, while certainly fitting, is hardly apropos here.

of the preface contour a “contrast” between the past and present, insisting on the recognition of progress (“a great step”) between the days of slavery and the post-emancipation period. Still, the insistence that the novella’s readership need *only* to follow the model of political action practiced by the previous generation in order to liberate themselves in the present suggests a sense of continuity and even interchangeability between the racism of the novella’s historical setting and its publication in the 1850s. Thus, while *Adolphus* recognizes the modernity of the present, it also underscores the fundamental similarities between the 1810s and the 1850s – in terms of both the problem (systemic racism) and the solution (emigration to Venezuela), the moments are virtually indistinguishable, emancipation and nominal enfranchisement of Afro-descended Trinidadians notwithstanding.

In this way, the projection of the present into the past fans the flames of emigration for Trinidadian readers of color in the 1850s: read within the pages of the *Trinidadian*, the novella’s commendation of the titular hero’s expatriation to Venezuela signals a further endorsement of Numancia. The first-person plural possessive—“our”—governing a preface signed by “The Writer” of an anonymous periodical novel at once intimately acknowledges the *Trinidadian*’s community of readers and, I would argue, further suggests that Des Source authored *Adolphus*, speaking here as a representative of the Numancians. Furthermore, because the readership of the *Trinidadian* comprised a modest contingent of loyal subscribers and other newspaper editors who participated in the West Indian periodical exchange networks, “The Writer” addresses the (predominantly Coloured) readers of the paper directly, readers who could only interpret the vague phrase “whatever causes of complaint by which they may be surrounded” to be the vehemently anti-Coloured culture that the *Trinidadian* had been promulgating throughout Des

Sources's tenure as editor.<sup>37</sup> Again, read intratextually within the context of the *Trinidadian*, *Adolphus* indexes the continuity of racial prejudice across the nineteenth century in Trinidad. Because the disenfranchisement of Coloured Trinidadians in the present is not a unique condition emergent during the post-emancipation period, but rather a modern manifestation of a slavery-era social issue, it can be met with successful solutions from the past. Readers are therefore encouraged to "exert themselves in the same manner as did their fathers"; rather than imagining new solutions to the evolving socioeconomic and political manifestations of white supremacy, readers should respond in kind, adapting the strategies of previous generations for the present moment, practicing what Amiri Baraka (Leroi Jones) has called "the changing same."<sup>38</sup> As a result, if the *Trinidadian*'s readers that the apostrophic preface to *Adolphus* directly and intimately addresses are to follow the model of "their fathers," then the historical-fictional example of Adolphus's emigration to Venezuela finds its immediate, direct corollary in the modern example of Des Sources and Numancia.

The descriptive content of *Adolphus* enhances this message, complementing the paradisiacal imagery of Venezuela offered elsewhere in the *Trinidadian*. Notably, however, the

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<sup>37</sup> As Patricia Okker theorizes the serial novel as a literary form, its protracted publication and shared waiting periods between issues help to forge a sense of community among its readership. "If the collaborative power of readers was essentially collective in nature," she adds, "that power was fueled by the illusion, at least, of an intimate relationship between the author and the individual reader"; see Patricia Okker, *Social Stories: The Magazine Novel in Nineteenth-Century America* (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 2003), 21.

<sup>38</sup> Baraka coins this term to name a through-line in the history of Black musical expression, indexing the many ways in the instruments and vocalizations have changed, but the patterns and Afro-Christian syncretisms have remained the same; see Leroi Jones, "The Changing Same (R&B and New Black Music)" in *The Black Aesthetic*, ed. Addison Gayle Jr. (New York: Doubleday, 1971), 112-125. Deborah McDowell later takes up Baraka's concept in order to chart paradigms across the history of Black women's literature in "*The Changing Same*": *Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1995).

novella moves beyond the pastoral portraits of “deep and fertile valleys [that] will admit of all sorts of cultivation” that the newspaper documents so thoroughly.<sup>39</sup> As Adolphus traverses the Venezuelan landscape en route to Caracas, “[a]nother picture was now before him—all was free, all men were equal. Joy reigned in every dwelling, —Liberty had given life to all; ...the tender spouses beheld with secret admiration the glorious scars which their husbands had brought home from the scenes of combat, as the fruits of their devotion to their country’s cause” (71-72). Rather than belaboring the agricultural promise of “the natural savannahs” and “the fertile lands of Venezuela” that appear in the *Trinidadian*, *Adolphus* replaces this natural imagery with a political ideology expressed in an agricultural register. Liberty—writ large—rather than “the inundations of the Orinoco” and “the regularity of the seasons” brings life to Venezuela, and the pride of its defense is one of the many “fruits” that freedom yields.<sup>40</sup> By offering a political survey in place of the agricultural survey offered in the *Trinidadian* a year earlier, *Adolphus* argues for a causality between the two: in the same way that the abandoned estates and agricultural labor shortages in Trinidad stemmed from “soil [that] was daily watered with the tears of slaves,” the fecundity of the Orinoco Delta owed to the egalitarian ideals of its political system.

In the same way that the novella takes up these respective landscapes to contrast their political outlooks for the Coloured population in each locale, the corporeal characterizations of their citizens also dramatize these differences. As I have documented throughout this chapter, *Adolphus* laboriously documents the physiognomy and parentage of almost every Trinidadian.

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<sup>39</sup>“SATURDAY afternoon the inter-colonial steamer came to an anchor,” *Trinidadian*, February 7, 1852.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*



But as the novella shifts its attention to Venezuela, physical descriptions fall away and citizens of that nation become radically disembodied, reduced to their familial functions. In the scene above, characters appear to us metonymically as “father(s) “son(s),” “spouses,” and “husbands” rather than the mulattoes, white mulattoes, “light Italian *brunette(s)*,” “negroes,” and “buckra(s)” (71,72, 9, 15, 48). Their relations to each and their metaphoric relations to the nation-as-family define them.<sup>41</sup> Nowhere is this disembodiment more apparent than in *Adolphus*’s portrait of Simón Bolívar, the revolutionary hero of Latin American independence and “founding father” of the Venezuelan nation-state. The novella animates Bolívar as a speaking character who receives Adolphus as a political refugee and grants him an audience upon arrival. The two men quickly discover a linkage between them—Padre Gonzalvez, the priest who rescued and reared Adolphus in Port of Spain, was also “the constant companion and guide of [Bolívar’s] youth” (73)—and the Venezuelan president embraces Adolphus as “my son” (73). By adopting this paternal register in his welcome to the Trinidadian refugee, Bolívar initiates Adolphus into the familial ideology of Venezuelan nationalism—he is no longer a marginalized mulatto; he has become, instead, and free and equal “son” of Bolívar and, by extension, the Venezuelan nation. The metaphoric equation of El Libertador and Liberty, Bolívar and Venezuela become radically literal as the novella proceeds, however. Because a familial/relational nomenclature replaces race as a means of socially organizing individuals, Bolívar’s body disappears entirely from the text. In fact, although Bolívar “seized the young man’s hand,” “tenderly threw himself on the young man’s neck,” and “shook him cordially by the hand,” the scene in which he interacts with Adolphus—the only scene in which he appears—offers absolutely no physical description of

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<sup>41</sup> For an influential account of the nation-as-family metaphor, especially in the context of USAmerican politics, see George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996).

Bolívar. In place of details regarding his appearance, the readers receive only strong impressions of his character on the protagonist: he has a “frank and open countenance” that “filled [Adolphus] with confidence” and his “generous behavior” leaves the hero “highly gratified” (73, 74). With the actual Bolívar nearly two decades deceased by the *Trinidadian*’s publication of *Adolphus*, it is perhaps fitting to describe his fictional avatar’s presence in the novella as apparitional: he operates as a kind of presidential poltergeist, able to act upon those around him, but seemingly without a body of his own.

Because the novella so often turns to detailed physical descriptions of characters’ racial identities as a means of painting the socioeconomic and political landscape of Trinidad, we cannot dismiss the striking lack of description with regards to Bolívar’s body as owing to a lack of knowledge on the part of the author or even an accidental oversight. He is the only substantial character for whom the novella presents neither physiognomic features nor a racially identifying moniker. *Adolphus*, as Christopher Taylor argues, “was never really describing Venezuela anyhow,” but rather inventing a “utopian ‘wish-image’” of that nation in order to fuel Des Sources’s emigration project.<sup>42</sup> The novella’s seemingly concerted evasion of Bolívar’s body, then, serves a political function, and in the context of its shift from painstaking physiognomic documentation of other characters to the radical disembodiment of El Libertador, that political function is also racial. Bolívar’s identity has been a particularly dense locus for constant and diverse myth-making, even during his lifetime and especially in the decades immediately following it.<sup>43</sup> One of the most prominent myths in the mid-nineteenth century pertained to

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<sup>42</sup> Taylor, “Empire of Neglect,” 284-5n528, 255.

<sup>43</sup> Michael Zueske, *Simón Bolívar: Myth and History* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2013).

Bolívar's racial identity, with many believing him to be of African descent, however fractionally.<sup>44</sup> This theory circulated widely, prompting an "Investigator" for the New-York-based Black abolitionist paper *Freedom's Journal* to write that "Bolivar [sic] has very little more white blood in his veins, than you or I, Mr. Editor."<sup>45</sup> That this racialization of Bolívar would be especially expeditious for the purposes of persuading Coloured Trinidadians to expatriate to the Spanish Main makes *Adolphus's* failure to do so all the more perplexing. By conspicuously circumventing any physical description of Bolívar, however, *Adolphus* narratively adopts the postracial optics attributed to Venezuelan society – the novella's narrative perspective literally cannot see race in Venezuela. Bolívar, in turn, comes to represent metonymically a postracial political ideology, what is commonly known as "racial democracy." Whereas the physiognomic recording of Port of Spain's residents is paramount to helping readers make sense of the socioeconomic and racial orders of power in Trinidad, such details would be superfluous on Venezuelan soil because they do not matter in Bolívar's postracial paradise. The familial and fraternal nomenclatures presented throughout *Adolphus's* brief time in Venezuela supplant the racial epistemology of Trinidad and thereby further evidence the egalitarianism that pervades the Bolívarian republic.

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<sup>44</sup> While I have no interest in contributing to the debate over Bolívar's racial ancestry, since doing so would require undertaking the same sorts of racial calculus that I critique in this study, it is worth noting that some scholars suggest Bolívar had a *mulato* ancestor; see Norman E. Whitten and Arlene Torres, *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean: Social Dynamics and Cultural Transformations*, Vol. 1: Central America and North and Western South (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998), 11-12; and Wright, 27-29. For an excellent fictional account of Bolívar as a member of the African diaspora, see Manuel Zapata Olivella, *Changó, the Biggest Badass*, ed. William Luis, trans. Jonathan Tittler (Lubbock: Texas Tech UP, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> "Colonization Society. No. II. Its Necessity," *Freedom's Journal*, October 5, 1827, 118.

Ironically, these portraits of Bolívar and the Venezuelan landscape stand in stark contrast to the realities of racial politics in the nascent republic. Bolívar, like many of his contemporaries and founding-father counterparts, held complex, inconsistent, and morally dubious views regarding slavery and people of African descent. In his February 1819 address at the yearlong Congress of Angostura, for example, he called for the abolition of slavery in Gran Colombia: “I leave to your supreme judgment the reform or amendment of all my statutes and decrees,” he humbly submits to the legislators, “but I beg the confirmation of absolute freedom for the slaves, just as I would beg for my life and the life of the republic.”<sup>46</sup> As a stand-alone plea, Bolívar’s antislavery rhetoric seems possessed by a strong ethical commitment to liberty and equality. Contextualized within the historical examples that he offers as support for his appeal, however, his reveals a less munificent motivation. He praises the Helots, Spartacus, and Haiti for transforming “the instruments of their captivity” into “freedom’s weapons,” and for their ability to “regenerate” and “defend” their respective nations once free.<sup>47</sup> Though couched in the language of admiration, Bolívar’s citation of his historical slave rebellions reveals an underlying anxiety that underwrites his endorsement of emancipation: amid the contagious egalitarian sentiment of the revolutionary moment, the maintenance of slavery posed an imminent danger to the stability of Gran Colombia because of the seeming inevitability of an organized slave rebellion or counter-revolution. Indeed, within the same speech, Bolívar contends that “Nature makes men unequal” and that government’s function is to “correct” this fact by endowing all

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<sup>46</sup> Simón Bolívar, “The Angostura Address,” in *El Libertador: Writings of Simón Bolívar*, ed. David Bushnell, trans. Frederick H. Fornoff, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 51.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

citizens with a “fictitious equality” before the law.<sup>48</sup> In doing so, he preserves his republican ideals at the same time that it upholds the tenets of biological racism. Ultimately, El Libertador’s interests in liberating the enslaved served a pragmatic and preventative function, and fell dramatically short of a postracial ideal of universal equality. Perhaps sensing the transformative address’s ambivalence, the Congress confirmed the liberty of already freed slaves and manumitted those who had fought in the War of Independence; for those who remained in slavery, they devised a system of gradual emancipation and an oppressive, transitional apprenticeship system.<sup>49</sup>

The romanticization of Venezuela for the purposes of emigration in 1853, then, relies on an ahistorical representation of Bolívar and his republic: whereas the novel projects the color-based class conflicts of mid-century Trinidad back into the 1810s, it simultaneously summons the sense of promise, possibility, and racial democracy associated with independence-era Venezuela into the present. For Des Sources, nonhistory facilitates the collapse of past and present in the service of manifesting potential future. It distorts a sense of linear time and disrupts any potential for a progress narrative that would champion race relations in Trinidad or Venezuela in the present (1850s). While it may be tempting to read *Adolphus*’s failures to account for the realities of racial oppression that continued to plague 1850s Venezuela, we must also recognize that the text’s return to a more hopeful moment in Venezuelan history effectively erases those decades of disenchantment through its narrative temporalities. In doing so, *Adolphus* ultimately suggests that it is not Venezuela per se that promises the fulfillment of a racially

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>49</sup> For more on these laws and the resulting apprenticeship system, see John V. Lombardi, “Manumission, *Manumisos*, and *Aprendizaje* in Republican Venezuela,” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 49.4 (1969): 656-678.

democratic ideal, but rather the transplantation of Colored Trinidadians to Venezuela that will effectuate the realization of that ideal.

### ***Adolphus, The Slave Son, and Greater Anglo America***

Only ever a pipedream though, Des Sources's Numancia colony caved in under the weight of its own promises. As it turned out, not only did Des Sources significantly oversell the prospects of the region for colonizers, but he also failed to secure permissions for his colony from the Venezuelan federal government.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the British established a naval blockade to preserve diplomatic relations in the region and essentially cutoff the colonists from outside resources, isolating them in the malarial Orinoco Delta with limited access to food and supplies.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, settlers found that despite many of the *Trinidadian's* claims, Venezuelans themselves were less than hospitable to the colonists. Although settlers were removed from the institutional racism of urban Venezuela, those who were fortunate enough to

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<sup>50</sup> A letter from the British Consulate General in Venezuela printed in the *Port of Spain Gazette* on March 23, 1853 (two days after Des Sources last launch) and reprinted as "Emigration to Venezuelan Guyana" in the *Trinidadian* on April 1 divulges that the Venezuelan government gave "no encouragement whatever to the scheme, but that it is so entirely averse to the principles upon which the Colony is to be founded, that it is the intention of the Executive *to expel the Immigrants as dangerous characters, and therefore prejudicial to the interests of the Republic*" (original emphasis). See also Toussaint, "George Numa Dessources," 215.

<sup>51</sup> According to the *Antigua Gazette*, many insolvent Trinidadian debtors were fleeing to Numancia in order to find asylum from legal persecution under the more forgiving debtor laws in Venezuela, forcing the British Navy to respond: "The Screw Steamer 'Highflyer,' Captain Matson, will be despatched [sic] to LaGuayra, and that Port as well as the Orinoco will be subjected to a blockade, until the over due [sic] claims which have been legally recognized are satisfactorily arranged. We have not the slightest apprehension that 'the little difficulty' will not be amicably terminated without an expenditure of powder. If the desired result of the Highflyer's message be not early obtained, the embryo President of Numancia and his followers will have an additional difficulty to those previously in existence to encounter"; see "Trinidad," *Antigua Gazette*, December 28, 1852, 2.

secure work still faced exploitation at the hands of opportunistic employers who took advantage of the immigrants' desperation. Within a year of the first wave of settlers, sick, starving, and thoroughly disillusioned Numancians began repatriating to Trinidad. In late 1853, Des Sources abandoned his collapsing colony and returned to Port of Spain defeated. Upon arrival, he found that his press had been sold and the *Trinidadian* discontinued.

As the last of the Numancians were garnering passage back the island, Marcella Fanny Wilkins was sending her novel *The Slave Son* (1854) off to the presses in London. Born in Ireland and residing in England, Wilkins was an amateur author who, according to her own account, set her only novel in Trinidad "for the sake of truth," since she had lived on her father's plantation on that island during her youth before settling in Manchester with her husband and children (99).<sup>52</sup> If we take Wilkins at her word that she composed her novel in 1848, she clearly did not have Numancia in mind when she wrote her conclusion. According to her preface to *The Slave Son*:

The following pages were written about six years ago, but it was thought advisable to alter the narrative, then consisting of detached pieces, to one consecutive story; even then being little encouraged, as the subject of slavery had passed away from the public mind with the days of Wilberforce, I threw it aside, until the appearance of Mrs. Stowe's work removed the objection, and the

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<sup>52</sup> The critical introduction to the novel offers the most thorough biographical discussion of Wilkins and suggests that she spent much of her youth in Trinidad; see Brereton, et al., introduction to *The Slave Son*, xlii-xliv. I would add to this biography a more concrete date of death (1892), accessed through public death records on [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com). In addition to this account, the reviewer at *The Leader* refers to Wilkins as "a planter's daughter," seemingly confirming the modern consensus; see "The Slave Son," *The Leader*, February 25, 1854, 187.

cessation of family cares and the return of health enabled me to listen to the suggestion of my friends and submit the work to the Public. (99)

It may be possible that her exilic ending numbered among the “alterations” she made in the early 1850s and that Des Sources’s emigrationist propaganda shaped her narrative, though it seems just as likely that she remained completely unaware of his expedition and that her invocation of Venezuela at the end of her novel owes more to the long history of interconnection between Trinidad and the Spanish Main than to the present. Moreover, this trope has a rich history in Trinidadian literature. Belfond, *The Slave Son*’s protagonist, corresponds typologically with the eponymous heroes of *Adolphus* and Michel Maxwell Philip’s *Emmanuel Appadocca* (1854): he is a Coloured man, born of a Black mother and a white father, who received a privileged education in Europe and eventually emigrates to Venezuela.

Still, the novel shares much in common with *Adolphus*. Though more sentimental than its locally serialized counterpart, *The Slave Son* too is a romance whose central love affair suffocates in the island’s noxious socioracial environment: Belfond, a mixed-race fugitive slave, and Laurine, a free, middle class mulatta, cannot marry according to Trinidadian laws and customs because of their birth conditions. Unable to consummate their affections for one another, the pair flees the island in the novel’s final pages amidst the conflagration of a slave rebellion. Their destination, like *Adolphus*’s, is Venezuela, “where none are slaves, where Bolivar has given to all equal rights” (320). Stylistically, as well, *The Slave Son*, takes the form of a historical novel, published in 1854, but set on the eve of the British Emancipation Act in 1832; and just as with *Adolphus*, I contend that this structuring of the plot brings together the past and present in order to highlight Colored Trinidadian relocation to Venezuela as the only viable solution to dysfunctional racial politics in Trinidad.



But whereas *Adolphus* and the *Trinidadian* expound upon an elaborate, if fantastic vision of Venezuelan racial democracy as a uniquely hopeful prospect for Colored Trinidadians, *The Slave Son* gives a subtle but emphatic emphasis to how such a mass migration might also benefit those who remain in Trinidad: white creoles. Beneath a veneer of optimism and the rhetoric of liberation in its narration of Belfond's and Laurine's escape from the island, *The Slave Son* promotes the "whitening" of the island through the strategic removal of Afro-descended populations. As previously discussed, the prominent Colored middle class posed one of the most protrusive stumbling blocks barring Trinidad's transformation from a Crown Colony without locally-elected representation in London into a provincial colony or even an independent nation. This population's removal, then, served an expedient political function for white creoles. But more troublingly, *The Slave Son* contributes to a larger ideological apparatus that I also situated *Uncle Tom's Cabin* within in the previous chapter: the underlying belief at the heart of both novels is that North America was *destined* to be Anglo America. The georacial mythology that animates these novels projects a vision that I term *Greater Anglo America*, a concept deeply indebted to Reginald Horsman's landmark study *Race and Manifest Destiny* (1981). Horsman argues that as the narration of English history shifted away from the monarchical Arthurian legend to focus instead on its Germanic tribal origins (which were strongly associated with practices of liberty, democracy, and justice), the English began to "jumble race, nation, and language into a hodgepodge of rampant, racial nationalism" that he terms Anglo-Saxon racialism.<sup>53</sup> This mythological past crossed the Atlantic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to find fertile ground in the minds of North American settlers. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the particularism of scientific racialism (which sought to differentiate

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<sup>53</sup> Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny*, 26.

communities from one another) supplanted the universalism of Enlightenment philology and began to advance theories of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority. Moreover, if Anglo-Saxons were an exceptional race, then the political, economic, and military successes of the nascent US American republic tautologically “proved” that Anglo Americans in the United States were exemplars of that race. The circular pseudoscience of Anglo-Saxon racial superiority provided the basis for US American exceptionalism and consequently justified the violent manifestations of that racial/national destiny; the continued genocidal displacement of Native Americans, the dehumanizing enslavement of African people, and the invasion of neighboring Spanish colonies all fell under the auspices of Anglo America spreading its civilizing culture and superior seed westward. As my reading of *The Slave Son* reveals, however, that mythological Anglo-Saxon past could also provide the foundation for a *transnational* projection of that racial destiny throughout the loose network of former and current British colonies in the Western Hemisphere: Greater Anglo America.

In what follows, I examine the ways in which *The Slave Son* enlists demographically symbolic types in order to stage a racial pageant that manifests a fantasy of whitening colonial Trinidad through the figurative and literal removal of non-European populations. These Lukácsian types include Belfond (the “noble mulatto”), Daddy Fanty (the “savage African”), and a nameless *mestizo* (the “vanishing Indian”), and within the narrative landscape of *The Slave Son* they collaborate to naturalize their collective disappearances. But much like *Adolphus*, this novel also requires a manipulation of historical time in order to enact its ideological vision. In the same way that Des Source positioning *Adolphus* prior to the failures of Bolívarian racial democracy recaptures the potential of those ideals, setting *The Slave Son* on the eve of emancipation allows Wilkins to unwrite manumission and the attempted assimilation of former slaves into the social

fabric of free Trinidad. The prospect of Black and Brown citizenship in Trinidad becomes unthinkable in *The Slave Son*, despite the fact that Trinidadians of color were grappling with the challenges of that reality daily at the time of the novel's publication. By collapsing the past and present, and by conscripting historical-social-types in order to naturalize its vision of history, *The Slave Son* ultimately suggests that the removal of non-white populations from Trinidad effectuates an inevitable, "natural," racial order.

Whereas in the previous section I took up the idea of "nonhistorical fiction" to expose the fatal flaws in Des Sources's optimistic projection of a cherry-picked version of Bolívarian racial democracy (c. 1810s) into the 1850s, I return to this reading strategy in my interpretation of *The Slave Son*, this time to expose how the historical-social-types the novel enlists fail to account for the complexities of lived, racialized experiences, not only for actual Trinidadians in the 1850s, but also for the characters (types) themselves. By reading the attempted antagonism between Black and Brown Trinidadians, as well as the attempted pairing of mulattos and *mestizos* as vestigial elements of a Spanish colonial past, this next section unravels *The Slave Son*'s fantastic vision of a whitened island forming part of a larger, transnational network of white American colonies/nations (Greater Anglo America).

### **The Color of Black Liberation in *The Slave Son***

Much like Des Sources's novella, Wilkins's novel offers a complex portrait of interracial conflict, refusing a reductive characterization of white-Black antagonism, but also upholding the undergirding assumptions of white supremacy. Rather than contrasting the hedonistic and insidious "white mulatto" with the proud, moral mulatto as in *Adolphus* though, *The Slave Son* relies on the juxtaposition of its mulatto hero with a Black villain. Through this pointed contrast,

the novel examines two distinct liberation strategies for enslaved Afro-Trinidadians. Belfond espouses familiar ideas about republican revolutions, gleaned from his European education, whereas his maternal uncle, Daddy Fanty, is a Black Obeah priest and the leader of a militant maroon community that eventually descends from the hills onto the plantations of their former masters. The latter champions maroon tactics, including guerilla warfare and Obeah sorcery to emancipate the enslaved people, while also endorsing a more violent and less conciliatory stance toward their oppressors.

Belfond's first narrative confrontation with Daddy Fanty indexes the novel's ideas about the gap between the educated mulatto and the Black population, ideas quite similar to the distinction between Juan Placido and the "dark, dumb, inert mass" that Whittier characterized in Chapter One. After returning from Europe where he served as an enslaved servant to his master's son, Belfond leaps from the boat off the Trinidadian shore, fleeing from slavery and into the overgrown jungles of the island's hilly interior. Here, Belfond unexpectedly encounters his uncle in an unsettling Gothic setting:

Nature, so beautiful and enchanting elsewhere on the mountains, here assumed a most repulsive aspect: dark, dismal blossoms, huge, misshapen fruits, and glossy leaves almost black with venomous sap, were mingled with thorns, long, pointed, and protruding, like spears of ugly gnomes; while a rank smell of unwholesome vegetation rendered the atmosphere around unpleasant and difficult to breathe.

(203)

In this sylvan setting, Nature has assumed a most unnatural form, a sense that the misshapen fruit exemplify. The source of this distortion, the text implies, is the maroon community that occupies the region. The subsistence of ex-slaves independent of the plantations from which they fled has

disrupted the “natural” orders of slavery and the racial caste system; as a result, they have also disrupted the otherwise captivating natural beauty that characterizes the mountainous landscape. In the same way that the “glossy leaves” imbued with a “venomous sap” become “almost black,” the otherwise “beautiful and enchanting” forest which hosts Daddy Fanty and his maroon community becomes “repulsive,” “unwholesome,” and “unpleasant.” Moreover, the emphasis on venom and the sharpness of the thorny vegetation betrays an anxiety about the potentially lethal threat that organized maroons might pose to the white creole planters holding their families and countrymen in captive. By articulating this fear through the language of the fantastical and the supernatural – the plant’s thorns are “like spears of ugly gnomes” – the text registers the island’s inability to process a black community operating autonomously from the social structures of white power. Such a prospect, according to the logic of the text, defies nature and provides readers with their first, subtle sense that Black life cannot subsist in Trinidad outside the racial order of slavery.

Against this backdrop, the newly fugitive Belfond encounters his maroon uncle. Daddy Fanty calls upon his nephew to perform a vengeful favor: returning to the estate from which he escaped and poisoning the owner’s newborn child. Although the white planter, Cardon, is responsible for the rape and death of Belfond’s mother, Belfond refuses the task because Cardon is his white father and the innocent child is his half-brother. Fanty, indignant, snarls at his nephew’s refusal and his disgust assumes the form of derogatory racial slurs: “‘Look there,’ he said pointing scornfully to the golden hue of Belfond’s hand, ‘Koromantyn’s blood has grown muddy there; and with a muddy heart, you mule, you love the whites that kick you’” (206). Had the narrative been set in 1853 rather than 1832, Fanty might have added “Uncle Tom” to the lengthy torrent of anti-mulatto epithets. The priest inverts the common tropes of racial mixing in

which “Black blood” is understood to taint or “muddy” “white blood,” arguing instead that Cardon’s European blood has adulterated the purity of “Koromantyn’s blood” in Belfond’s veins. The text quickly disavows this reading, however, suggesting that the same whiteness that Fanty understands to be a corruption is precisely what provides Belfond with a more “rational” perspective that distinguishes him from the more savage Black maroon community. When Belfond denies his sympathies for Cardon, from whom he has just fled, he also rebuts his uncle by affirming his loyalty to his African ancestry:

You dare not say that in earnest; you know well how I have loved my mother’s people, you know well what I have done for them. Who gathered the Maroons up in the mountain yonder? Who taught them to till the ground, to lay up stores, to do without white people and their markets? Who taught them songs, and order, and courage? Who would have raised the glorious standard of liberty for them, – liberty and freedom like America, like France, – and have made them a people among the nations of the earth, had they but listened to me and gathered round me like men, brave, bold, generous? But no! they would not, could not believe me: they must be murderers like you, and go, like sneaking cowards at midnight, to set fire to the white man’s house, and murder him as he from the flames. I am not a man to do that; I wouldn’t head such warfare, no, not to save a thousand lives if I had them; nor will I now be your minion, and bewitch infants with Obiah; go, send your snakes to do that work, not me. (206)

Belfond’s self-distancing from the maroon community that he himself organized does not stem from his innate preference for “the white man’s house,” but from *their* preference for guerilla tactics that he sees as cowardly, underhanded, and sinister. He regards these resistance strategies

as craven and ethically indefensible. The repeated word “murder,” for instance, belongs to a legal/moral register rather than a military register, implying that killing white slaveowners is an act of excess, not a justified response to violence; it is an act more fit for “snakes” than rational men.

Belfond’s disavowal of the maroons owes to their failure to embrace an ideologically coherent Black nationalist program with “songs, and order” and a “standard of liberty.” That is, a Black nationalist revolutionary project “like America, like France” and legible within the republican traditions and enlightenment ideals of those movements. Glaringly absent within Belfond’s revolutionary genealogy, however, is the Haitian Revolution, an omission that becomes all the more surprising when the narrator later reveals that Belfond was well-versed in the history of Saint-Domingue. In his youth, he accompanied Cardon on an overseas trip and was left behind in France to serve his white half-brother, who was finishing college. Here, Belfond “heard of Touissant L’Ouverture, and the unfortunate Ogé of St. Domingo. Revolutions of kingdoms, the march of freedom, and the quality of men, were subjects that soon became familiar to him” (260). If Belfond has L’Ouverture and Ogé—both of whom, like him, are men of mixed racial ancestry who benefitted from a French education—in mind when he describes his conceptualization of Black nationalism to Fanty in the scene above, then he appears to associate these leaders with the ideals of the French Revolution rather than an independent movement endemic to Saint-Domingue. Instead, his understanding of Haitian history attributes the uprisings in Saint-Domingue to the revolutionary spirit of these *gen de couleur* leaders and their French educations. In doing so, he denies the alternative narrative of the Haitian Revolution’s origins: Boukman’s vodou ceremony at the Bois Caiman, which led directly to the earliest slave

uprisings in 1791.<sup>54</sup> The Boukman's incendiary vodou and the ensuing anti-white violence that characterized self-emancipation in Saint-Domingue correlate directly with the Obeah practices of "set[ting] fire to the white man's house" and "bewitch[ing] infants" that Daddy Fanty champions in *The Slave Son* (206). By "silencing the past" through his elision of the uneducated, enslaves masses' indispensable role in the liberation of Saint-Domingue, Belfond not only denies the potential efficacy of Daddy Fanty's maroon tactics, but he also privileges a historiography of the Haitian Revolution in which educated mulattoes (like himself) led the charge by drawing from their familiarity with revolutionary democratic principles.<sup>55</sup> The argument between Fanty and Belfond dramatizes competing strategies for Black liberation from slavery, a dispute hardly unique to Trinidad. It pits passionate, anti-white violence and marronage against rational, structured state-building. This archetypal opposition plays out along a spectrum of Blackness: the illiterate, dark-skinned, practitioner of "African witchcraft" espouses unchecked violence, while the enlightened, literate, mulatto champions idealistic diplomacy.

Careful not to overtly attribute this divide to racial essentialism by suggesting that Belfond's white ancestry makes him *necessarily* more rational than Fanty, the novel singles out education as the force that enlightens people of color. For instance, although both men speak the same "clipped and broken" Trinidadian patois that the narrator has "transcribe[d] into as fair

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<sup>54</sup> For historical accounts of Boukman's role in the Haitian Revolution, see Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World* (Durham: Duke UP, 2004); Carolyn E. Fick, *The Making of Haiti: The Saint Domingue Revolution from Below* (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1990); C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (New York: Vintage, 1989); Celucien Joseph, *Haitian Modernity and Liberative Interruptions* (Washington: UP of America, 2013); and John K. Thornton, "'I Am the Subject of the King of Congo': African Political Ideology and the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of World History* 4.2 (1993): 181-214.

<sup>55</sup> My language here invokes Michel-Rolph Trouillot's watershed theorization of Haitian historiography, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).



English as my vocabulary permits,” the text takes great pains to distinguish between their modes of speaking (205). Fanty converses in “the similes and proverbs of Negro dialect,” and his articulation takes the form of animalistic “snarls” and “growls,” while Belfond commands the same language “in terms so finely modulated and with such choice of expressions as to betray a romantic mind refined by a European education” (205, 207, 123). Furthermore, because Belfond speaks like a white creole and has received a European education, he is always individuated by his name, whereas the text regularly refers to Fanty as simply “the Negro” throughout their dialogue. The text grants autonomous personhood to the introspective and rational Belfond, while the content of Fanty’s character appears to be coincident with his racial identity—the moniker “Negro” pretends to explain all of his desires, passions, and actions and thereby stands in for his interiority.<sup>56</sup> Despite these efforts to deny the coextension of education and whiteness, *The Slave Son* posits a direct correlation between the education that Belfond surreptitiously obtained during his time in France and the cultural markers of whiteness. His exposure to French history and philosophy, for example, amounted to nothing short of a religious, intellectual, and ethical awakening for him:

He awoke, as from a dream, to find himself one of the great human race—a creature endowed with a soul, animated by the breath of the Almighty; and it was with a mingled feeling of awe and astonishment that at last he took in the eternal

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<sup>56</sup> Hortense Spillers recognizes a similar process at work in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, wherein the text evacuates personhood from the titular character in order to present him before an abolitionist audience: “as Tom becomes in Stowe’s text *the negro* – this existence of a him/her in a subject position that unfolds, to rob the subject of its dynamic character, to captivate it in a fictionalized scheme whose outcome is already inscribed by a higher, different, *other*, power, freezes it in the ahistorical”; see “Changing the Letter: The Yokes, the Jokes of Discourse, or Mrs. Stowe, Mr. Reed,” in *Slavery and the Literary Imagination*, ed. Deborah E. McDowell and Arnold Rampersad (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1989), 29.

truth, that the black man and the white man stand equal before God in his love, equal in his care, equal in his promise of a heavenly home; for before that time he had never thought of an after-life, save in some low condition, far, far behind the meanest white men. (260-1)

Despite some intimations of racial equality in this oneiric passage, the rhetorical labor of the definite article governing “*the* great human race” (my emphasis) suggests that there are several human races, with one *definite* superior race among them. If there remains any doubt which race the text regards as the innately superior one, Belfond’s limited capacity to conceptualize the afterlife only “far behind the meanest white men” confirms that it was his African ancestry that suppressed him before a French education “awakened” him from his somnambulistic life. As the dream dissipates, it becomes clear this edification has not actually transubstantiated Belfond from *thing* into *person*, but instead, has made him suddenly aware of his soul, his promise, and, most importantly, his whiteness. The education itself does not *inspire* Belfond in the religious sense of the term: it is not the education that breathes a soul into his body. Rather, his introduction to Enlightenment thought *activates* his latent whiteness and makes him conscious that he has *already* been “endowed with a soul” and “animated by the breath of the Almighty” by virtue of his white parentage.

This spiritual, intellectual, and racial awakening, then, also secures Belfond’s salvation from spiritual, intellectual and *racial* darkness (read: Blackness). *The Slave Son* not only directly contrasts him with Daddy Fanty, but further distinguishes him from the anonymous mass of Black slaves and maroons: “Unlike his darker comrades, [Belfond] did not tell all that passed his mind. He knew their understandings, awakened to anything above the little affairs of their brute condition, could never comprehend the tumults of his own struggling heart, or the strange

feelings that had grown in him” (258). The novel grants interiority and complexity to Belfond that it refuses to grant Fanty and the maroons. Fascinatingly though, the repeated metaphor of awakening here intimates that “his darker comrades” *could* be awakened. The conditionality of slavery here is paramount.<sup>57</sup> Again, while the novel pulls up well short of arguing for racial equality, it does suggest the possibility for Afro-Trinidadians to be educated and elevated “above” the “brute condition” in which slavery has obviated their intellectual development. *The Slave Son* implicitly argues that Belfond, as a mulatto governed by the pensive, introspective rationality attributed to his whiteness, is ideally suited to lead his “darker comrades” whose only other candidate for leadership is Daddy Fanty. The novel not only figures Belfond as *saved*, but also as a potential *savior* for “his darker comrades.”

In the end, *The Slave Son* argues that neither form of Black liberation can be successful. As the novel approaches its climax, Daddy Fanty incites the captive laborers of the Palm Grove plantation into a full-scale rebellion; in doing so, the Black maroons and their enslaved counterparts affirm that “they would not, could not believe [in Belfond’s vision]” of rational, Black nationalist state-building (206). They set fire to the cane fields, the refinery, and the creole family’s mansion; they begin slaughtering the overseers and the Cardons. “Bewildered by the

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<sup>57</sup> The conditionality of slavery has led me, following the work of many, to refer to “enslaved people” throughout this study, as opposed to referring to these same individuals or groups as “slaves.” Not only does “enslaved,” as a participle, shift our attention to *those doing the enslaving*, but it refuses to validate “slave” as an ontological category with positive content. The slippage between “slave” and “enslaved” is perhaps the most fundamental basis of racial slavery. In previous modes of slavery in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, an enslaved person, once freed, no longer bore physical markers or social disadvantages of his/her previous condition. With the turn to racial slavery, dark-skinned bodies were permanently “marked” as slaves or ex-slaves, lending purchase to “slave” as a racialized ontological category with positive content: “Black” and “slave” become coextensive, and the creation of this category thereby validates the existence of “race” (and racism). For an influential account of the distinction between “captive bodies” and “slaves,” see Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 65-81.

glare and uproar” (313) of the destruction around him, Belfond is once more disidentified from “his darker comrades.” He remains “bewildered and stupefied” amid the “cries of females and shrieks of alarm” that surround him (313). He regards this violence as unjustified and excessive, an impression underscored by the base passions of the rebelling Black men and women around him: “savage screams of laughter, hoarse sounds of angry contention, and one mad roar of triumph: the Negroes had proclaimed an insurrection” (313). Awakened once more within the hellish conflagration of “snake-like flames,” Belfond hears Cardon’s cries for help, rushing to his aid, only to find his master/father cornered by the seething rebels. Despite enduring years of physical and psychic abuse from Cardon, Belfond still attempts to save him. Once more, though, his attempts to “reason” fell upon the unhearing ears of “the Negroes: they were maddened with the deed” (314). Cardon, for his part, refuses Belfond’s help – “do you think I am to owe my life to you?” he entreats his son – and perishes “beneath the weight of a hundred blows” with Daddy Fanty at the fore (314). Such “infuriated savages,” the novel argues and Belfond agrees, are unfit for nation-building, and he must abandon his commitments to revolutionary nation-building (314). Moreover, despite the apparent successes of the uprising the frenetic and chaotic language that characterizes the maroons’ victory suggests that that victory is unsustainable, that it cannot result in a stable society that might replace the plantocratic social order it destroys.

In the aftermath of this confusion and destruction, Belfond alights to the neighboring plantation (Fountain Estate) to ensure that Fanty’s insurrection has not spread beyond the boundaries of Palm Grove. Here, we come to realize that the priest’s rebellious fervor seems to have been driven primarily by his desire for retribution, not only against Cardon, but also against Cardon’s fugitive-slave-hunter, Higgins. Higgins earned Fanty’s ire by ransacking his home and slaughtering his menagerie of pets during an interrogation about the escaped Belfond’s

whereabouts; Fanty, in turn, vowed vengeance. The grisly scene that Belfond witnesses at Fountain Estate proves a fatal one for both men:

Higgins lay ghastly and dying, – not from any visible wound, but clinging round him, like a beast of prey, was the crippled body of the sorcerer Fanty. Faithful to his promise, the old Negro had sought the sailor, and then and there, in the midst of the confusion and terrors of the rebellion, regardless of the shots and the blows which assailed him on all sides, he had leaped upon him, darting his long and poisoned nails into the ears of his enemy, he clung to him with a strength and pertinacity which no effort could overcome. It was a hideous spectacle: the old man's glassy eyes were wide open with a fixed stare, while a demoniac grin on his shriveled lips showed the last working of his soul before it took its final leave of earth's trials and wrongs. It was impossible to disengage him, and Higgins cried piteously for water; but ere they could bring it, the words thickened in his throat, and, before many minutes, he lay a blackened, loathsome corpse, just as the sorcerer had foretold. (317)

In the image of these mortal enemies locked in a morbid embrace, the novel figuratively foments the onset of *rigor mortis*: the bodies of the black man and the white man become eternally entangled. Locked into this combative posture and “impossible to disengage,” the antagonistic bodies merge into a single entity: the mulatto. As a somatic manifestation of *The Slave Son's* understanding of mulattoness, the inextricably intertwined corpses of Fanty and Higgins figuratively represent the warring ideals of blackness and whiteness transubstantiated into a single body. The soldering of these two men together has a profound impact on each. For example, although the passage continues to emphasize Fanty's sinister features – his “glassy

eyes,” “demoniac grin,” and “shriveled lips” – it also humanizes him as “the old man” rather than as the generic moniker “the Negro,” which the text has consistently applied until now. The scene also recognizes the workings of his “soul” and the injustices that the “earth’s trials and wrongs” have wrought against him. Thus, although Fanty passes from the world of the living as a maniacal and demoniacal practitioner of a ‘profane’ religion, Belfond feels sympathy for the tortured man, his tormented soul, and his maddening myopia. Only after Fanty’s body has united with the creole’s corpse can Belfond see the priest’s humanity. Conversely, death transforms Higgins into “a blackened corpse,” without any intimation of any metaphysical or spiritual activity during the process of his passing. The “blackening” of his dying body connotes more than simply the biological effects of Fanty’s withering poison. In such proximity to the priest’s body, Higgins’s white flesh darkens, just as Fanty’s proximity to the creole’s body whitens his soul.

As the two bodies become one, a lucid metaphor appears before us. The Black body entangled with the white body, the two-become-one darkened in physical appearance, but with a recognizable humanity and a savable soul: this is the mulatto. Because it is Belfond who bears witness to this destructive finale, he cannot help but see himself in the “hideous spectacle” before him. Shortly following his rejection by the enslaved masses in uprising and Cardon’s abnegation of his familial ties to Belfond, the mulatto hero comes to understand that his unique sympathies for both races distinguish him from them. He cannot strictly identify with solely one or the other, but only and always both. As a result, the most important feature that he recognizes in the interlocked bodies of Fanty and Higgins is their lifelessness: any attempt to resolve these warring

ideals into a unity means death, as the symbolic mulatto expiring before him testifies.<sup>58</sup> The morbid image of twin racial foils transformed into a single, mixed-race corpse portends the unsustainable future of the mulatto in Trinidad, and Belfond comes to realize the “fact” of his placelessness within the Trinidadian socio-racial order.

### **The Vanishing Indian and the Vanishing Mulatto**

Having abandoned his commitments to racial revolution and Black nationalist state-building, Belfond vows to leave the island for a more hospitable country. He and Laurine flee from Fountain Estate and orient themselves for the coast.<sup>59</sup> There, several Amerindian fishermen who “were used to helping the wretched fugitives who came that way,” greet the pair and agree to guide them across the water to Venezuela (320). While the reasons that *The Slave Son* indicates

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<sup>58</sup> As my language of “warring ideals” here suggests, Belfond’s sense of “two-ness” strongly parallels W.E.B. Dubois’s conceptualization of double consciousness; see W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Donald Gibson (New York: Penguin, 1996), 5.

<sup>59</sup> Wilkins’s sets her novel in “a very obscure hamlet on the south-east coast” of Trinidad, and Belfond and Laurine embark for Venezuela from Bande de l’Est, on “the eastern side of the island, where the Tamana joins its sparkling tide to the ocean” (111, 320). There is no major river in Trinidad called “Tamana,” though Mount Tamana is a large hill located in Sangre Grande in the island’s central region. Perplexingly, if Belfond and Laurine were to set out from Bande de l’Est for the Orinoco River in Venezuela, this would require either following the southern coast of the island into the Gulf of Paría or rowing their canoe directly south out into the hazardous open waters of the Atlantic Ocean toward one of the Orinoco tributaries in the Delta Amacuro. A more realistic point of departure, practically and historically speaking, would have been off the western coast of the island. Because it consists of a swirling eddy, the Gulf of Paría provided a naturally occurring circuit between the island and Venezuela that departures from any port on Trinidad’s west coast could have used as launch points. The passage would be shortest from the southwest coast across the Boca del Serpiente or from the northwest coast across the Bocas del Dragón. The Numancian expeditions of 1853, which I describe later in this chapter, even departed from San Fernando, a midpoint city along the island’s western coast. It seems likely that Wilkins’s decision to set her novel in the southeast stemmed from the location of her family’s during her youth and that this resulting oversight regarding the practical implications of canoeing into the Atlantic perhaps reveals that her (understandably) limited knowledge of actual black emigration.

Venezuela as the ideal site for relocation share much in common with the rationales offered in *Adolphus*, the curious appearance of Amerindians mark the novel's unique contribution to contemporary Coloured emigration discourses in Trinidad, and their characterization performs an essential ideological and narrative function that juxtaposes these two works of fiction rather dramatically. As the title of this section suggests and as I will argue below, *The Slave Son's* description of collaboration between Amerindians and mulattos participate within a broader project of the novel: the removal of non-European demographics in order to whiten the Trinidadian polity.

The arrival of the fishermen at the novel's conclusion is not as abrupt as it may seem; they first appear much earlier in the story, at which point the text foreshadows their willingness to assist in just such an escape. Upon Belfond's recapture and forced return to Palm Grove, Fanty seeks out Laurine and agrees to escort her to nearby Fountain Estate, where she can begin negotiating for his freedom. A torrential storm interrupts their journey and the "two travellers of a different stamp" find refuge from the ensuing deluge in the hut of a welcoming *peon* and his family. Although the novel describes the *peon* as "half Indian, half Spaniard," the ensuing description of his home characterizes the family's cultural practices as unambiguously aboriginal (286). Unlike the isolation that characterizes Daddy Fanty's gothic lair or the idyllic, sylvan hideaway that Belfond erects for Laurine, the *peon's* rural residence vibrates with energy and sociable people: the "great many women" bustled "at their work... preparing a cassava" while the children "were out too, laughing and shouting at one another, for they were earning their breakfast in true Indian fashion, by shooting at pieces of dried fish and tassa, hung upon the tree-



tops, as rewards for their skill” (286, 287).<sup>60</sup> The description of this family in *The Slave Son* proceeds with a gaze that anthropologically documents their hunter/gatherer lifestyle, rituals, ethics, diet, and implied polygamy as crude expressions of “true Indian fashion.” Not only do they appear as unambiguously Amerindian, but this ethnographic optic enacts a temporal gap between the visitors (Fanty and Laurine) and the natives; it relegates the *peon*’s family to the realm of pre-modern history. *The Slave Son*’s decidedly indigenous gloss on the *peon* family, however, erases much of the complexity of that cultural identity and renders visible the symbolic labor that encumbers the Amerindian in the novel. Bridget Brereton explains that “*peon*” signified Venezuelan immigrants to Trinidad both before and after the British abolition of slavery in the colony. “Though some were prosperous, relatively well-educated, and ‘white,’” she writes,

[m]ost were labourers and peasants, illiterate and of mixed antecedents (Amerindian-African-European). These so-called ‘*peons*’ became an important part of the island’s rural population: they were Spanish-speaking, Catholic, and were identified with cocoa cultivation and a Spanish/Venezuelan cultural complex which absorbed and reinforced the island’s original Amerindian heritage.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> “Tassa” refers to *tasajo*, or sun-dried beef produced primarily in the Rio de la Plata region, but also in Venezuela. Along with the “dried fish” or *bacalao*, *tasajo* served as a staple of the slave diet in the nineteenth century Spanish America. This dietary and historical detail suggests an even stronger association in Wilkins’s mind among the African, the Amerindian, and Spanish America. For an excellent study of the *tasajo* trade and its role in the development of Cuban slavery in the nineteenth century, see Andrew Sluyter, “The Hispanic Atlantic’s *Tasajo* Trail,” *Latin American Research Review* 45.1 (2010): 98-120. I am grateful to Vera Kutzinski for bringing this source and this connection to my attention.

<sup>61</sup> Bridget Brereton, “Social Organisation and Class, Racial and Cultural Conflict in Nineteenth Century Trinidad,” in *Trinidad Ethnicity*, ed. Kevin A. Yelvington (Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1993), 35.

Despite *The Slave Son*'s pointed emphasis on the *peon*'s dual Spanish and Amerindian ancestry, this bustling portrait of family life exhibits no signs of Spanish American or Catholic culture, and thereby limns the *peon* as predominantly Native American. Indeed, much like the abundant references to Fany as "the Negro," subsequent references to the nameless *peon* assume the form of the racial moniker "the Indian."

Still, the recognition of the *peon*'s "half Spanish" ancestry" preforms an important function here, underscoring, as Brereton notes, that many of the *peons* in Trinidad originated from the mainland. The fisherman's classification as a *peon*, specifically, underscores his Venezuelan origins and his status as a landless immigrant in Trinidad; although he is a Native American, he is not a Native Trinidadian. The island's Amerindian population, the novel implies, has already vanished, and any extant traces of Arawak or Carib culture were imported by *peons* from Venezuela.<sup>62</sup> This perspective resonates with discursive complex of the Black Legend: the

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<sup>62</sup> For the British colonial administration in Trinidad, it was easy to attribute the declining Amerindian population as a problem that they inherited from the Spanish colonial regime prior to the British conquest of the island. Sadly, Spanish liberalization of the colony in the last decades of the eighteenth century only lent credence to this perspective. Despite the island's strategic position as a link between the West Indies and South America, the colony struggled to generate revenue for the metropole. According to Eric Williams, the Spanish Empire's strategy of pursuing precious metals (which unfree Native American laborers were forced to mine) rendered Trinidad dependent on other European nations for essential goods and natural resources and thus truncated the island's economic growth. In the early 1780s, King Carlos III issued liberal incentives for Europeans and creoles who wished to relocate to Trinidad, hoping that this influx of people would jumpstart the colony's development. Waves of immigrants responded to this Spanish inducement, especially aristocratic French creole planters fleeing the early stages of revolution in Saint-Domingue with their slaves led the way. These liberal inducements succeeded as Trinidad experienced unprecedented economic growth in the final decades of the eighteenth-century, but the demographics of the island also began to shift dramatically. As these transplanted planters founded new estates on acreage ceded by Spanish land grants, Amerindian villages were consolidated and the long history of native displacement accelerated. Furthermore, the high demand on a decreasing supply of Amerindian labor, the grueling nature of that manual labor, and the resulting Amerindian neglect of their own *labranzas* (farmlands) also contributed to the dwindling population. The British acquisition of the island did little to ameliorate the dwindling population. For more Spanish colony policy and its effects on the Amerindian population in

British associate Spanish colonialism with exceptionally brutal treatment of indigenous Americans and exceedingly permissive social practices regarding European-Amerindian sexual relations.<sup>63</sup> Such a formulation, in the case of Trinidad, attributes the ostensible extinction of Trinidad's native population and the present presence of *peons* on the island to the legacy of Spanish colonialism. On the one hand, attributing the ostensible extinction of Trinidad's native population to Spanish colonial policies obscures the role of Anglo Americans in devastating the Amerindian population in Trinidad and elsewhere. The British, after all, only took control of the island in 1797, well after the native population had already been disappeared through two centuries of Spanish settlement. On the other hand, mooring *mestizaje* and the presence of *peons* in Trinidad to the sexual and cultural mores of Spanish settler colonialism distances British mercantile colonialism from interracial comingling and amalgamation. In doing so, it further

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Trinidad in the late eighteenth century, see Eric Williams, *History of Trinidad and Tobago* (New York: Praeger, 1962), 40-50; Selwyn Ryan, *Race and Nationalism in Trinidad and Tobago* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1972), 4; Francisco Morales Padrón, *Spanish Trinidad*, trans. and ed. Armando García de la Torre (Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2012), 177-251; and Linda A. Newson, *Aboriginal and Spanish Colonial Trinidad* (London: Academic Press, 1976), 177-224.

<sup>63</sup> The Black Legend refers to a network of discourses, particularly from the Anglo Atlantic world, which demonizes Spain and the Spanish Empire. The "blackness" of the legend levies a moral judgment against Spain's colonial policies particularly the genocide of Native Americans, but also often connotes the "impure" racial origins of the Spanish people, whose cultural ties to the Islamic Moors and geographical proximity to Africa led to the prominent belief that "Africa begins at the Pyrenees." For more on the Black Legend and its legacy in the Americas, see María DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005); Charles Gibson, *The Black Legend: Anti-Spanish Attitudes in the Old World and the New* (Cambridge: Knopf, 1971); Margaret R. Greer, Walter D. Mignolo, and Maureen Quilligan, ed., *Rereading the Black Legend: The Discourses of Religious and Racial Difference in the Renaissance Empires* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2008); William S. Maltby, *The Black Legend in England* (Durham: Duke UP, 1971); Phillip Wayne Powell, *Tree of Hate: Propaganda and Prejudices Affecting United States Relations with the Hispanic World* (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2008); and Roberto Fernández Retamar, "Against the Black Legend," in *Caliban and Other Essays*, trans. Edward Baker (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989), 56-73.

inculcates the barrier that morally, racially, and politically separates British creoles from other Trinidadian demographics. *The Slave Son* thereby projects *mestizaje* and the devastation of native populations to a dark, barbaric, and *Spanish* past. This mode of discussing an active, present native population as if it is already “extinct” or, at best, a rapidly fading, vestigial relic of a past time, invokes a trope familiar to US American literature: the “vanishing Indian.”<sup>64</sup> By presenting the *peon* as a vanishing Indian, *The Slave Son* figuratively writes not only Amerindian culture, but also Spanish American culture out of Trinidad’s British present and into the annals of the island’s history. As Shona Jackson, narratives of vanishing Indians in the southern Caribbean constituted part of a larger debate over the concept of *indigeneity*: the genocide and displacement of Amerindians operated alongside creole mercantile and material practices in order to justify creoles’ claims that they belong on the land (indigeneity).<sup>65</sup> To the extent that these extant native populations were visible or recognizable as such in 1832 or 1854 Trinidad, the novel narrates them as holdovers imported from Venezuela, where a Spanish legacy still thrived. The *peons* represent a symbolic relic of Trinidad’s Spanish colonial past and a symbolic

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<sup>64</sup> Although the overall population of Trinidad had more than doubled from when the British took control of the island in 1797 until the time of the novel’s setting, a mere 762 of the island’s 41,668 inhabitants were classified as “Indians” on the 1831 British census, down from as many as 1,804 in 1812; see Daniel Hart, *Trinidad and the Other West India Islands and Colonies*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Trinidad: The Chronicle Publishing Office, 1866), 151. For more on the Vanishing Indian trope in North American literature and culture, see Brewton Berry, “The Myth of the Vanishing Indian,” *Phylon* 21.1 (1960): 51-57; for more on a corollary of this trope in a Spanish American context, see Cecilia G. Mendez, “*Incas Si, Indios No*: Notes on Peruvian Creole Nationalism and Its Contemporary Crisis,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28.1 (1996): 197-225. A more immediate source of the “vanishing Indian” for Wilkins would have been the novels of James Fennimore Cooper, who was enormously popular in Great Britain. For more on Cooper’s novels and the London book trade, see Joseph Rezek, *London and the Making of Provincial Literature: Aesthetics and the Transatlantic Book Trade, 1800-1850* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2015).

<sup>65</sup> Shona N. Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2012).

marker of Venezuela's postcolonial present, thereby collapsing both past and present into a British creole fantasy. In doing so, the novel preserves the racial purity and moral progressivism of British settlers on the island and establishes the 1797 British conquest as the beginning of Trinidadian modernity.

This formulation plays out in the contrasting views toward slavery held by Cardon and those held by Mr. Dorset, a white man and a recent arrival to the island from Great Britain. The chapter "Wrath and Retaliation" details the Englishman's challenges to the barbaric plantation practices of his French creole counterpart at length. Though a slaveowner himself, Dorset articulates moderate and skeptical views toward the institution and the novel underscores that he is not a slaveowner by choice: when unable to secure employment as a medical doctor in London, he relocated to Trinidad and assumed control of an estate that was bequeathed to him (173). *The Slave Son* unambiguously attributes Dorset's moderate and ameliorative view of slavery to his English sensibilities. Echoing a pattern of attributing racial monikers to characters, *The Slave Son* frequently refers to Dorset metonymically as "the European" or "the Englishman," thereby differentiating him from white creoles born and raised in Trinidadian society, especially those of French and Spanish descent: "He was as yet too new in the Colonies to share in the prevailing notions concerning Negroes, or rightly to understand the position he himself held with regard to them, and the scene, so strange, so subversive of his European ideas of justice and humanity, bewildered him" (157). Notably though, *The Slave Son* bemoans the failure of his compassion and generosity to impact the island's enslaved community:

They ought to have been prosperous, but they were not. With enthusiasm they commenced a system of teaching and reforming among their slaves, which on all occasions ended like the experiment of the wheelbarrows—in failure. On slaves

that were African born they were invariably succeeded in making some impression, but on Negroes born as slaves in the Colony, never; these were all hardened, cunning, and corrupt. (323)

Despite the “enthusiastic” philanthropic efforts of Dorset to educate and “civilize” his slaves, the range of effectiveness falls directly along the lines of birthplace: native Africans were impressionable, but Afro-Trinidadians were inured to education since they had already been corrupted by their previous cultural instruction. Because native Africans successfully learn from Dorset, this observation affirms the quality of his pedagogical practices and shifts the blame for the Afro-Trinidadian unteachability elsewhere. If we recall that the novel is set in 1832, the culprit for the “corruption” of these Afro-Trinidadian slaves is understood to be the Spanish and French creole planters—men like Cardon—whose immoral practices had influenced not only the planting class of 1832, but the generation of slaves that parented the 1832 generation. Only then can Englishmen like Dorset successfully bring Trinidad into modernity.<sup>66</sup>

This instantiation of a temporal break in Trinidadian, dividing the Spanish past and British modernity, also displaces that Spanish colonial past by suggesting that it is still accessible on the postcolonial Spanish Main. *The Slave Son* employs the *peon* family compound as evidence for how the Venezuelan present can sustain a “doomed” population already written into the Trinidadian past (the Amerindians). Their home appears as a paradisiacal haven where this native family can practice their traditional culture and live “in true Indian fashion” and thrive

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<sup>66</sup> The efficacy of his education with native Africans is lauded in the final lines of the novel. After Mr. and Mrs. Dorset remove to New York, they attempt to repay a number of their freed slaves who lent them money during a time a desperation: “His success was first marked by a remittance to his colonial friends; but the good creatures sent it back, alleging that the money advanced was a free gift, and should remain so; they would be well paid hearing that he was rich and happy” (324).

outside the island's socio-racial infrastructure (towns, estates, markets, etc.). By associating the family's satisfying extra-social existence with the both Spanish colonial past and the Spanish Main, *The Slave Son* orients Belfond and Laurine in a similar direction when they endeavor to flee Trinidad. *The Slave Son* portrays both the *peon* and the mulatto couple as representatives of "doomed" populations: modern British Trinidad cannot sustain them, but the more permissive and retrograde Hispanic society in Venezuela can. The alliance between them establishes a corollary between the vanishing Indian trope and what I call the "vanishing mulatto" trope. The legacy of slavery and racism in Trinidad are so deeply rooted in Trinidadian society, the novel suggests, that the integration and equality of the free Coloured population are not realistic goals. Owing to the intense psychological and socioeconomic effects of racism in Trinidadian society on educated mulattos, Belfond and Laurine arrive at a conclusion similar to that of the *Trinidadian* discussed above: "The middling [Coloured] class or small proprietors *must disappear*," whether by self-removal or by the kind of gradual genocide the ancestors of the *peon* had already witnessed.<sup>67</sup> The self-deportation of Belfond and Laurine marks an escape from the ostensibly intransigent, unalterable socio-racial order of British Trinidad and toward the supposed racial democracy of Bolívarian Venezuela.

By linking together the vanishing Indian and the vanishing mulatto, *The Slave Son* actively proffers a narrative that the demographic landscape of early nineteenth-century Trinidad profoundly contradicts. While the sharp decline of Trinidad's Amerindians parallels a disturbingly familiar story throughout the Americas, the demographic trends for the island's Afro-descended population during this period are somewhat unique. Because Great Britain obtained Trinidad so late in its colonial American enterprises, enslaved Africans and African

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<sup>67</sup> "Emigration to Venezuela," *Trinidadian*, November 6, 1852. Original emphasis.

Americans comprised a much smaller percentage of the island's population (just over half) than much of the British West Indies (typically closer to 90%).<sup>68</sup> Even during the brief period in which the British could have legally imported enslaved Africans to Trinidad, the colonial administration largely declined. Although this decision owed in part to the mounting capitalist and humanitarian arguments of British anti-trafficking activists and abolitionists, it also owed to the economic interests of more established British West Indian agricultural colonies. As a result, Trinidad became an island of small estates rather than large plantations.<sup>69</sup> Unable to expand the island's labor force through the transatlantic slave trade after 1807 and disinclined to depend on the informal inter-colonial slave trade, the British colonial government in Trinidad aggressively attempted to lure white laborers from other nations and colonies, especially elsewhere in the West Indies. Much like Cuban initiatives to incentivize European and white creole immigration, the Trinidadian administration no doubt desired to "whiten" the colony's population through its targeted immigration initiatives.<sup>70</sup> Despite a roughly 50% increase in white inhabitants and a net decline in the enslaved population between 1808 and 1832, however, these efforts to lighten the island's overall racial complexion were largely unsuccessful. During that same 24-year period, the "free Coloured" population grew at three times the rate of the white population, increasing

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<sup>68</sup> Brereton, "Social Organisation," 34.

<sup>69</sup> In 1833 the average Trinidadian planter held seven slaves, compared to nine per claim in Barbados, fifteen per claim in Jamaica, 21 per claim in Antigua and 23 per claim in nearby British Guiana; over 80% of Trinidadian planters owned fewer than ten slaves, while less than 1% owned more than 100; see Williams, *History of Trinidad and Tobago*, 84.

<sup>70</sup> For more on Cuban attempts to sponsor white European immigration to the island, see David R. Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain, and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980), 149-151.



from 6,478 in 1808 to 16,302 in 1832.<sup>71</sup> Not only was the growth of the free Coloured population outpacing the growth of the white population, but, as Selwyn Ryan notes, “it was generally true that the middle class was predominantly Coloured [mulatto].”<sup>72</sup> Put differently, not only was the mulatto population not *vanishing*, but it was actually becoming increasingly more visible and audible.

White planters found this rapid accretion of Coloured citizens deeply unsettling, and this anxiety begins to explain the figural ties between the mulatto and the *mestizo* in *The Slave Son*. Where the slow diminution and assimilation of the island’s native population lent credence to the “vanishing Indian” trope, the deployment of analogous “vanishing mulatto” rhetoric expressed a counterfactual desire for the island’s free Coloured population *to be vanished*. The landed planter class recognized the island’s demographics as the largest obstacle obviating Trinidad’s transforming from a Crown Colony governed by externally appointed administrators into a provincial colony with locally, democratically elected representation. “Let it be understood,” Eric Williams emphasizes, “the principle reason for this decision [Trinidad’s Crown Colony status] was to deny the vote to people of colour who were otherwise qualified.”<sup>73</sup> Back in London, British officials were equally uneasy about the prospect of granting electoral power to the residents of Trinidad in general and to the free Coloured population in particular. The

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<sup>71</sup> While the island’s white population did grow from 2,470 to 3,683 between 1808 and 1832, the enslaved population remained surprisingly consistent: from 1808 to 1816, the number of slaves grew 21,895 to 25,871, but then declined to 20,265 by 1832; see Hart, *Trinidad*, 151. It is unclear from the census data whether “Coloured” refers strictly to the mulatto population, as “Coloured” tends to in the Anglo Caribbean, or whether it refers to all Afro-descended people in Trinidad. There is no separate data for a “free black” population.

<sup>72</sup> Ryan, *Race and Nationalism*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> Williams, *History of Trinidad and Tobago*, 72.

Colonial Office attempted to manage the latter contingent with the introduction of harsh laws against vagrancy that overtly targeted manumitted slaves fleeing the estates where they were held in bondage. These laws accompanied other legal efforts to criminalize African cultural expression, including Obeah.<sup>74</sup> Because many of the free Coloured Trinidadians were established members of the middle class, however, these business-owners and landowners were largely immune to such legislation. These mulattoes in positions of influence, combined within an increasingly persecuted and restless class of impoverished former slaves, constituted an Afro-Trinidadian majority that substantially outnumbered the island's white population. For white creoles, the fear of racial violence was palpable, especially in the wake of the 1849 riots in Port of Spain. To make matters worse, from the white creole perspective, the island's configuration of races and power posed an identifiable hurdle to the island's political enfranchisement within the British imperial network: the British were unwilling to extend local representation rights to Trinidad because they feared the prospect of the island electing a mulatto into colonial office. Protonationalist white creoles, then, understood the removal or diminution of the free Coloured population as a strategy for facilitating Trinidad's progress from a Crown Colony to a province with locally-elected representation to the metropole or even to nationhood.

Because the demographic realities of 1850s Trinidad actively contradict the narrative that the Amerindian and Afro-descended populations were actually disappearing, *The Slave Son* avers a symbolic connection between the *peon* and the mulatto couple, scripting them each as Lukácsian historical-social-types: they become allegorical figures for *the* vanishing Indian and

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<sup>74</sup> For more on the racial dimensions of legal reform in the post-emancipation period, see Jeannine Purdy, "Racism and the Law in Australia and Trinidad," *Caribbean Quarterly* 42, no. 2/3 (1996): 144-157; and Trotman, *Crime in Trinidad*, 35-67. Unlike many other American post-slavery societies, Trinidad did not have a substantial "poor white" class and the island's vagrants were almost exclusively black, mulatto, *mestizo*, or Amerindian.

*the* vanishing mulatto, respectively. *The Slave Son* once more manifests the intimate linkage between these historical-social-types at the level of language, this time in an exchange between the *peon* and Laurine. The *peon* speaks only once in the novel, offering a valediction to her and Fanty as the storm subsides and the travelers depart:

“Then I will go with you a little way for company,” said the Indian, “I am going towards Bande de l’Est, to my brothers and friends, bound for the Orinoco tomorrow morning at three by the bright moonlight: we are off on a hunting expedition along the banks, and *acuerdate bien* [sic],’ he added, addressing Laurine, “if anything should happen to make a boat welcome, meet us by the Tamana, on the sea-shore.” (287)

The brief injection of Spanish into his speech represents the only signifier of the *peon*’s mixed racial ancestry in the entire scene. Although Laurine has only just met the *peon* and this utterance marks their first and only verbal exchange, when speaking to her directly, he codeswitches into Spanish. Furthermore, his imperative “*acuerdate bien*” (“remember this well”) addresses her in the informal *tu* rather than the formal *usted*, even though her position as a free mulatto afforded her some status in Trinidadian society. By codeswitching to address Laurine privately and personally, the *peon* locates the pretense for his intimate mode of address in their shared marginalization within the white-dominated power structures of modern (whether Spanish or British) Trinidadian society. In the end, the disappearing Indian, as a representation of the island’s aboriginal and (Spanish) colonial past, helps to *disappear* the mulatto from modern British Trinidad as well by removing him/her to a place where the past supposedly still thrives: Venezuela.

When the novel's conclusion reveals the *peon*'s cryptic hypothetical ("if anything should happen to make a boat welcome") to be a prescient one, we learn the justification his familiar mode of address. Having fled Fountain Grove and having resolved to leave Trinidad forever, Belfond and Laurine make for the coast and find the fishermen in the specified location. "[T]he Indians asked but few questions, for they were used to helping the wretched fugitives who came that way" (320). For the Amerindian fishermen, assisting in the flight of "fugitives" (read: fugitive slaves) is another ritual, not unlike those earlier portrayed in the *peon*'s domestic setting. Although it is Laurine who learns of the chance to flee the island from the *peon* fisherman and who, presumably, coordinates the escape with her former host, Belfond takes full credit for the plan. Her planning falls into relegated to the background, however, in order to entrench Belfond in the role of the representative mulatto hero. In a speech that mimics George Harris's letter proclaiming his intentions for Liberia in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Belfond narrates their flight as if it were a reasoned decision resulting from his careful, thorough meditations as an educated mulatto, and not an opportunity occasioned by Laurine's chance encounter with the fisherman on *her* way to rescue *him* several chapters earlier:

You asked me where I was taking you: brighten up, my star, and I will tell you: there, beyond the sunny islands across the water, – there, where none are slaves, where Bolivar has given to all equal rights, – there am I taking you, Laurine; where you can share my uprising, and bless me as I go; where our children will be a glory to us, and our union sanctified, and held sanctified by the people among whom we live; – there, Laurine, am I taking you. (319-320)

The repetition of the bloated, anastrophic phrase "there am I taking you" rhetorically demonstrates Belfond's education (i.e. his mastery of rhetorical speech conventions) and further

elaborates the delusion that he played the primary role in determining the plan of escape, as opposed to Laurine. Because *he* is taking *her* and no longer vice versa, he rescripts himself as the subject of the sentence, the manly leader of the voyage, and the agent of his own exile. Belfond stakes a claim to his masculinity and, with it, his right to citizenship in his new home.

At the same time, Belfond's mantric anaphora of "there" summons a mythical Venezuela into being. Much like *Adolphus*, set in the 1810s, *The Slave Son* romanticizes the land across the water as a place "where none are slaves, where Bolivar has given to all equal rights." Although Wilkins's novel cuts off short of the lovers' arrival in Venezuela and, in turn, offers no characterization of Bolívar, its invocation of El Libertador in the passage betrays the cult of personality and symbolic capital that his name commanded in Trinidad. But like *Adolphus*, *The Slave Son* also projects a fictional, idealized image of the nascent republic. Slavery, however diminished through gradual emancipation and the 1821 "free birth" law, persisted in Venezuela through convoluted manumission laws that protected the remuneration of slaveowners for their "lost property." Moreover, the still substantial enslaved population frequently served as political pawns: both conservative and liberal parties threatened the opposition with the prospect of immediate emancipation, which, it was imagined, would result in the formerly enslaved avowing unflinching loyalty to the party of their liberators. Venezuela would not be a place "where none are slaves" until President José Gregorio Monagas finally proclaimed all slaves free in March 1854 – two months after the publication of *The Slave Son* in London.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> For the most complete account of abolition in Venezuela, see John V. Lombardi, *The Decline and Abolition of Negro Slavery in Venezuela, 1821-1854* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1971). For more on the reluctance of Venezuelan politicians to abolish slavery despite the popular consensus that it should be abolished, see also John V. Lombardi, "The Abolition of Slavery in Venezuela: A Nonevent," in *Slavery and Race Relations in Latin America*, ed. Robert Brent Toplin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974), 228-252.

However illusory the vision of Venezuela that Belfond briefly sketches for Laurine at Bande de l'Est, this image presents a stark contrast to his understanding of the free Coloured population's prospects in Trinidad: "Do you see, Laurine that fallen tree, lying prostrate on the ground! see the little twigs it sends shooting upwards – those are its endeavors to rise, but a power greater than all its force keeps it chained to the ground: such is the poor slave, and such are his impotent yearnings to rise" (320). As an uprooted, decaying, and prostrate tree, the island of Trinidad cannot support the ambitious aspirations of its enslaved population; the institution of slavery "chains" them to the tree and grounds their efforts at "shooting upward." Moreover, the image of the rotting, "prostrate" log and the "impotence" of enslaved Afro-Trinidadians gesture not so subtly toward the emasculation of Belfond on the island. Not only does the social order of Trinidad occlude the consummation of his amorous desire for Laurine, but it denies his recognition as a man and a citizen, since it understands these designations to be coextensive. By performing masculine heroics and declaring Venezuela as their destination, Belfond outlines the new republic as a cultural geography that will facilitate the realization of his sexual and political desires; it will allow him to "rise" in both senses of that word, and "our children [who] will be a glory to us" become both literal and figurative.

Within the historical context of 1832, Belfond's rationale for their migration to Venezuela makes a certain kind of sense. Despite Bolívar's death in 1830 and the region's spotty track record with race relations, Belfond buys wholesale into the promise and potential of that nation-state. If we take seriously the historical moment in which the novel is set, 1832 Venezuela had only recently become an independent republic following the dissolution of Gran Colombia in 1831 – it represented a land of possibility, change, and democratic ideology. Conversely, from the more historically informed perspective *The Slave Son's* composition (1848) and publication

(1854), the motivation for the couple's departure is less convincing. Why not allow them to remain on the island another two years until British West Indian Emancipation took effect on August 1, 1834? Why not allow them to return to France, where Belfond received his education and whose culture he associates with liberalism and liberty? There are, of course, practical answers to these questions. The proximity and promise of Venezuela (to say nothing of the conjugal consummation awaiting the unwed couple there) collaborate to make it the obvious choice. If we return to the *The Slave Son's* invocation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, however, another explanation crystallizes. As I argued in the previous chapter, the USAmerican abolitionist romance makes the troubling case that people of African descent had no future anywhere in the Americas and would be more ideally suited for disseminating the republican and capitalist programs of USAmerican Empire in Africa. If we return to *The Slave Son's* argument yoking together the vanishing Indian and the vanishing mulatto, we recognize a similar project at work. As Sean Goudie points out, the United States understood itself in contradistinction to "the creolization of New World cultures, languages, peoples, races, and so on" that European nations so maligned in their American colonies and in the West Indies, in particular.<sup>76</sup> By symbolically associating the mulatto and the *peon* with a Spanish American past, *The Slave Son* figuratively and physically erases the elements of creolization – *mulatez* and *mestizaje*, in particular – that would obviate the colony passing for "white." More functionally, the voluntary self-deportation of the Coloured population promised to remove (literally) the largest British objection to transforming the island from a Crown Colony into a colony with elected representation in the

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<sup>76</sup> Sean X. Goudie, *Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2006), 9.

metropolitan government.<sup>77</sup> By shedding its Crown Colony status and severing its historical ties to Spanish colonialism, *The Slave Son* figures British colonization as a force of civilization and situates the British conquest of the island (1797) as the origin of Trinidadian modernity, earning it a place beside or within the United States.<sup>78</sup> This network of current and former British colonies throughout North America is that geopolitical coalition that I have called Greater Anglo America: an alternative version of Manifest Destiny, in which North America becomes the purview of a transnational Anglo-Saxon race rather than strictly the political dominion of an ever-expanding USAmerican Empire.

That Trinidad constitutes part of this geopolitical imaginary becomes evident in Belfond's tragic valediction to his homeland at the novel's conclusion, but his speech also cuts sharply against the ideological coherency of that narrative. As the mulatto couple embark for Venezuela, he looks back to the island and laments its inaccessibility to him:

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<sup>77</sup> Newson, *Aboriginal and Spanish Colonial Trinidad*, 187. Moreover, because the British conquest of Trinidad never included a substantial British settlement of Trinidad, Anglo American creoles constituted a minority even among the white population of Trinidad, the majority of whom were of French or Spanish ancestry. By 1811, white Spanish (559), white French (681) and other European or USAmerican citizens, combined to outnumber white British on the island 1,321 to 1,280; see Hart, *Trinidad*, 152. As Christopher Taylor argues, the colonial overlay of Spanish and British legal and social systems also fostered an uncomfortable and frustrating political liminality for the island's white inhabitants: "Trinidadians were subject to Spanish law while simultaneously subject to British sovereignty. From a jurisprudential perspective, Trinidadians were not precomprehended as British subjects. [...] At the same time, the use of Spanish legal instruments had limited effectivity, for the retained legal regime of Spanish Trinidad presumed the island's embedding within the political, juridical, and institutional cartographies of Spanish empire. Subjects of hobbled Spanish law but subjected to indifferent British power, Trinidadians were neither Spanish nor British" (275).

<sup>78</sup> Though there does not seem to have ever been a serious movement for the United States to annex or acquire Trinidad from the British, the possibility seemed palpable among Trinidadians themselves. Des Sources writes in the *Trinidadian* on February 7, 1852 that "Trinidad is doomed to be a Colony; and whether she is to belong to England or to the United States, her well-being will ever be subordinate to that of the Mother Country."



“Farewell!” he said, waving his hand; “no spot on earth is more lovely than you. God might have chosen you for Eden when first he created man; angels might have lived among your gardens. What dreams of prosperity, of glory, have I not had about you, – all spoiled, poisoned by the white man! Farewell, then, sweet island! the best I can wish you is that you may daily send forth slaves, flying, like myself, to be free!” (320-321).

Exemplifying the kind of “feeling backward” that Love attributes to queer history, this cathartic moment of progress and liberation is marred by pause in which Belfond mourns the violent traumas that have occasioned their determination to pursue the promise of Venezuela. While the comparison of a Caribbean island to Eden in this passage is hardly an innovation, even by mid-nineteenth-century standards, a closer examination of the metaphor in this context reveals it to be deeply strained.<sup>79</sup> If “the white man” has “poisoned” the paradisiacal image of the “gardens,” and yet Belfond and Laurine are cast out of “Eden,” then the recognition of the couple as Adam and Eve casts the English as the Snake. The analogy reveals the contradictory logic of *The Slave Son*. Though the novel remains highly critical of the English for their role in slavery and colonialism in Trinidad, this offense leads to the removal of the *offended* parties (Afro-Trinidadians and Amerindians) rather the *offending* party (“the white man”); Adam and Eve are expelled and the Snake inherits Paradise. Moreover, “the white man” marks rare slippage among Wilkins’s otherwise careful and scrupulous distinctions between Anglo, French, and Hispanic ethnicities – this appeal to an unspecified whiteness regards them all equally. This blanket term becomes especially telling in that the English often represent the voice of reason, compassion, and, within

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<sup>79</sup> Henri Baudet, *Paradise on Earth: Some Thoughts on European Images of Non-European Man*, trans. Elizabeth Wentholt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

the biblical register of the passage, salvation, as we saw in the example of Dorset. Thus, although the novel attempts to configure Dorset outside the categories of *offender* and *offended* by suggesting that the English inherited an island already corrupted by French and Spanish creoles, Belfond's conclusive exclamation "all spoiled, poisoned by the white man!" indicts the geopolitical project of transnational white supremacy rather than a specific colonial history. The attempts to inscribe a whitewashed projection of British modernity onto the island and its people belie British complicity in the destruction of Trinidad.

Although the novel imbricates Belfond's valediction into the ideologies of Anglo exceptionalism, this moment lends itself to another reading. His melancholic act of looking backward at the island presents a disruption to the ideological progress narrative that the novel otherwise insists. While *The Slave Son* attempts to normalize the eviction of mulattos from Trinidad, Belfond's antistrophic mourning reminds the readers that it "might have" been otherwise. The repetition of this subjunctive phrase denaturalizes the narrative that Trinidadian modernity requires whiteness and Englishness, even as "the hymn of nature's joy, the mingled song of sea and forest" sets the soundtrack to his and Laurine's departure, as if Nature herself smiles upon their exile and the restoration of a natural, racial order (321).

This same act of looking back also undercuts the vanishing Indian and vanishing mulatto connection. When Belfond finally waves farewell to the island, is it "[t]he Indian on the shore [who] smoked his calumet as he listened, and waved his hand in response to Belfond" (321). The novel makes clear that the *peon*'s wave is a direct reply to Belfond, even though Belfond addresses his farewell to Trinidad ("Farewell, then, sweet island!"). The *peon* understands himself as a metonym for Trinidad and responds accordingly. In doing so, he insists on the past remaining in the present. His body and his very presence, however invisible to the white creole

aristocracy or the English transplants, becomes punctures the fabric of their narrativized racial destiny. His refusal to leave a colony that has already written him out of history monumentalizes the failures of that meta-narrative and renders starkly visible the impossibility of a “pure” Anglo nation in Trinidad.

## **Conclusion**

As works of historical fiction, both *Adolphus* and *The Slave Son* employ racially symbolic types in order to constitute coherent ideological narratives of the Coloured population’s role in Trinidad’s past, present, and future. They collapse time and geography to summon a vision of Bolivarian racial democracy from earlier decades into the present, while also projecting Coloured Trinidadians into a future on the Spanish Main. Although both novels ultimately espouse Coloured emigration to Venezuela as their proposed solutions to racial politics in Trinidad, they express optimism about radically different aspects of such a massive relocation movement. For George Numa Des Sources, the promise of a postracial society and independence from an oppressive British colonial regime presented an unprecedented opportunity for Coloured state-building. *The Slave Son*, by contrast, imagines the removal of Coloured and Amerindian populations from Trinidad as a means of whitening the island, a crucial step before the island could hope to progress into colony with locally-elected representatives or even an independent nation.

By reading these novels as nonhistorical fiction, however, the traumatic history of slavery consistently bursts through the fabric of these ideological narratives. Recontextualizing *Adolphus* and the *Trinidadian* within a broader history of Venezuelan politics quickly reveals that Des Sources’s vision was far removed from the realities of the 1850s, where slavery still persisted in

the republic and where the Bolívarian dream of a postracial society was far from realized. Similarly, by restoring the violent anti-white history of the Haitian Revolution to Belfond's understanding of Black nationalism and by contrasting the images of the vanishing Indian and the vanishing mulatto with the demographic realities of 1850s Trinidad, we can scrape the philanthropic gloss off *The Slave Son's* romanticization of Coloured emigration to Trinidad. I conclude with Belfond's valediction to the island for double emphasis. In one direction he looks forward a Venezuela that does not exist; in the other, he looks backward to a "spoiled" colony, ruined as much by Spanish colonialization and slavery, as by British colonialism and racial caste politics. Reading these novels as nonhistorical fiction allows us to recognize the overwhelming coherency and cultural capital the ideological narrations of Coloured emigration wielded. At the same time though, nonhistorical fiction outs the skeletons in those narratives' closets. We must grapple with these bones—the bones of the enslaved and the displaced—and when we do, we can restore them to a narrative of Trinidadian and Venezuelan history in which actively challenges the white supremacist historiography of the region's development.

## CHAPTER IV

### BREAKING BAD SCIENCE: E.G. SQUIER, JAMES MCCUNE SMITH, AND THE GENRES OF NICARAGUA ETHNOGRAPHY

*I infer that you will have need of all your grit, as I am led to presume that Uncle Sam has burdened your shoulders with a greater load than you had bargained for: —that you will carry it through in safety, I do not doubt, nor do I doubt that the result of success will be such as to repay you for all your toil and trouble. Only don't let Politics swallow up science. They will pull together well enough and make a strong team — one however, which will require a hand as strong as yours to manage it.*

— Francis Parkman to E.G. Squier, 13 May 1849

In the previous chapters, I have considered how the political agendas of abolition, colonization, and emigration have exposed the tense and unstable relationships among transnational understandings of Blackness, local culture and history, and imperialist ambitions. In this current chapter, I turn our attention to what has heretofore been an ancillary aspect of these debates: scientific racism and the institutional formalization of ethology in the mid-nineteenth-century USA. With the rise of the American School of Ethnology, white supremacy became more than an ideology, more than a cultural more, and more than social praxis. Academically-trained and university-supported ethnologists like Samuel Morton, Louis Agassiz, and Josiah Nott, transformed racism into a science, quite literally—their comparative studies of human craniology, evolution, and diversity lent scientific credence to long-held beliefs about

Anglo-Saxon superiority, the genetic similarities between Negroes and apes, and the imminent dangers associated with racial amalgamation, all while also challenging widely accepted theories of monogenism and environmental determinism. As a result of the American School of Ethnology's cultural ascension, debates about the nature of race became both a popular topic in US American parlors and a serious site of academic inquiry, where theories carried the weight of scientific research and institutional support behind them.

Among this rapidly expanding coterie of professional scientists in the USA, Ephraim George Squier, a pioneering archaeologist with frustrated literary dreams, became one of the most prolific, versatile, popular, and respected writers of the nineteenth century. Born and raised in upstate New York, his early career included serving as a contributing editor to *The Literary Pearl and Weekly Village Messenger* and the *Hartford Journal*, where he published several poems and composed many more that never reached the public. Squier made a name for himself in the scientific community when the Smithsonian Institute agreed to publish his and E.H. Davis's *Ancient Monuments of the Mississippi Valley* (1848), an exceptional overview of his archaeological fieldwork investigating Amerindian mounds. It was the first publication that the Institute had sponsored and they were evidently pleased with Squier's work, since they agreed to publish his *Aboriginal Monuments of the State of New York* the following year (1849). While conducting fieldwork for these studies, Squier became convinced in the existence of historical, cultural, and genetic linkages between the Amerindians from North America and their counterparts in Central and South America. In 1849 he would get to opportunity to test his theories, when the US American government appointed him to a diplomatic position in Nicaragua, thereby launching his career as a preeminent early anthropologist of Central America and Peru. The transformative works of Central American archaeology and ethnography that

Squier would produce over the next three decades, according to anthropological historian Terry Barnhart, modeled “a more comprehensive and integrated science that examined humankind in all of its physical, psychological, material, historical, and linguistic characteristics as well as its corresponding social relations and institutions.”<sup>1</sup> In other words, these studies marked a turning point in Euro-American anthropology, innovatively practicing the kind of holistic approach to ethnology that scientists had been demanding of themselves and their field. His studies discuss racial and ethnic diversity, detail the often intricate and plural social structures, and recreate religious and cultural rituals, all while providing rigorous, expansive analysis of agriculture, architecture, geography, topography, transportation, and myriad other topics of interest. He even complemented his written work by “recovering” a number of cultural artifacts and archaeological relics from Central America and shipping to the Smithsonian.

Although Squier’s studies represent a truly watershed moment in the history of US anthropology, his views toward his Central American subjects betray the undeniable influence of the American School of Ethnology’s scientific racism, which likely stemmed from Squier’s close professional and personal ties to Morton and Nott. As a result, Squier’s scholarship, according to Barnhart, has been derided and dismissed by historians of US American ethnography, who have exhibited “an imposing attitude that assumes the period to be beneath serious consideration.”<sup>2</sup> For another anthropologist, Michael Olien, the modern disregard for Squier’s writings on Central America signals more than simply forgetfulness or a wish to dismiss his work based on its harmful propagation of racialist pseudoscience. When Squier turned his anthropological attention

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Barnhart, *E.G. Squier and the Development of American Anthropology* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2005), 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

away from the monuments and mounds of the Mississippi Valley, Ohio, and New York, and toward the people and history of Central America, he did so within the nationalist, imperialist paradigms that characterize mid-century US American politics.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, unlike the dozens of independent European traveler writers that arrived in Central and South America after Humboldt and described the fertile regions as ripe for colonization, a group that Mary Louise Pratt calls the “capitalist vanguard,” Squier’s endorsements for a neocolonial project were state-sanctioned.<sup>4</sup> “Nevertheless,” Olien posits, “Squier’s publications on Central America were generally accepted uncritically by the scientific world at the time and later by American historians.”<sup>5</sup> Much like Thomas Clarkson’s and John Greenleaf Whittier’s authority as well respected abolitionists codified the conflation of Juan Francisco Manzano and Plácido into “Juan Plácido,” as seen in Chapter One, Squier’s exceptional early work on North American archaeology authorized his later findings on Nicaraguan culture and history among US American readers that had never and likely would never travel to Central America for themselves.

This chapter explores the authority of Squier’s accounts of Nicaragua in his first volume on the region, *Nicaragua: Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal* (1852), and a pseudonymously published, fictional travel narrative, *Waikna, or Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* (1855). As works both self-conscious of partitioning scientific writing from adventure/travel writing and eager to muddy these stylistic distinctions, these texts pose challenging questions about genre and reception, science and politics, and whether racial

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Olien, “E.G. Squier and the Miskito: Anthropological Scholarship and Political Propaganda,” *Ethnohistory* 32.2 (1985): 111-133.

<sup>4</sup> See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 144-171.

<sup>5</sup> Olien, “E.G. Squier and the Miskito,” 111.



difference should be regarded as a scientific certainty or a fictional construct. I begin this chapter with an overview of *Nicaragua*, a holistic, anthropological and social study of the region that was explicitly conceived within the political apparatus of USAmerican imperialism: the study was underwritten by the USAmerican government to justify the construction of a trans-isthmus canal in the region that would connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, thereby revolutionizing global trade and positioning the USA as the gatekeepers of this new trade route. Because Squier turns to scientific data to defend his overtly racial arguments about how the region and its people were well-suited for USAmerican paternalism, however, he opened himself to academic critiques. In this chapter's second section, I examine how Black radical abolitionist and physician Dr. James McCune Smith took up the rhetorical codes and methodological protocols of scientific discourse in order to lay bare the "bad science" undergirding Squier's calls for USAmerican intervention in the region. McCune Smith uses Squier's demographic assessment of Nicaragua against him, positing that instead of becoming a site for USAmerican imperial intervention, the Central American republic that Squier glosses as a "colored" nation should become a relocation site for free Black USAmericans. In its final sections, this chapter turns to Squier's *Waikna*, a narrative set in the Nicaragua-adjacent British protectorate known as the Mosquito Coast. By framing his writings about this region as distinct from his scientific contributions, Squier ostensibly insulates them from the kinds of critiques that McCune Smith so agilely levels, thereby allowing Squier to mold his representations of the men and women of Central America to the needs of the USAmerican imperial agenda and Squier's own financial agenda. As we have seen repeatedly throughout *The Race for America* though, these efforts to treat African American and Amerindian bodies as puppets for imperial politics often fail, and in *Waikna*, Squier's own characters undermine the very propaganda project he endeavors.

In attempting to frame *Waikna* as a project distinct from albeit related to that of *Nicaragua*, Squier takes advantage of the increasingly meaningful divide between science writing *qua* science and scientifically-toned amateur travel writing to partition his scholarly persona from his personal beliefs regarding race, difference, and geopolitics. In my analysis of these texts, I both demystify and reify this generic distinction. As McCune Smith's critique of *Nicaragua* makes plain, Squier's explicitly scientific writings were hardly as objective as they had pretensions to being. Similarly, because *Waikna* was quickly revealed to be the work of Squier and not "Samuel A. Bard," his fictional travels throughout the Mosquito Coast, his invented encounters with Miskitos, and his thinly veiled suggestions about the merits of USAmerican intervention in the region were read as earnest, anthropological observations and conclusions forwarded by a serious scientist. At the same time, to dismiss *Waikna* as simply another layer of Squier's propaganda for the interoceanic canal project, as the few critics of this novel have done, would be premature. Instead, I read Squier's meditations on supernatural phenomena that lie outside the realm of science and his perplexing gestures toward a transnational Amerindian revolution at the novel's conclusion as a sincere attempt to meditate on the scope and stakes of imperial anthropology.

### **"To Gird the World as with a Hoop": Squier's *Nicaragua* and USAmerican Empire**

Squier's appointment as the USAmerican *chargé d'affaires* to Nicaragua coincided with a marked shift in the nation's foreign policy toward Central America. With the discovery of gold in California in 1848, the major military and trading powers of the Atlantic world began to take great interest in the not-yet-three-decade old republic of Nicaragua. With one of the narrowest mainlands in Central America, Nicaragua offered an ideal site for the construction of an

interoceanic canal that would dramatically alter international trade routes by closing the distance between the east coast metropolitan centers of the USA and Asia. In particular, the San Juan River linked the Caribbean port city of San Juan del Norte to Lake Nicaragua, which provided easy access (via transit road) to the Pacific port city of San Juan del Sur. The British also realized that such a route would revolutionize global trade. Eager to protect their own lucrative mahogany trade in the region and eager to preempt the ambitious USAmerican government that would soon acquire more expeditious routes for transporting Californian gold back to the east coast metropolises, Great Britain seized the port of San Juan del Norte and declared the entire eastern coastline of Nicaragua and modern-day Honduras a British protectorate called the Mosquito Shore. In a thinly veiled attempt to mask their economic intentions, the British justified their land grab as an attempt to honor the sovereignty of the Miskito Amerindians who resided there. Needless to say, these actions proved a thorn in the sides of USAmerican expansionists and the capitalist vanguard. By August 1849, for example, shipping magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt, who had secured an exclusive government contract between his Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company and the USAmerican government, would become especially perturbed. He stood to make a previously unthinkable fortune through complementary overland and marine transportation monopolies in Nicaragua, a fortune now compromised by British obstruction and later compromised by William Walker's filibustering. The only thing that remained was to secure the exclusive rights to building an interoceanic canal from the Nicaraguan government, to which Squier was appointed *chargé d'affaires*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> For more on Vanderbilt, Walker, and the canal project, see Stephen Dando-Collins, *Tycoon's War: How Cornelius Vanderbilt Invaded a Country to Overthrow America's Most Famous Military Adventurer* (New York: Da Capo P, 2008).

Figure 5.



Source: L.D. Williams, *Map of Central America* (Washington: np, 1856). Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

Squier, for his part, was eager for the opportunity to travel to Central America. Although he tentatively posited the possibility of a loose connection between the Amerindians of the Ohio Valley and Mesoamerica at the conclusion of *Ancient Monuments*, he had grown increasingly more convinced that “North and South American indigenous peoples were part of a common, and noble, ancient culture” in the years since its publication.<sup>7</sup> Unable to secure funding from academic institutions, Squier took a cue from the diplomatic appointment of John L. Stephens as a *chargé d’affaires* to Central America under the Van Buren administration in the mid-1840s and he petitioned the USAmerican government for a diplomatic post in the region as a means to underwrite his archaeological studies. With powerful recommendations from scholars and politicians, Squier emerged as an easy choice for Secretary of State John Clayton, and in 1849, he enlisted the journalist/archaeologist as the *chargé d’affaires* to Nicaragua, the first official USAmerican diplomat appointed to that republic. According to Squier’s biographer Charles Stansifer, “[a]lthough the administration apparently did not object to Squier’s antiquarian

<sup>7</sup> Sharon Hartman Strom, “Labor, Race, and Colonization: Imagining a Post-Slavery World in the Americas,” in *The Problem of Evil: Slavery, Freedom, and the Ambiguities of American Reform*, ed. Steven Mintz and John Stauffer (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 2007), 265.

ambitions and probably even prided itself on its patronage of science, Clayton's official instructions to the new *chargé d'affaires* placed primary importance on the proposed Nicaraguan canal."<sup>8</sup> In June of that year, Squier was deployed with the responsibility of persuading the Nicaraguan government to sign a treaty yielding the exclusive rights for canal construction to the USA (specifically, Vanderbilt's Atlantic and Pacific Ship Canal Company). By September, Squier had proposed a treaty to this effect, which, several weeks later, the Nicaraguan government ratified. Squier's appointment was a diplomatic success for both the Monroe Doctrine and US American imperialism, effectively securing US American economic and political hegemony in Central America.

Although the USA never officially adopted Squier's treaty (it was later superseded by the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty between the USA and Great Britain, in which both nations agreed to abandon any exclusive claims over the now-neutral canal zone), the archaeologist had become deeply entrenched in the canal project and would dedicate the next decade of this life to "assault[ing] the public consciousness" through a diverse array of magazine articles and scientific studies that provided "ready-made arguments for those who sought to combine the colonization of ex-slaves, the mobilization of labor forces of color, and economic expansion into Central America."<sup>9</sup> The first of these was the 1852 publication that resulted from his brief tenure in Nicaragua from June 1849 to June 1850, *Nicaragua*. The study exemplifies Squier's holistic anthropological methodology, painting a portrait of the landscapes, culture, history, rituals, monuments, and political environment of the region with Humboldtian verbosity and vigor.

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Stansifer, "The Central American Career of E. George Squier," (dissertation, Tulane University, 1959), 34.

<sup>9</sup> Hartman Strom, "Labor, Race, and Colonization," 265.

Similar to Alexander von Humboldt's many studies, *Nicaragua* enjoyed tremendous commercial success. It was published in two volumes by a major, primarily literary firm—D. Appleton and Company—who would later publish the first US American edition of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Joel Chandler Harris's *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1880), and Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895). According to Squier's contract with Appleton, the publishers were anticipating strong sales of *Nicaragua*, which retailed for a whopping five dollars. They agreed to issue a first edition of 2,000 copies "in best style of similar works, on paper at least equal to Butler's 52th, 15cts, and bind the same in style equal to similar works" and made provisions for future editions of 1,000.<sup>10</sup> The following year (1853) Appleton issued a one-volume edition. In his contract, Squier retained the rights to publish *Nicaragua* in England and quickly found an overseas publisher: London's Longman, Brown, Green. The British firm released a two-volume edition and a one-volume edition the same year as the US American edition premiered (1852). In 1856, during the height of a civil war and the filibuster William Walker's meteoric political ascendancy as the self-proclaimed president of Nicaragua, Appleton issued a new two-volume edition of Squier's book. In 1860, Harper and Brothers acquired the rights to *Nicaragua*, likely because they were pleased with the similar success of Squier's pseudonymous novel *Waikna*, which they had published in 1855. *Nicaragua* was also translated broadly and distributed widely across European markets as well.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Agreement between E. Geo Squier, Author and Proprietor of a Work entitled 'Nicaragua' etc., and Messers D. Appleton & Co., of New York, Publishers," E.G. Squier Papers, Tulane University, Special Collections, Box 1, Folder 40.

<sup>11</sup> Notably, both *Nicaragua* (1852) and *Notes on Central America* (1855) were almost immediately translated into German, perhaps signaling Humboldt's legacy of German interest in Central and South American anthropological writings. See E.G. Squier, *Der Centralamerikanische Staat Nicaragua in Bezug auf sein Volk, seine Natur und seine Denkmäler, Nebst einer ausführlichen Abhandlung über den projectirten interoceanischen Kanal*, trans.

As the full title of *Nicaragua: Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal* makes abundantly, unambiguously clear, the scientific dimensions of the study were deeply enmeshed within the political apparatus of USAmerican expansionism in Central America. Squier initially describes the republic as “[t]he key of the continent, destined to unlock the riches of two hemispheres,” by which he means East and West.<sup>12</sup> In order to portray Nicaragua as an ideal site of USAmerican paternalism and potentially annexation, Squier relies on a sophisticated arsenal of racial, political, and cultural assumptions about Central America in forging his portrait of the regions for USAmerican readers. Because, as we have seen in previous chapters, the USA defined itself, ideologically if not demographically, as a white, Anglo-Saxon nation-state, the ethnological definition of the Nicaraguan people as predominantly nonwhite, “unnatural” admixtures of Spanish, Amerindian, and African ethnicities became central to Squier’s anthropo-ideological project in Central America. In particular, *Nicaragua* portrays the Miskito Amerindians of the British Mosquito Coast as primarily African as a means of undercutting their claims to indigeneity, political sovereignty, and land, while it also portrays the Amerindians of the Nicaraguan Interior and Pacific Coast as the noble albeit “semi-civilized” cousins of Native North Americans as evidence of their amenability to and, indeed, dependence on USAmerican paternalism.

*Nicaragua*’s racialization of that republic’s population harmonized sonorously with Squier’s imperialist political charge. In particular, by characterizing Nicaragua as a republic

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Eduard Höpfner (Leipzig: Dyk’sche Buchhandlung, 1854) and E.G. Squier, *Die Staaten von Central-Amerika, insbesondere Honduras, San Salvador und die Moskitoküste*, trans. Karl Andree (Leipzig: Carl B. Forck, 1856).

<sup>12</sup> E.G. Squier, *Nicaragua: Its People, Scenery, Monuments, and the Proposed Interoceanic Canal*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1852), I.8. All further references will be made parenthetically.

comprised of an overwhelmingly indigenous population, Squier positioned the region as a corollary to the USAmerican West, a kind of Central American frontier: a vast landscape of untapped natural resources, thinly populated by “vanishing” Native American communities. According to numbers drawn from a census of the Nicaraguan population that Squier cites early in his study (more on this below), Amerindians, *mestizos*, and *zambos* constitute 210,000 of the 250,000 inhabitants, or 84% of the population (I.33). As a majority-Amerindian nation, though, the prospects of Nicaragua as a republic are grim in Squier’s assessment. He imagines the USAmerican trans-isthmus canal as an effort “[t]o gird the world as with a hoop” and, in doing, to pass an electrical “current of American Republicanism, vivifying dead nations and emancipating mankind, over the continents of the earth...” (I.8). Squier’s characterization of Nicaragua as a “dead nation” in need of “vivification” seems, at first, a hard sell. After all, the republic was by all accounts a nascent nation-state, less than thirty years into its independence from the Spanish Empire, and in possession of a highly coveted isthmus. “No country,” by Squier’s own admission, “could be more favorably suited for commerce” (I.8). By emphasizing the nation’s overwhelming Native American population though, Squier narratively transforms Nicaragua from a burgeoning site of international trade and Bolivarian republicanism into a “dead nation” occupied by a vanishing, semi-civilized people. For example, while traversing the San Juan River (the proposed site of the interoceanic canal), Squier recounts in detail frequent interactions with diverse communities of Native Americans that populate the jungles lining the river. Despite his own provision of substantial empirical evidence that the region is already populated though, Squier nevertheless claims that “[t]he country here is evidently one well adapted for cultivation, and must ultimately *become populated*” (I.105, my emphasis). These strange moments of dissonance where the Amerindian is both present and absent betray Squier’s



own conflictedness; these are moments where his sincere reverence for atavistic Amerindian culture and the political expediencies of USAmerican imperialism awkwardly collide. Much like the Vanishing Indian tropes of the USAmerican West, *Nicaragua* asks its readers to imagine that, even though they constitute at least 84% of Nicaragua's population and even though they are present throughout the pages of the anthropological study, Amerindians are a population already in the past and to be replaced, "inevitably," by white USAmericans.

This portrait of the Nicaraguan population, filtered through the imperialist logics of the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny, narratively rescripts the interoceanic canal project from a neocolonial imposition to the divine right and political responsibility of the USA. If Nicaraguans, as Amerindians, were going to disappear "naturally" anyway, then the USAmerican government could adopt a gentler, paternalistic stance toward the nation, rather than the more aggressive military stance recently taken toward Mexico. "It is only by preserving [Nicaragua's] freedom and its territory inviolate and enabling and encouraging it to open an inter-oceanic highway," Squier claims, "that Americans can ever hope to reach that commercial and national pre-eminence to which their elastic institutions and their individual superiority amongst races of lesser vitality, invites and enables them to aspire" (I.8). The Nicaraguans, in Squier's eyes, were not only amenable to such governance, but were enthusiastic about becoming a colonial protectorate or unincorporated territory of the USA, much like Puerto Rico and a number of Pacific Islands would become in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: "[t]hey seemed to entertain the highest hopes from the opening of more intimate relations with the United States... the United States should be looked to as a conciliator of intestine factions, as a friend, and a protector" (I.146).

This openness to USAmerican paternalism also manifests when Squier offers brief sketches of individual Amerindians along the San Juan River. Squier strategically presents the men he encounters as nonthreatening, while the women he encounters are hypersexualized, twin strategies which collaboratively augur the disappearance and assimilation of Amerindians into the imagined USAmerican parent state. Early in his travels, he limns two naked “Indian” men, “an old man and a boy,” as impotent (“wrinkled and drooping, his gray hair matted”) and animalistic (“sleek as a young panther”), respectively (105). Despite their nudity, these men are presented as asexual and pose no threat to Squier and his party—in fact, their primary function seems to be to confirm the whiteness of the USAmerican travelers by hailing them as such: “[t]hey looked curiously at our party, and frequently exclaimed, *blancos, blancos*, whites, whites!” (105). By contrast, Squier describes a brief, impersonal encounter with a racially ambiguous woman as an intense, sexually charged event:

I glanced into one of the huts as I passed, but saw nothing beyond a very pretty yellow girl, swinging slowly to and fro in a hammock, with one naked leg hanging indolently over the side. She threw her long black curls, but, without changing her position, exclaimed, “Adios, California!” A party of outward Californians had spent a number of days here, a few weeks previously, and had evidently been on familiar terms with the señora. (I.108)

A voyeur into the domestic space of this woman, Squier recalls her with exceptional clarity and tremendous attention to the movements of her body: the slow pace of the hammock’s sway, the indolent dangling of her casually exposed leg, and the coquettish manner in which she flips her hair without disturbing the hammock’s rhythm. Hypersexualized in this fashion, the woman flirtatiously hails Squier and his party. Her “evident” experience being on such “familiar terms”

with previous USAmericans who had passed through her village, adds a not-so-subtle sexual charge to her “Adios, California!” Squier’s status as a white USAmerican, in his estimation, immediately presents him as an object of sexual desire for Nicaraguans, especially those whom he regards as nonwhite. Throughout, *Nicaragua* is ripe with accounts of lascivious Nicaraguan women like this anonymous “yellow girl,” women who can barely contain their sexual desire for USAmericans, even when filtered through the censorial Victorian prose of the anthropologist’s account. If we read *Nicaragua* as, on at least some level, propaganda for the interoceanic canal project and the neocolonization of the region, we can imagine the effects that such a scene would have on the men of commerce contemplating launching enterprises in the region. The exotic women that Squier paints as lusty and eager were no doubt incentivizing advertisements directed at white USAmerican men to endeavor the long journey from the domestic (and conjugal) comforts of home.

While most critics of Squier’s anthropological writings agree that he evinces a strong disdain for racial amalgamation as an “unnatural” and aberrant practice, his hyper-eroticization and exoticization of nonwhite Nicaraguan women suggests his views were more complex. *Nicaragua* dedicates much of its energy to discerning the “true” racial ancestries of men attempting to pass for white *criollos* and making comparative claims that situate the relative whiteness or nonwhiteness of variegated Nicaraguans in relation to their USAmerican counterparts. In making these men legible to readers fluent in USAmerican racial vocabularies, Squier facilitates the translation of Central American populations into the USAmerican racial epistemology and imperial imaginary. When Squier later details the diversity of Nicaraguan women, he substitutes the pejorative physiognomic markers typically applied to nonwhite men with a captivating array of the “superior attractions” that characterize “women of pure Spanish

stock,” and those with “an infusion of other families and races, from the Saracen to the Indian and the Negro, in every degree of intermixture” (I.153, I.154). Indeed, he betrays an investment in preserving the beholder’s right to determine the beauty of nonwhite women:

And as tastes differ, so many opinions as to whether the tinge of brown, through which the blood grows with a peach-like bloom, in the complexion of the girl who may trace her lineage to the caziques upon one side, and the haughty grandees of Andalusia and Seville on the other, superadded, as it usually is, to a greater lightness of figure and animation of face,—whether this is not a more real beauty than that of the fair and more languid senora, whose white and almost transparent skin bespeaks a purer ancestry. Nor is the Indian girl, with her full, lithe figure, long, glossy hair, quick and mischievous eyes, who walks erect as a grenadier beneath her heavy water-jar, and salutes you in a musical, impudent voice as you pass—nor is the Indian girl to be overlooked in the novel contrasts which the “bello sexo” affords in this glorious land of the sun. (I.154)

Notably, Squier restricts his own fascination with nonwhite women to *mestizas* and Amerindian women in this passage. With a reverence that fails to couch his own attractions, Squier daringly suggests that the relative beauty of white *criollas*, *mestizas*, and *indias* is largely a matter of “taste” rather than essence, a provocation that cut sharply against the widely held Victorian notions of beauty that governed the period. The metaphor of “taste” conflates the carnal desires of sex and consuming these nonwhite bodies: not only do these women serve as exotic advertisements geared toward lusty white USAmerican men who would eventually settle the region after the canal’s completion, but the concerted destigmatization of such desires indicates Squier’s more permissive and even enthusiastic disposition toward interracial marriage and

reproduction between white USAmericans and *mestizas*/Amerindian women. Whereas men of Amerindian descent would be eliminated through the “inevitable” conflicts that would arise from the canal’s construction across Native American hunting/fishing grounds and settlements, women of Amerindian descent would be integrated into USAmerican settler colonial culture through “interbreeding” and “absorption.” Doubly displaced by political and sexual colonization, the Amerindian cultures that Squier regards with such earnest veneration, would inevitably become a relic of the past as their populations diminished.

Squier’s subtle encouragement of racial amalgamation between men of Anglo-Saxon descent and women of Amerindian descent runs counter to many of the racial views that Squier endorses in his later writings. When Squier published *Notes of Central America* only three years later (1855), for example, his views on racial amalgamation, in particular, had become bolder and more entrenched in the theories espoused by the American School of Ethnology, likely because of the field-altering publication of *Types of Mankind* (1854).<sup>13</sup> Written by Squier’s close friend and colleague, Josiah Nott, and George Gliddon, *Types of Mankind* was a tremendously popular commercial and academic success. Despite weighing in at over 800 pages, the book sold out its first run of 3,500 copies in a mere four months and, by 1870, had gone through ten editions.<sup>14</sup> With regards to so-called racial “hybridity,” *Types of Mankind* espouses two highly influential theories that appear, in turn, in Squier’s *Notes on Central America*. The first of these involves the “absorption” of one race into the other through the process of amalgamation,

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<sup>13</sup> For more on the influence of the American School of Ethnology on Squier’s racial views in the mid-1850s, see Barhnart, *Ephraim George Squier*, 222-228, 281-316.

<sup>14</sup> Bruce Dain, *A Hideous Monster of the Mind: American Race Theory in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002), 225.

typically the weaker race into the stronger race, though, as Squier himself later argues, the European races were often “demoralized” through “interbreeding” with Amerindians and Africans in Central America.<sup>15</sup> The second of these theories posits that sterility would necessarily result from extended, multigenerational “interbreeding,” effectuating the eventual extinction of the composite “stock” races. Thus, while absorption could potentially allow the Anglo-Saxon race to eliminate other races, it also risked that race’s extinction, its purportedly undeniable superiority notwithstanding.

In light of these theories, Squier takes a much firmer anti-amalgamation stance in *Notes on Central America* than in *Nicaragua*, where he expresses more permissive and less dogmatic views on amalgamation, likely because the earlier writings by Morton and Nott were less vicious in their conclusions on the subject.<sup>16</sup> Nott’s *Two Lectures on the Natural History of the Caucasian and the Negro Races* (1844), for example, theorizes absorption, but stops well short of positing that its inevitable result would be sterility or Anglo-Saxon extinction. In fact, Nott takes great pains to avoid this claim, acknowledging that while “[s]ome hybrids do not breed—as the Mule for example... There are other hybrids, which do propagate perfectly.”<sup>17</sup> For Squier though, Nott’s most fascinating claims about racial amalgamation take up the specific example of white men reproducing with nonwhite women:

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<sup>15</sup> Squier, *Notes on Central America*, 55.

<sup>16</sup> Squier was likely also familiar with the work of his mentor, Samuel Morton; see his “Hybridity in Animals, Considered in Reference to the Question of the Unity of the Human Species” *American Journal of Science and Arts* 2.3 (May 1847): 39-49.

<sup>17</sup> Josiah Nott, *Two Lectures on the Natural History of the Caucasian and the Negro Races* (Mobile: Dade and Thompson, 1844), 32.

[W]hen the white man is crossed upon the Negresse or Indian women—the law of hybrids is shown at once—in the offspring the brain is enlarged, the facial angle increased, and the intellect improved in a marked degree. Every one at the south is familiar with the fact that the mulattoes have more intelligence than negroes, make bad slaves, and are always leaders in insurrections.<sup>18</sup>

Although Nott expresses concerns about mulatto/mulatta or *mestizo/mestiza* unions resulting in eventual sterility, he argues forcefully that unions between *mestizas*/mulattas and white men will result in the improvement of the “lesser” races as the offspring will eventually “change back to one of the parent stocks.”<sup>19</sup> Since Nott offers, in this same lecture, an explicit and ferocious articulation of the Vanishing Indian trope (“let the graves of the Indians speak...their destiny too is fulfilled and their days are numbered”), it becomes clear that the only means of preserving Native American culture is through absorption into the Anglo-Saxon race: “It will be seen that whatever improvement exists in their condition is attributable to a mixture of races. Their Chiefs and Rules are whites and mixed bloods, and the full blood Indian is now what he always has and always will be.”<sup>20</sup> Squier adopts these theories and further develops them in his endorsement of white USAmerican men marrying and reproducing with Central American mixed race women in *Nicaragua*. If so-called interbreeding between white men and *mestizas* will result in the restoration of the composite races (Anglo-Saxon and Amerindian) within a few generations, and if extinction is the “destiny” of one of those composite races anyway (as Nott claims and Squier echoes in his study), then racial amalgamation among the frontier generation of USAmericans

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

that settles the canal zone becomes, in Squier's view, a harmless, expedient, and pragmatic strategy for facilitating colonization.

Indeed, the intermingling of sex and politics, as well as the domestic and the public sphere, manifest most acutely in the exchange of addresses between Squier and the Nicaraguan President Norberto Ramírez. Toward the end of volume one of *Nicaragua*, Squier delivers a public address at Leon, in which he assures the people of the USA's ambitions "to create new ties of friendship, and to promote a closer and more intimate relationship between [the two republics]" (I.251). Ramírez, in his rejoinder to Squier's speech, declares Nicaragua's obsequious fealty to the USA, while echoing the sexually-charged language of intimacy. "Believing therefore that the best intentions exist upon your part towards us," Ramírez declares in response to Squier's address, "I entertain no doubts that we shall succeed in establishing the most intimate relations between the two Republics, and in opening the way to the consummation of that most glorious enterprise which it has been reserved for the successors of the immortal Washington to undertake and perfect" (I.254). Ramírez's address, a full English translation of which appears in *Nicaragua*, expresses faith in the geopolitical, sexual, and racial logics of "that most glorious enterprise," Manifest Destiny. In Squier's translation (he offers Spanish-language original), Ramírez, speaking metonymically for the entire Nicaraguan republic, accepts complacently, even enthusiastically, that the only means of preserving the Nicaraguan republic is to accept the terms and conditions of USAmerican paternalism.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Squier likely translated Ramírez's speech himself, as he spoke fluent Spanish. Nevertheless, the absence of the original and Ramírez's oddly specific invocation of Manifest Destiny suggest that, at best, Squier took some liberties with the translation, which was likely rendered from memory, not transcribed from a source text; at worst, he fabricated the president's response entirely. To the best of my knowledge, the original Spanish text of Ramírez's reply is no longer extant.



With these strategies for incentivizing and enacting the preliminary colonization of Nicaragua in mind, Squier's proposal that Nicaragua become a protectorate or dependency of the USA (rather than a state) comes into focus. Amid his claims to USAmerican dominion "over the continents of the earth," Squier identifies Nicaragua as the "one small spot" where the USA will exercise its "sovereign rights," rights the USA imagined itself to be the "rightful possessors" of according to the hemispheric logic of the Monroe Doctrine (I.8). These USAmerican claims to the proposed Canal Zone notwithstanding, Squier also recognizes the need to preserve the "freedom" and "territory inviolate" of Nicaragua (I.8). Thus, the USAmerican sovereignty over the region depends on two seemingly contradictory but actually codependent understandings of Nicaragua: it is within the geopolitical ambit of the USA while also existing distinctly outside of the nation-state. These dual understandings owe to the racial composition of Nicaragua and the strategies for its sexual and political colonization. Much like the admission of western territories into the USA as states required those territories boast a minimum free population of 60,000, the Nicaraguan population was not nearly white enough to be admitted into the USA on so-called "equal footing" with current USAmerican states; at least not yet. Squier's proposed plan for colonization of the canal zone and racial amalgamation between white men and *mestizas* would facilitate the progressive whitening of the republic. Until that point, however, Nicaragua could only become a dependency of the USA, lest the political imperatives of the Monroe Doctrine conflict with the racial ideologies of Manifest Destiny.

### **James McCune Smith's Response: The Anthropological Gaze and the Untrained Eye**

As the above analysis demonstrates, the political underpinnings of Squier's anthropological writings frequently result in strange and troubling inconsistencies not only over

time, but also within individual studies. While *Nicaragua* was critically acclaimed both academically and commercially, one reader of this holistic ethnography offered a scathing, public critique of Squier’s scientific methodology and suspect findings. That critic was Dr. James McCune Smith, the first African American in the USA to obtain a medical degree (from the University of Glasgow), the first to become a practicing physician and pharmacist (for both white and Black patients). In addition to his professional accomplishments, McCune Smith was also a journalist and activist, penning diverse articles challenging slavery, colonization, and racism—he was a radical abolitionist and a vehement critic of phrenology. He was a regular contributor to *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, where he wrote under the *nom de plume* “Communi-paw,” and it was here that he decided to “go in’ for an overhauling of Mr. Squier’s book in [sic] Nicaragua” almost immediately after its publication.<sup>22</sup> In fact, given the date of his response (January 8, 1852) and *Nicaragua*’s “1852” imprint (which likely indicated a December 1851 publication date, as was the convention for winter releases), McCune Smith must have read the two-volumes (totaling almost 900 pages) with great stamina and interest during the busy holiday season.

Although McCune Smith publicly declared himself to be a descendent of Native Americans and although his pen name and articles frequently espouse “savagery” (e.g. slave uprisings) as the only appropriate strategy for emancipation, his review of *Nicaragua* focuses explicitly on Squier’s characterization of Afro-descended Nicaraguans, paying precious little attention to the anthropologist’s substantial and problematic assessment of the region’s many

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<sup>22</sup> “Nicaragua,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 8 January 1852.

Amerindian population.<sup>23</sup> In part, this lopsided attention to Squier's treatment of Blackness stems from the expedience of abolitionist politics and the venue in which the review appeared (*Frederick Douglass' Paper*). In my analysis below, however, I reveal how Communipaw's critique of Squier's racism reveals the dramatic inconsistencies through *Nicaragua* and how Squier relies on fluid definitions of race in order to buttress his political arguments and promotion of the canal project. As a result, Communipaw proffers a radical demographic reassessment of Nicaragua that lends support to an entirely distinct political project which runs counter to Squier's proposals: the emigration of free Black USAmericans to Nicaragua and the establishment of a "colored" Central American republic.

As Communipaw, McCune Smith begins his review with praise for the work's "freshness and originality," locating it in the archaeological, ethnographic tradition of *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* (1841) by Squier's diplomatic predecessor, John Lloyd Stephens, and Austen Henry Layard's two-volume survey of Assyria, *Nineveh and its Remains* (1848-1849).<sup>24</sup> These laudatory remarks notwithstanding, he engages Squier's text with the precise attention and perspicacity that were characteristic of his critical engagement with scientific racism, yet exceptional for the journalistic standards of the period. According to Thomas Morgan, "[r]efuting racially biased statistics was [McCune Smith's] passion," and

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<sup>23</sup> According to John Stauffer, "James McCune Smith publicly defined himself as an Indian, even though there is not record of his being part Native American"; see *The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2001), 186.

<sup>24</sup> Throughout this section, I will use "Communipaw" when referencing McCune Smith's journalistic persona and "McCune Smith" when discussing the man himself. Layard, an English archaeologist, is most famous for his mid-century excavations at Nineveh, during which he discovered the Library of Ashurbanipal, a collection of thousands of cuneiform clay tablets dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC; the Library included *The Epic of Gilgamesh*.

Communipaw wastes little time in his careful close reading of *Nicaragua* before scrutinizing the Squier's racial and demographic characterization of the region.<sup>25</sup> Communipaw begins his review with an overview of the previously discussed population figures that Squier provides:

The population consists of Whites, 25,000; Negroes, 15,000; Indians, 80,000; mixed of all three above, 130,000; total, 250,000. (Vol. L.P. 33.) And of the 25,000 whites, Mr. Squire [sic] says: "An infusion of Indian blood (? negro too) is easily detected in a large portion of those who claim to be of pure Spanish descent. It displays itself in the color of the skin, &c." Hence truth might say, Whites, 10,000; Negroes, 15,000; Indians, 80,000; mixed, 145,000; or, if we take the American view of the question, (North American of course,) and put down figures in the order of majority, we have, Colored or Negroes, 160,000; Indians, 80,000; Whites, (so called,) 10,000. Which, as an equation, can't be beat in Bonny castle! Whites, one twenty-fifth.<sup>26</sup>

Communipaw's careful arithmetic renders visible some of the complex racial calculus subtending Squier's ostensibly subjective analysis of *Nicaragua*. Implementing an almost unheard of practice in antebellum newspapers, Communipaw provides specific page numbers for his citations from the text in order to draw our attention to specific instances of inconsistencies across Squier's study. He brings together population numbers included in a statistical chart from early on in volume one of *Nicaragua*, which he cites with a page number (33), and a narrative

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas M. Morgan, "The Education and Medical Practice of Dr. James McCune Smith (1813-1865), First Black American to Hold a Medical Degree," *Journal of the National Medical Association* 95.7 (2003): 611.

<sup>26</sup> "Nicaragua," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 8 January 1852, original emphasis.

account from much later in that volume, which he quotes from directly without pagination (267-268). These two moments offer slightly incongruent portraits of Nicaragua's population. The former (a chart) provides a neatly organized portrait of the region's racial distribution, while the latter (an embedded qualitative account of racial designations) makes clear that these racial categories are not as reliable as the earlier chart suggests because many of those who self-identify as "white" actually possess "[a]n infusion of Indian blood," or, as Communipaw suggests "negro blood."<sup>27</sup> In reading these two representations side by side, Communipaw textures the evenly rounded figures of neatly distinguished populations that the study aims to present and reveals the purportedly neutral statistics to be inflected by Squier's racial and political views. He quantifies Squier's qualitative claim that a "large portion of those who claim to be of pure Spanish descent" are only passing as such: specifically, he estimates that 15,000 out of the total 25,000 that the census designates as "White" are actually *mestizos*. Communipaw then transfers these 15,000 people into the "mixed" category, which in turn increases from 130,000 to 145,000. Communipaw's quantification of a "large portion" into a full three-fifths of the "White" population is as liberal as it is arbitrary. As an inexactitude passing as an exactitude though, this figure illustrates his critique of Squier with perspicacious precision. Indeed, Squier himself admits that "[t]he population here given is the result arrived at, in round numbers, by a census

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<sup>27</sup> While this assessment of Hispanic Americans as white may be inconsistent with popular Anglo-American understandings of Spanish ethnicity as "off-white," it remains likely that Squier – their European ancestry would likely code as whiteness, however those of Anglo-Saxon descent may want to qualify it. See María DeGuzmán, *Spain's Long Shadow: The Black Legend, Off-Whiteness, and Anglo-American Empire* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2005). The British and Anglo Americans were especially fond of impugning the racial origins of the Spanish people. Spanish cultural ties to the Islamic Moors and the nation's geographical proximity to Africa led to the prominent belief and popular saying that "Africa begins at the Pyrenees," meaning that "pure" Spaniards were actually an ethnic amalgam.

attempted in 1846. It was only partially successful, as the people supposed it preliminary to some military conscription, or new tax” (32). With uncooperative informants, an incomplete, inaccurate dataset, and heavily rounded numbers, Squier’s representation of Nicaraguan demographics hardly stands up to scientific standards of evidence.

Communiaw highlights these estimates as examples of bad science *par excellence*, particularly because they were received and lauded as outstanding scientific contributions. Because Squier’s archaeological credentials bore the Smithsonian’s seal of approval and because the study itself was underwritten and therefore tacitly endorsed by the USAmerican government, his financial stake in the canal project and his racist disposition toward Nicaraguans of color could operate under the guise of objective ethnography. As I have shown in the previous section, Squier dedicates extensive attention to the many Amerindian peoples that populate the cities and *campo* of the region in order to portray Nicaragua as a “dead nation” in dire need of rejuvenation through USAmerican sexual and political colonization. But as Communiaw unveils in his analysis, Blackness also plays a prominent role in the racialization of the Central American republic. Indeed, in addition to characterizing Nicaragua as 84% Amerindian, *mestizo*, and *zambo* (a remarkable 90%. if we follow Communiaw’s interpretation of Squier in the assumption that three-fifths of the 25,000 “Whites” are actually *mestizos*), Squier dramatically downplays the Africanist presence in Nicaragua (a paltry six percent of the population). Together, these demographic analyses augur a future in which the 90% Amerindian population will vanish through “natural” extinction and absorption, leaving white USAmerican immigrants to manage a modest population of “pure” African Americans and “pure” white, *criollos*, in roughly equal proportion.

Communipaw turns our attention to these inconsistencies between Squier's quantitative and qualitative demography to reveal an alternative interpretation of these same findings. Communipaw stresses that the racial categories that Squier is even capable of recognizing among the Nicaraguan people are culturally and nationally circumscribed. By regarding the Nicaraguan people as a subject for scientific analysis, Squier affords a broad range of distinct cultural, ethnic, and racial designations to Nicaraguans, differentiating among *mestizos*, *mulatos*, *zambos*, and *negros*. But despite his best attempts to reproduce these Spanish American racial categories for a USAmerican readership, a fundamental cultural and epistemological disconnect remains: all of these populations still code as "colored" according to USAmerican protocols of racial organization, and readers of *Nicaragua* would have regarded them as such. Communipaw lays bare as much, arguing that "[I]f we take the American view of the question, (North America of course)," he explains, then the 15,000 *mestizos* and *mulatos* that Squier's claims are passing for Spanish *criollos*, the 15,000 African Americans, and the 130,000 people of mixed racial ancestry are organized under the umbrella of "Colored or Negroes" and now collectively form 160,000 people or 64% of the total population. Thus, while Squier's intentional manipulation of Nicaraguan demographic attempts to limn that nation as destined to become a white, Anglo-Saxon republic, Communipaw narrates these same findings quite differently. With 64% of the population descended partially or fully from Amerindians or Africans, Communipaw boldly (and rightly) concludes that, in the present, "Nicaragua is a *colored republic!*"<sup>28</sup>

For Communipaw the majority "colored" population of Nicaragua was cause for celebration, as it provided antislavery activists with an example of a successful non-white republic in the Americas less incendiary than Haiti. For Squier, conversely, it posed an obstacle

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<sup>28</sup> "Nicaragua," *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 8 January 1852.

to the political and propagandistic objectives of *Nicaragua*. Squier was no doubt aware of how the impression that Nicaragua was a “colored republic” might curtail the enthusiasm of squeamish, xenophobic, white USAmericans contemplating relocation to Nicaragua to pursue gold or aid in the construction of the interoceanic canal. To that end, his study parses distinctions between the Afro-descended populations of Nicaragua and those of the USA in order to assuage the anxieties of prospective white migrants who had no desire to settle among a majority “colored” population:

It should however be observed that the negroes of Nicaragua differ very widely in appearance from those of the United States. They must have been derived from an entirely different portion of the African continent. They have, in general, aquiline noses, small mouths, and thin lips,—in fact, with the exception of the crisp hair and dark skin, they have few of the features which, with us, are regarded as peculiar and universal in the negro race. (I.268)

Although he limits his observations here to physiognomy, there are unambiguous cultural implications to his claim that the Black Nicaraguan population lacks the “features” that USAmericans typically associate with people of African descent. His relative silence and lack of derogatory remarks toward Afro-descended Nicaraguans speaks volumes, especially when read alongside his excoriation of the “wretched Moscos or Mosquitos,” a population that describes as “a mongrel breed, crossed between negroes and Indians” that has “only a factitious importance” in the Central American political landscape (I:18, II:308). His comparatively neutral treatment of Afro-descended Nicaraguans indexes their distance from their USAmerican counterparts more than their proximity to white Nicaraguans. As Squier is sure to note, however, “notwithstanding the diversity of races, distinctions of caste are hardly recognized,” though he quickly qualifies



this assertion by adding that “[t]his would not probably be the case if the white population was proportionately greater, and possessed the physical power to keep up the distinctions which nature separate the superior and inferior families of men” (I: 267-268). Squier’s analogy comparing people of African descent in Nicaragua and the USA is ultimately much less interested in “whitening” the former than it is in “Blackening” the latter.

The implications of Squier’s comparison between African Americans in Nicaragua and the USA were not lost on Communipaw, who eviscerates the author for making such an analogy. Despite the anthropologist’s pretensions to being an objective “witness from the other side,” Communipaw charges that his ethnological optics are shaded by the fact that he was “brought up in Albany, as full as any man of filthy American prejudice, of nasty negro hate.”<sup>29</sup> Squier lacks the scientific objectivity and critical distance to discuss race in the USA, nevermind in Nicaragua; Communipaw argues it would be an “asinine stupidity [to assume] that an American with the seven-fold gaze of prejudice before his eyes, *when in the United States*, can even see the physique of the black men.”<sup>30</sup> Communipaw’s invocation of “physique” here is telling – the word had only been in usage for about forty years and describes, in its most common usage, “the form, size, and development of a person’s body; the characteristic appearance or physical powers of an individual or people,” and in a less common usage, “physical surroundings.”<sup>31</sup> The ethnographic gaze at work in *Nicaragua* registers both senses of “physique” when rendering its Nicaraguan subjects. The study meticulously attends to the physical surroundings of individuals

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<sup>29</sup> “Nicaragua,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 8 January 1852.

<sup>30</sup> “Nicaragua,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 8 January 1852.

<sup>31</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “physique, n.,” <http://www.oed.com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/view/Entry/143186?redirectedFrom=physique&> (accessed November 18, 2015).

and subsequently extrapolates the physical characteristics of those individuals into essential characteristics of entire populations. This same gaze never falls upon the Black men in the USA, however, precisely because white men like Squier are “smitten” with the “asinine stupidity” of racial bigotry. Put differently, where the white USAmerican in Central American admits less familiarity with the foreign African American and adopts an ethnographic gaze in an attempt to understand him/her, the same white USAmerican adopts, instead, the “seven-fold gaze of prejudice” when he confronts the domestic African American; he assumes he already possesses complete knowledge of this subject and therefore cannot see him/her as s/he really is.

Because Squier begins from a position of relative unfamiliarity with populations outside the USA, the racial schema of the USA nevertheless continues to inform his cognition and representations of foreign bodies. Communipaw highlights the influential impact of USAmerican white supremacy on Squier’s anthropological observations in Nicaragua adulterates his scientific findings. The presumptuous premises of anti-Black racism yield subjective rather than objective results. The critical acclaimed that the USAmerican scientific community poured onto Squier revealed the complicity of these academic institutions in the project of white supremacy – they lauded Squier’s bad science because it confirmed the racist presuppositions and imperial desires of the USA. For McCune Smith, this critique of the academic approbation that *Nicaragua* received was no doubt personal. Anti-Black admission policies forced McCune Smith to pursue a medical degree outside of the USA (the University of Glasgow), and despite his impressive formal training, robust publishing résumé, and thriving medical/pharmaceutical practice, he was never admitted into the American Medical Association. To render visible these institutional politics, Communipaw’s critique of *Nicaragua* turns *ad hominem*, as he assaults Squier’s scientific credentials, including his “miraculous ignorance of the ethnography of Africa.” He

writes, “Mr. Squier professes to be an Ethnographist. He is a member of the New York Ethnological Society; he should know, therefore, that the Joloffs, on the Guinea coast, are just such looking negroes as those of Nicaragua; that throughout that coast travelers are struck with the European features of the natives.”<sup>32</sup> Communipaw sardonically suggests that “professing” to be an ethnographist and actually possessing the academic credentials in order to be a practicing ethnographer (beyond the remarkably rapid institutional recognition and approbation that Squier’s work received) are two different things.

The greater concern for Communipaw, however, was the impact of that bad science on foreign and domestic racial politics. Squier supposes that the Afro-descended people of Nicaragua actually originate in a different part of the continent than the Afro-descended people of the USA. This claim was indebted to the polygenetic and environmental determinist theories of the American School of Ethnology, theories that began to gain traction in the late 1840s, but had developed into scientific consensus by the 1850s as ethnologists developed more nuanced challenges to monogenism that complemented (rather than undermined) Christian creation epistemologies.<sup>33</sup> Communipaw does not dispute the racialist theories undergirding this conclusion because Squier does not purport to be a racial scientist. Instead, Communipaw focuses on the quality of Squier’s ethnological observations in order to show precisely how Squier (not the racialists) fails to uphold the integrity of science. Ultimately, he exposes Squier’s assumptions about the distinct origins of Afro-descended peoples in the USA and Nicaragua to

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<sup>32</sup> “Nicaragua,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 8 January 1852.

<sup>33</sup> See William Stanton, *The Leopard’s Spots* (1976); David N. Livingstone, *Adam’s Ancestors: Race, Religion, and the Politics of Human Origin* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008), 169-200. The game-changing treatise on polygenism in this period was Nott’s and Gliddon’s *Types of Mankind* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo and Co., 1854).

be based more in fantasy than fact, more in anti-Black presuppositions than empirical evidence. Indeed, the historical ledgers of the transatlantic slave trade make clear that captive Wolofs, who originated in the Senegambia region of West Africa, were trafficked in significant numbers to Spanish Circum-Caribbean (including Nicaragua). Significantly, these same ledgers make clear that enslaved Wolofs were also transported to Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina as part of the North American slave trade well into the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the Wolofs on the Guinea Coast were not only “just such looking negroes as those of Nicaragua,” but “just such looking negroes [also] abound in these United States.”<sup>35</sup> By appealing to the diasporic history a particular ethnic group, Communipaw recuperates, however modestly or briefly, an Africanist account of racial science and, in turn, reveals how Squier’s ethnological gaze defies science in order to “whiten,” however marginally, the Afro-descended populations of Nicaragua compared to Afro USAmericans.

Communipaw’s critique of Squier’s bad ethnology is essential precisely because Squier celebrates his own trained eye’s capacity to perceive what the untrained (i.e. unscientific) eye

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<sup>34</sup> *The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* ([www.slavevoyages.org](http://www.slavevoyages.org)), an online project developed by David Richardson and David Eltis that collects data about thousands of transatlantic voyages transporting enslaved Africans to the New World, makes clear that the Wolofs and their descendants were present in both the USA and Central America. According to the database, there were 358 ships that brought captive Africans from Senegambia to mainland North America between 1662 and 1817; there were 279 voyages that brought captive Africans from Senegambia to the Spanish Circum-Caribbean (including Nicaragua) from 1545 to 1726. Although Nicaragua never participated in plantation slavery to the extent of the Caribbean sugar islands, the USAmerican South, or Brazil, its Afro-descended populations are undoubtedly part of slavery’s diaspora. In addition to those enslaved Africans transported to Nicaragua throughout the eighteenth century, many other people of African descent in the region were fugitives who had escaped from shipwrecked slave vessels or migrated from the post-emancipation plantations of the British West Indies in search of better-paying labor opportunities in Central American mines.

<sup>35</sup> “Nicaragua,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 8 January 1852.

cannot. We need no further example of such self-confidence than Squier's purported ability to recognize *mestizos* passing for *criollos* as such. In order to expose, yet again, the bad science driving such a claim, Communipaw meaningfully misrepresents the anthropologist's exaggerated sense of his own ethnological aptitude. For example, although he quotes Squier as saying that evidence of mixed racial ancestry "displays itself in the color of the skin &c," this is actually the opposite of the ethnologist's claim. In actuality, Squier writes: "An infusion of Indian blood is easily to be detected in a large proportion of those who claim to be of a pure Spanish descent. It displays itself *less* in the color of the skin than in a certain quickness of the eye, which is a much more expressive feature in those crossed with Indians than in either of the original stocks" (I.267-268; my emphasis). Not unlike Miss Ophelia's disquietude with Topsy's "cunning glances... shot askance from the corners of her eye," Squier perceives the "Indian blood" of men and women passing for Spanish in "a certain quickness of the eye" rather than in physiognomy and phenotypes.<sup>36</sup> For Squier, the eyes become the loci of race once skin color is revealed to be an unreliable marker of a person's "true" racial identity – this logic frames a symbolically loaded attribute ("a certain quickness of the eye") as a supposedly essential expression of a racial identity ("the original stocks"); but there is much at work in this intercultural ocular intercourse, when the white, ethnographic gaze meets the eyes of the Other. To begin, the observation of "quick eyes" is, of course, symbolically loaded, as we saw in the case of Topsy: shifty eyes connote a shifty character. The white viewer/commentator, therefore, projects his anxiety about the "shiftiness" of racial Other *onto* and *into* the eyes of the racial Other. Corporealizing and externalizing white anxiety in this fashion naturalizes the racial Other's supposed shiftiness:

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<sup>36</sup> Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 352.

much like craniology and phrenology attributed certain characteristics to particular skull shapes, the “quickness” of Nicaraguans’ eyes becomes a “natural” expression of racial identity; that shiftiness is no longer in the imagination of the white gaze, but now actually, *naturally* exists in the eyes of the Other. Put differently, Squier’s claim that the “quickness” of Nicaraguans’ eyes unmasks efforts of lighter-skinned *mestizos*’ attempts to pass for white is not a *recognition* of Otherness; it is a *cognition* of Otherness.<sup>37</sup> Communipaw chooses to erase this complex negotiation of white, USAmerican anxiety, however, reducing Squier’s “detection” of non-whiteness to his perception of nonwhite phenotypes (i.e. “the color of the skin &c”). On the one hand, this revision lets Squier off the hook for his implausible perception of racially essential behaviors and, disappointingly, it squanders a valuable opportunity to expose how cultural constructions of non-whiteness serve white supremacy and to unveil the fragility of Squier’s own precious whiteness. On the other hand, Communipaw’s excision of Squier’s “less/than” formulation disregards the anthropologist’s unscientific racialization of behaviors and refuses to reproduce the affective projection of Otherness that Squier attempts to pass off as science. Instead, he intentionally misreads Squier in order to bring to the surface the racism and insecurity that subtend the anthropologist’s anxieties about almost invisible markers of non-European ancestry.

Communipaw’s strategic debunking of Squier’s bad science yields three conclusions, which collaboratively underwrite an alternative political project to Squier’s proto-eugenicist, imperialist designs on Nicaragua. To review, Communipaw reinterprets Squier’s own demographic analysis in order to argue 1) that a sustainable intermediary (“hybrid”) racial

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<sup>37</sup> My reading here owes much to Frantz Fanon’s work on the white gaze in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), especially his fifth chapter, “The Fact of Blackness.”

population that ethnologists like Nott and Squier argued could not survive “has been artfully excited, created between the races in Central America”; 2) that the Wolof ethnic group links together Black populations in Nicaragua, the USA, and Africa; and 3) that “Nicaragua is a *colored republic!*” In the second part of his review of *Nicaragua*, published a week afterward, Communipaw reveals what might be made of these conclusions:

Hence there is no need of going to Liberia to find a field for the exercise of the highest talents on the part of our down-trodden: nor did it require the infernal machinery of the American Colonization society to prove what black men are capable of doing. Here in Nicaragua, the most beautiful, freest and happiest region on the face of God's earth, where black and white interchange all the civil and social relations on the same platform... If any of our young men feel enterprise kindling in their blood, Nicaragua, free Nicaragua, offers the highest inducements to fair and honest endeavor.<sup>38</sup>

Whereas the free Black colonization of Liberia encouraged emigration as a function of Manifest Destiny's racial separatist ideology, free Black emigration to Nicaragua would serve to buttress and expand a diverse, “colored” republic in a geographically tactical region. Indeed, several months before Martin Delany's influential *Condition, Elevation, Emigration, and Destiny of the Colored People of the United States* (1852) singled out Nicaragua and New Granada as “the most favorable points, at present, in every particular, for us to emigrate to,” Communipaw uses Squier's survey of the region to argue that Nicaragua's current demographic, cultural, political, and economic situation made it the ideal site for Black emigrants from the USA to settle.

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<sup>38</sup> “Communications: Nicaragua. No. II,” *Frederick Douglass' Paper* 15 January 1852.

Unlike Delany, however, Communipaw's vision for Nicaragua is not a Black nationalist or Black separatist project. In fact, the primary allure of Nicaragua is the diversity of its population and the prevalence of "black and white interchange" among social, political, and sexual spheres. To better understand his infatuation with Nicaragua, McCune Smith's adoption of the "Communipaw" persona is instructive. According to John Stauffer, "McCune Smith wrote under the Indian name of "Communipaw," which was derived from a colonial settlement in what is now Jersey City, New Jersey, made legendary by Washington Irving as an interracial community of blacks, Indians, and Dutch settlers who resisted British invaders."<sup>39</sup> McCune Smith found the idea of such a community deeply compelling. He claimed publicly to be a "descendant" of Communipaw, and in his later essay on "Civilization: Its Dependence on Physical Circumstances" (1859) he argues that the etymological origins of "civilization" ("civis, co-ivis, 'coming together'") indicate the concept's foundational investment in racial diversity and egalitarian pluralism.<sup>40</sup> By portraying Nicaragua as a "colored republic" comprised of Europeans, Amerindians, Africans, and myriad admixtures of the so-called "pure stocks," Communipaw imagines the region as a present manifestation of this idyllic past.

Such a vision of Nicaragua runs counter to Squier's narrowly circumscribed and politically charged rendering of the region. For Squier, the atavistic culture of the majority

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<sup>39</sup> John Stauffer, *The Works of James McCune Smith: Black Intellectual and Abolitionist* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006), xxxi. McCune Smith likely arrived at the idea to write as Communipaw from popular reissues of Washington Irving's *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (New York: C.S. Van Winkle, 1819) like *A Book of the Hudson: Collected from the Various Works of Diedrich Knickerbocker* (New York: G.P. Putnam, c1849), or broader histories that excerpt his sketch of the Communipaw community, such as *A History of New-York* (New York: George P. Putnam, 1849). Both of these publications appeared shortly before McCune Smith began contributing to *Frederick Douglass' Paper* in 1851.

<sup>40</sup> Stauffer, *Black Hearts of Men*, 188. "Civilization" appeared in the inaugural issue of the *Anglo-African Magazine* in January 1859.



Amerindian and Amerindian-descended population was an object of reverence and mourning, signifying the noble past of noble people barreling toward the brink of extinction against the currents of “civilization” coursing all around them. Once these peoples vanished from the Nicaraguan landscape and into the annals of USAmerican imperial history, the USA would claim its Manifest Destiny: the Nicaraguan canal zone and its adjacent regions would be subsumed into the USAmerican Hemispheric Empire. For Communipaw, this presence of this atavistic culture in Nicaragua marks a continuity with the pluralistic, pre-modern utopia that shares McCune Smith’s pen name. The diversity and interracial comingling that characterize the republic are not anathema to civilization, but rather the epitome of it. By positing an alternative vision of civilization, Communipaw suggests that Nicaragua’s destiny is not to be assumed under the paternalism and eventual direct governance of the white, USAmerican nation. Instead, its destiny is to prolong the legacy of Communipaw (the community). If Nicaragua truly was, as Squier claimed and as many believed, “[t]he key of the continent, destined to unlock the riches of two hemispheres,” then the preservation and augmentation of a diverse, pluralistic, egalitarian American republic in this strategic region could radically alter the course of hemispheric history. Nicaragua and Communipaw could become model societies, supplanting the white supremacist, xenophobic model of USAmerican hegemony that Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine espoused. The future of the Americas, Communipaw submits, may well be its past.

### ***Waikna and the Fictionalization of Anthropology***

Squier was certainly aware of such critiques of his blurring the lines between politics and science, and was no doubt particularly sensitive to accusations that the rigor of his anthropological research had suffered owing to its imbrication in the political and economic

ambitions of the USAmerican government. His close friend and fellow anthropologist Francis Parkman warns him of as much in a letter written on the eve of Squier's departure. "[D]on't let Politics swallow up science," Parkman cautioned, "They will pull together well enough and make a strong team — one however, which will require a hand as strong as yours to manage it."<sup>41</sup> Moreover, as Squier's publication of an anonymous review of *Nicaragua* in *Harper's* indicates, the anthropologist was deeply invested in the positive reception of his scientific studies among academic and popular audiences. Thus, regardless of whether or not Squier, a native of Albany, had read McCune Smith's particularly critical review of *Nicaragua* in a well-circulated abolitionist weekly based in Rochester (*Frederick Douglass' Paper*), the anthropologist was certainly aware that his studies of Central America were inextricable from their diplomatic and colonial contexts, and therefore susceptible to accusations of "bad science."

By 1855, Squier had found a solution. Drawing on his first hand travels throughout Central America in 1849 and 1850, as well as a robust library of studies on the region, Squier submitted the manuscript for a novel entitled *Waikna; Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* to Harper and Brothers under the pseudonym, "Samuel A. Bard." Similar to *Nicaragua*, *Waikna* was a tremendous mass market success. The thoroughly illustrated volume sold for the modest price of \$1.25 and, thanks to the aggressive advertising of its major publisher, circulated widely.<sup>42</sup> The book even found its way into the libraries of major mid-century writers like

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<sup>41</sup> Francis Parkman to E.G. Squier, 13 May 1849, in *Letters from Francis Parkman to E.G. Squier*, ed. Don C. Seitz (Cedar Rapids: Torch P, 1911), 22.

<sup>42</sup> Advertisements for *Waikna* compellingly graph the novel's wide distribution throughout the USA: "New Books," *Hartford Daily Courant* 9 August 1855, 1; "New Books," *Daily Courier* (Louisville, KY) 22 August 1855, 8; "New Books," *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), 20 July 1855, 228; "Received This Day," *The Daily Cleveland Herald* 9 August 1855; "New Books," *The Boston Daily Atlas* 20 July 1855; "New Books," *Daily Chronicle & Sentinel* (Augusta, GA) 18 August 1855; "New Books," *The Daily South Carolinian* 30 August 1855;

Herman Melville, Henry David Thoreau, and Wilkie Collins.<sup>43</sup> Notably, however, *Waikna* did not present itself as novel, but rather as a faithful first-person travel narrative composed by Bard, a landscape artist who is shipwrecked on a voyage from Jamaica to Central America, and subsequently journeys throughout the Mosquito Shore. The plot is thick with adventure and, in many ways, resembles other major travel-themed novels of the period, like Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years before the Mast* (1840) and Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* (1851), and mass-market adventure fiction by authors like Marturin Murray Ballou and Ned Buntline. *Waikna* openly invites comparison to such works, as its subtitle "*Adventures on the Mosquito Shore*" and the narrator's self-reflexive references to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and William Carleton's *Willy Reilly and His Dear Coleen Bawn* (1855) readily attest.<sup>44</sup>

At the same time though, *Waikna* strongly resembles the many scientifically-oriented travel narratives about Spanish America that gained remarkable popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, such as Stephens's *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* (1841), John A. Perry's *Thrilling Adventures of a New-Englander* (1853), and Dana's *To Cuba and Back* (1859). Most contemporary readers of *Waikna* received it within this scientific travel tradition. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* projected that the novel "will challenge a brilliant

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"New Works," *The Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Gazette* 11 September 1855; "New Books--Per Express," *Daily Evening Bulletin* (San Francisco, CA) 16 November 1855; "New Books," *Vermont Patriot & State Gazette* 30 November 1855.

<sup>43</sup> See Hershel Parker, *Herman Melville: A Biography*, Vol. 2 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005), 376; Robert Sattelmeyer, *Thoreau's Reading: A Study of Intellectual History with Bibliographical Catalogue* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2014), 273; and William Baker, *Wilkie Collins's Library: A Reconstruction* (Middletown: Greenwood, 2002), 77.

<sup>44</sup> Upon being shipwrecked at the beginning of the novel, Samuel remarks "Robinson Crusoe, and Reilly and his companions, recurred to my mind, and my impulse was to leap up and commence an emulative career" (37).

place among our popular American ‘Travels’”; *The Presbyterian* claimed that “[a]mong books of travel recently issued, it would be difficult to find one more lively and interesting”; the *Ladies’ Repository* heralded it as “an unusual book in the line of its class”; and the *New York Daily Times* boldly declared that “[w]e shall be greatly mistaken if this volume does not become the most popular book of travels of the day.”<sup>45</sup> Other reviews remarked on the putative veracity of Bard’s tale. Indeed, Squier combined his own brief experiences on the Mosquito Shore with liberal adaptations and outright plagiarism of other Central American travelogues and studies; combined with the remarkably vivid illustrations that accompanied the prose, the integration of these “authoritative” source texts into the plot of *Waikna* lent the distinct impression of scientific authenticity to its readers. The reviewer from *Ballou*, for instance, averred that the exceptional woodcuts provided “internal evidence of perfect truthfulness,” while the *Daily Cleveland Herald* championed the novel’s pedagogical merits, professing that for “[t]hose unacquainted with the peculiarities of the tropic lands and seas... this little book [can] much improve their knowledge.”<sup>46</sup>

As Roberto González Echevarría describes the emergent genre during this period, these scientific travelogues about Central America are “permeated by the figure of this narrator-hero who undergoes trials for the sake of knowledge,” and therefore blend generic elements of science

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<sup>45</sup> “*Waikna; Adventures on the Mosquito Shore*, by Samuel A. Bard (Harper Brothers)” *Harper’s Magazine*, August 1855, 404; “Recent Publications,” *Presbyterian*, 11 August 1855, 128; “*Waikna; or Adventures on the Mosquito Shore*” *Ladies’ Repository* 1 September 1855, 118; “Notices of New Books,” *New York Daily Times* 3 August 1855, 6.

<sup>46</sup> “Notices of New Publications,” *Ballou* 25 August 1855, 123; “*Waikna; or, Adventures on the Mosquito Shore*,” *The Daily Cleveland Herald* 13 August 1855.

and adventure, fact and fiction.<sup>47</sup> *Waikna* exemplifies this tradition. Bard, the book's narrator-hero, certainly "undergoes trials" (e.g. the shipwreck that interrupts his initial voyage from Jamaica to Bluefields) throughout his travels, but these stem from his desire to literally paint the Nicaraguan landscape. While this artistic mission perhaps intimates that that romance, not science, drives Bard's travels, the painter's keen eye for aesthetics proves perspicacious also in the fields of natural science and ethnography: *Waikna*'s collection of sixty illustrations complement the painstakingly attentive narrative accounts of the geography, topography, flora, and fauna of the Mosquito Shore, as well as the social structures, religious rituals, and political organization of the diverse human communities that populate the region. The *New York Daily Times* best summarized *Waikna*'s successful marriage of fact and fancy, marveling that the book "is amusing as a romance, and, at the same time, has every appearance of being strictly true."<sup>48</sup>

But if Squier intended to publish *Waikna* within this tradition of scientifically-oriented, adventure-driven travel narratives, why did he submit the publication to Harper and Brothers under a pseudonym? I submit that the novelistic plot of *Waikna* afforded Squier, a failed poet, a degree of creative license to promote his political agenda in ways that he simply could not in his scientific writings, and his pseudonym would insulate him from the kind of devastating methodological critiques that Communipaw leveled against him in *Frederick Douglass' Paper*. Whereas Squier had composed *Nicaragua* as a geographical, political, and ethnographic survey of Nicaraguan republic in order to promote the interoceanic canal project), the strictures of his scientific and diplomatic functions in the region limited the extent to which he could tackle the

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<sup>47</sup> Roberto González Echevarría, *Myth and Archive: A Theory of Latin American Narrative* (Durham: Duke UP, 1998), 107.

<sup>48</sup> "Notices of New Books," *New York Daily Times* 3 August 1855, 6.

primary obstacle to the canal project: British interests in the region. Accordingly, Bard's travels take place not in the Nicaraguan republic that Squier's early Central American writings detail so thoroughly, but rather in the nearby Miskito Kingdom, which spread along the east coast (the Mosquito Shore) of what is now Nicaragua and Honduras. As previously discussed, the British had declared the Miskito Kingdom a protectorate of their Empire in 1844 as a tactical ploy to block the USA from gaining exclusive political and economic control over the site of a potential interoceanic canal that would revolutionize global trade. As an official representative of the USAmerican government, Squier could not directly criticize the British without risking diplomatic turmoil or, worse, armed conflict. Thus, while *Nicaragua* is filled to the brim with incidental scenes of Nicaraguans showering Squier's party with unsolicited chants of "Death to the English!" and "Vivan los Americanos del Norte!" such political commentaries were protected under the guise of objective, ethnographic observations (67, 68). *Waikna*, as a pseudonymous travel narrative, freed Squier to lambast and lampoon the British colonial government in the region and the British metropole's obviation of the interoceanic canal without risking retribution against himself or his own government. This anonymity proved especially prudent because two different British publishers reissued the novel in London the year following its USAmerican release.<sup>49</sup>

Liberated from his diplomatic and scientific obligations, Squier held nothing back in his novelistic assault on British colonialism in Central America. As Michael Olien convincingly demonstrates, Squier's primary ethnographic objective in *Waikna* was to differentiate the Miskito Amerindians that inhabited the Caribbean coast from the diverse Amerindian

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<sup>49</sup> See Samuel A. Bard, *Waikna; or, Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* (London: Sampson, Low, and Son, 1856) and Samuel A. Bard, *Waikna; or, Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* (London: James Blackwood, 1856).

populations that inhabited the Nicaraguan interior and Pacific coast.<sup>50</sup> In particular, *Waikna* is filled to the brim with blackface caricatures of Miskitos that hold high-ranking governmental and military positions in order to demonstrate two conclusions, both of which undermine British interference in the region. First, these caricatures aimed to prove that these Amerindians were actually African Americans and were, therefore, not native to the lands they currently claimed as their own. In particular, this claim undermined the British defense of the Miskito Kingdom's sovereignty: if the Miskitos were not Native Americans, then they had no rights to the lands the British claimed they did, particularly the port of San Juan del Norte. Secondly, these caricatures aimed to prove that the Miskito leadership were actually Black puppets under the careful control of the British colonial government. Such a claim putatively unmasked the true British intentions in the region. Rather than magnanimously defending the sovereignty rights of one of the First Nations of the Americas, the British protectorate really intended to prevent USAmerican dominion over the proposed interoceanic trade route.<sup>51</sup>

*Waikna* begins, not accidentally, in the British colony of Jamaica, where the artist Samuel Bard is languishing amid the decay of post-slavery Kingston. "A month in Jamaica," Squier begins the novel, "is enough for any sinner's punishment, let alone that of a tolerably good Christian" (13). Where many USAmerican abolitionists held up the free British colonies as examples of how emancipation had only positive effects on the economies and societies of those

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<sup>50</sup> This racialized distinction between eastern and western Nicaragua persists in Nicaraguans contemporary understandings of race in the region; see Baron Pineda, *Shipwrecked Identities: Navigating Race on Nicaragua's Mosquito Coast* (New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> Michael Olien, "Were the Miskito Indians Black? Ethnicity, Politics, and Plagiarism in the Mid-Nineteenth Century," *Nieuwe West-Indische Gids / New West Indian Guide* 62.1/2 (1988): 27-50.

islands, Squier paints a picture of Jamaica as regressing rapidly “into native and congenial barbarism” in the aftermath of slavery (19).<sup>52</sup> For the landscape artist Bard, such features detract mightily from the island’s natural beauty, which was “fine in scenery,” but blighted by the preponderance of “dilapidated plantations, and filthy, lazy negroes” (18). This characterization of emancipated African Americans in Jamaica belies his view that they are completely unable to comprehend art, language, or any aspect of the Enlightenment project more broadly; they “scratched their heads” in reaction to his aesthetic productions and “jabbered their incomprehensible lingo,” Jamaican *patois*, which etymologically means “incomprehensible, vulgar gibberish” (19).<sup>53</sup> Even the “fair” Jamaicans (a mere one-sixth of the population by Bard’s estimation) speak an “abominable, unintelligible Congo-English” that “darkens” their complexion in the narrator’s eyes (13). For Bard, as for many US Americans, the creolization of language and culture in hemispheric geographies south of the USA were intimately connected to the creolization of racial identities/lineages that were understood to be distinct and pure.

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<sup>52</sup> For prominent general writings on the successes of British Emancipation, see Nathaniel P. Rogers, “British Emancipation,” in *Liberty Bell*, ed. Friends of Freedom (Maria Weston Chapman) (Boston: Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Fair, 1842), 97-111; and Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Address Delivered in the Courthouse in Concord, Massachusetts on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1844 on the Anniversary of the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies* (Boston: Munroe: 1844). Among the British colonies, Jamaica became a popular exemplar and a popular site for free Black emigration from the USA in the 1850s; see John Greenleaf Whittier, “Jamaica—Its Condition and Industrial Resources and Advantages,” *National Era* 7 October 1852, 164; Samuel Allinson, “Jamaica—Its Advantages as a Home for Colored Emigrants,” *National Era* 7 October 1852, 164; “Colored Emigration to Jamaica,” *Frederick Douglass’ Paper*, 10 June 1853; and Samuel Ringgold Ward, *Autobiography of a Fugitive Negro: His Anti-slavery Labours in the United States, Canada, & England* (London: John Snow: 1855).

<sup>53</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “patois, n.” For more on the politics of Jamaican *patois* and other syncretic Caribbean nation-languages, see Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (Boston: New Beacon Books, 1984).



One of immediate consequences of this hybridization of language and races in Jamaica (and, as is later underscored, in the Mosquito Coast) was the moral, social, and economic declivity of the island in the post-emancipation period.<sup>54</sup> This proposed linkage runs counter to convention in some ways: the claim that racial and cultural amalgamation leads to moral and cultural decay was a favorite tactic of British and USAmerican writers in their characterizations of Spanish colonial societies. *Waikna*, by contrast, applies this cultural logic to British creole societies in order to contrast them with USAmerican colonialism. Bard posits that “the condition of Jamaica” entails “a grand, practical misconception of the laws of Nature”:

It can not be denied that where the superior and inferior races are brought in contact, and amalgamate, there we uniformly find a hybrid stock springing up, with most, if not all of the vices, and few, if any of the virtues of the originals. And it will hardly be questioned, by those experimentally acquainted with the subject, that the manifest lack of public morality and private virtue, in the Spanish-American States, has followed from the fatal facility with which the Spanish colonists have intermixed with the negroes and Indians. The rigid and inexorable exclusion, in respect to the inferior races, of the dominant blood of North America, flowing through different channels perhaps, yet from the same great Teutonic source, is one grand secret of its vitality, and the best safeguard of its permanent ascendancy. (24-25)

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<sup>54</sup> The view that the intermarriage of Afro-descended people with Europeans and Amerindians in the region resulted in cultural decline endured well into the twentieth century. See Samuel Crowther, *The Romance and Rise of the American Tropics* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1929), 113; and Wolfgang von Hagen, “The Mosquito Coast of Honduras and Its Inhabitants,” *Geographical Review* 30.2 (1940): 238-259.

Bard immediately links racial amalgamation to vice, arguing that the admixture of different racial lineages effectuates the presentation of sinister traits that were recessive or latent in the “pure,” constitutive races.<sup>55</sup> He then, following popular USAmerican and British characterizations of Spanish colonialism, cites the “Spanish-American States” as an exemplar how racial amalgamation “manifest[s this] lack of public morality and private virtue.” Bard concludes by making a rather curious rhetorical move in support of an otherwise mundane, quotidian claim among racialists of the period and white supremacists throughout history (i.e. avoiding amalgamation is essential to the “permanent ascendancy” of the Anglo-Saxon race): he distinguishes “the dominant blood of North America” (Anglo USAmerican blood) from Anglo American blood, averring that although they come from the “same great Teutonic source,” they “flow through different channels.” In doing so, he implicitly claims that USAmericans of Anglo-Saxon descent are *whiter* than other Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent and, thus, more fit to “safeguard” the “permanent ascendancy” of the race.

The USAmerican exceptionalism that informs Bard’s perceptions of British creole culture in Jamaica (and subsequently on the Mosquito Coast) extends Sean Goudie’s arguments about the colonial and early republican USAmerican views of British and Spanish creole culture into the mid-nineteenth-century imperial undertakings of the USA. For Goudie,

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<sup>55</sup> This view was popular among white supremacists and abolitionists alike, so much so that when a Southern Democrat named David G. Croly published an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races, Applied to the American White Man and Negro* (New York: H. Dexter, Hamilton, and Co., 1864), he parodically endorsed the idea that interracial procreation would result in manifestation of the most virtuous traits of the composite races as a gambit to dissuade more conservative antislavery activists from voting Republican. For more on this hoax, see Sidney Kaplan, “The Miscegenation Issue in the Election of 1864,” *Journal of Negro History* 34.3 (1949): 274-343.

Many North American colonists—particularly in the Northern colonies—recoiled from the prospect that they had “degenerated” from the European “norm” like West Indians in the “torrid zone” or their fellow North American colonists in the South. They were sensitive to the ways in which the creolization of New World cultures, languages, peoples, races, and so on were viewed by European societies and intellectuals. Thus central to political propaganda during the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary periods was an effort to renounce any affiliation with the pejorative classification “creole.”<sup>56</sup>

In the wake of the US-Mexico War and amidst USAmerican designs on expanding the nation into the Caribbean and Central America, disavowing *creolité* while continuing to denigrate it, lent credence to the white fantasies of Anglo USAmerican exceptionalism, Manifest Destiny, and paternalistic neocolonialism. This differentiation and stratification of Anglo-Saxon lineages according to their cultivation in colonial/postcolonial American societies becomes the basis for Squier’s claims regarding USAmerican intervention in Central America. Indeed, according to his own admission, *Bard* is a more sensitive barometer to the relapses of British colony precisely because of his “American notions and tastes” with regards to race (19). Much like the USAmerican exceptionalism that courses through *Nicaragua*, this elevation of USAmerican culture over British creole culture in *Waikna* invites readers to imagine how the Mosquito Coast and its residents might look differently under USAmerican paternalism. By beginning the novel in this way, Squier prepares readers to see the same “backwardness” on the British-governed Mosquito Coast and to anticipate the mutually beneficial consequences of the USAmerican more aggressively enforcing the Monroe Doctrine.

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<sup>56</sup> Goudie, *Creole America*, 9.

Whereas the earlier periods of USA-Caribbean history that Goudie analyzes were marked by more clearly delineated understandings of *creolité* (i.e. “a descendant of white European settlers [esp. Spanish or French] who is born in a colonized country”), by the mid-nineteenth century, the term “creole,” when applied to individuals or populations, variously indicated either “any person of mixed ancestry born in a country previously colonized by white Europeans,” or “a person of black African descent born in the Caribbean or mainland Americas, esp. (in early use) as opposed to one recently arrived from Africa.”<sup>57</sup> As a result, “creole,” unless deployed in a highly precise and painstakingly clarified cultural context, often operated as a floating signifier with (sometimes intentionally) ambiguous racial connotations. There is no better example of the slipperiness of this ethnonym than the Mosquito Coast in the nineteenth-century. According to anthropologist Baron Pineda,

The term *Creole* (borrowed from the Jamaicans who were beginning to come to the Central American coast in search of wage labor) was used in the Mosquito Coast to distinguish Blacks who had been born in the region from Miskitos. In Latin America and the Caribbean as a whole during the colonial period, the term *Creole* distinguished native-born people of all races from European-born people.<sup>58</sup>

A linguistic import from Jamaica, “Creole” quickly shed its British West Indian cultural connotations and developed specific parameters within the social landscape of the Mosquito Coast: differentiating locally born African Americans from the Miskitos, whose purported

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<sup>57</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. “creole, n.”

<sup>58</sup> Pineda, *Shipwrecked Identities*, 53-54. Following Pineda, I will capitalize “Creole” when referring to the particular ethnic identity associated with the Mosquito Coast and revert to the lowercase “creole” when discussing creole identities more generically.

ethnogenesis in the seventeenth century resulted from the intermarriages of shipwrecked African slaves and Amerindians.<sup>59</sup> As Pineda and Olien both highlight, however, the distinction between creoles and Miskitos often named an identity associated with language and customs rather than strictly perceived racial or geographical origins. But even here, the extent to which this distinction fell neatly along these lines is ambiguous. According to Olien's earlier study, "the term 'creole' came to delineate the same native born/foreign born distinction among blacks that it earlier had among whites," whereas Pineda's more recent work asserts that "creole" indicated "English-speakers of putative African descent" and "Miskito" denoted "Miskitu-speakers of putative Indian and mixed (Sambo) descent."<sup>60</sup>

Oddly though (because of how neatly its pejorative connotations would corroborate his denigration of cultural/racial amalgamation under British governance of the Mosquito Coast), the eponym "Creole" is entirely absent from *Waikna*. For Olien, this apparent missed opportunity owes to the historical and ethnographic sources on the region that Squier plagiarized, many of which were 15-45 years old—concomitantly with the ethnogenesis of the creole identity.<sup>61</sup> Because his source texts failed to employ the ethnonym, which was only beginning to come into usage, Squier misrecognized people that would likely have identified as either Creoles or Miskitos as uniformly *zambos*. Upon arriving at the Mosquito Coast port of Bluefields:

I was amazed to find that, with few exceptions, they were all unmitigated negros, or Sambos (i. e. mixed negro and Indian). I had heard of the Mosquito shore as

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<sup>59</sup> While Pineda rightly challenges the "shipwreck theory" of Miskito ethnogenesis as reductive and overly reliant on biological determinism, he maintains the African origins of the Miskitos; *ibid.*, 34-35.

<sup>60</sup> Olien, "Were the Miskito Indians Black?," 46; Pineda, *Shipwrecked Identities*, 33.

<sup>61</sup> Olien, "Were the Miskito Indians Black?," 44-47.

occupied by the Mosquito Indians, but soon found that there were few if any, pure Indians on the entire coast. The miserable people who go by that name are, in reality, Sambos, having a considerable intermixture of trader blood from Jamaica, with which island the coast has its principal relations. (58-59)

At first, this misrecognition seems insignificant. After all, since Creole and Miskito largely designated the cultural affiliations and primary languages of the populations they describe, and Squier does detail the diverse languages and customs of the Mosquito Coast in both *Waikna* and *Notes on Central America: particularly the States of Honduras and San Salvador* (1855). But as Olien argues, such a misrecognition facilitated Squier's "Blackening" of the Miskitos, many of whom possessed African ancestry, however phenotypically pronounced or fractional. In portraying the Miskitos as predominantly Black, Squier strengthened the case for USAmerican intervention: the moral, cultural, agricultural, and economic stagnation of the Mosquito Coast owed not only to colonial mismanagement under British protection, but also to the preponderance of Blackness (which in the mainstream white USAmerican view denoted an incapacity for self-government or morality without white USAmerican guidance) that resulted from the British governance.

The Blackening of the Miskitos as a means of strategic dispossession crystallizes upon Bard's arrival in Bluefields, wherein he desires an audience with the Miskito King, but assumes the leader would make himself unavailable for an audience with the unknown artist. Instead, Bard takes coffee with Mr. Bell, an Englishman of preliminarily ambiguous albeit official station in the Mosquito capital. Between their first and second cups, a teenaged Black boy interrupts them; when he makes no impression on the white men, "the sloven youth got up, took his hat, and slowly walked down to the path to the river, where I afterward saw him washing his face in

the stream” (63). As the conversation between Bard and Bell unfolds, the artist learns the young man was washing his face in shame at being unrecognized. “Perhaps you are not aware,” Bell prompts his guest, with a snarky gesture toward the Black boy, “*that* is the king?” (63, original emphasis). To the surprise of the USAmerican and the relish of the Englishman, the dirty, unkempt, obsequious Black boy is none other than “the world-renowned monarch, ‘George William Clarence, King of all the Mosquitos’” (57).

This farcical moment of revelation, for Bard, illustrates perfectly the manipulative, disingenuous, and self-serving nature of the British “protectorate” over the Mosquito King: “I soon saw who was the real ‘king’ in Bluefields. ‘George,’ I think, had also a notion of his own on the subject, but was kept in such strict subordination that he never manifested it by words. I found him shy, but not without the elements of an ordinary English education, which he had received in England” (64). Bard’s overarching criticism takes aim at the British masquerading neoimperial claims to the Mosquito Coast as benevolent protections over the Miskitos, but it is George that takes the brunt of the artist’s disapprobation. With his mocking quotation marks around “king,” Bard betrays his belief that the Miskito Kingdom has no pretensions to calling itself a monarchy as the British claim it is; with his mocking quotations marks around “George,” Bard distances the Black boy from the Hanoverian Georges (I-IV) and impugns his pretensions to calling himself by the name of English royalty (63). Moreover, paired with the ironic, litotic description of George’s “ordinary English education”—a far cry from Belfond’s privileged European education in *The Slave Son* (1854), as seen in the previous chapter—these derisive quotation marks bracketing the name further and more severely question whether the Miskito monarch deserves any English name at all. To underscore this point, the artist figuratively translates the Miskito king into USAmerican slavery, speculating that he “would pass at the

South for ‘a likely young fellow, worth twelve hundred dollars as a body-servant’” (64). As a chattel slave, George’s name would have come from his master, which, in this analogy, would be the British colonial government in the Mosquito Coast. In Bard’s estimation, the British-Miskito dynamic is nothing short of a master-slave dynamic.<sup>62</sup>

The artist’s derision of George, as synecdoche for the Miskito Kingdom, thereby undermines the Miskitos’ claims to the Mosquito Coast and the British pretenses of protecting the Miskito sovereignty. As the master-slave analogy intimates, Bard’s assault on the integrity of these geopolitical claims operates within an explicitly racial logic. For instance, he describes George as “what an American would be apt to call, a ‘young darkey’” and “nothing more or less than a negro, with hardly a perceptible trace of Indian blood” (63, 64). If the Miskitos are descendants of shipwrecked African captives (as their king’s racial embodiment ostensibly evidences), then they are not “indigenous” to the region and therefore have no claim to the Mosquito Coast; in turn, the British have no basis for defending Miskito sovereignty over that land. Moreover, by suggesting that a USAmerican would *recognize* George as a “young darkey” and likely even sell him into chattel slavery as a body-servant, Bard implicitly argues that the USA understands a more “appropriate” tactical approach to the region: treating the Miskitos as if they are “nothing more or less” than common “negroes.” Whether Bard attributes the British failure to see Miskitos as he sees them as owing to ignorance or deception remains unclear. What is clear, however, is that by unveiling, in his estimation, the Miskitos as Black, Bard discredits the Miskito Kingdom and the British defense of the Mosquito Coast, while also framing the USA as the most cognitively and politically equipped nation for the governance of the region.

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<sup>62</sup> This scene also appeared with a short, citational preface as “King of the Mosquitos” in *The Daily South Carolinian* (23 August 1855).



### **His Man Antonio: Indigenous Homoerotics, Native Nationalism, and Manifest Destiny**

Pragmatically, adopting a pseudonym allowed Squier to blur the lines between science and fiction in *Waikna* without risking his scientific reputation or compromising the diplomatic détente between the USA and Great Britain. On the one hand, this strategy allowed Squier to write about Central American geographies largely and personally unfamiliar to him. Because his 1849 diplomatic post primarily stationed him on the west coast of Nicaragua, Squier spent a mere two weeks traversing Mosquito Shore, and the majority of his time there was spent in the port city of San Juan del Norte (Greytown), not the rural, jungle regions that comprise the narrative landscape of *Waikna*. On the other hand, this strategy also facilitated the full partitioning of his scientific persona from the often romantic observations and incredulous adventures of Bard, including the narrator's substantial meditations on the supernatural powers and paranormal phenomena he bears witness to throughout his travels.

In this section, I examine Bard's perceptions of the various Amerindian communities that populate the Mosquito Shore. Whereas Bard regards the Afro-descended peoples of the Caribbean and Central America as largely uniform and, more to the point, indistinct from their diasporic counterparts in the USA, he paints the various Native Americans he encounters throughout his travels with a much broader palate. Because his ethnographic gaze successfully incorporates Miskitos and *zambos* into an existing category (the USAmerican "negro"), his descriptions of these Afro-descended men and women belie his disdain for Blackness more broadly, a sentiment shared by the vast majority of his countrymen. Conversely, this same ethnographic gaze beholds the diverse Native American populations of the Mosquito Shore and Nicaragua with arresting fascination. He makes frequent and multilateral comparisons among

different tribes, detailing the idiosyncratic rituals, appearances, and cultures of each throughout his travels. Significantly, Bard regards the rituals of Amerindian culture, not the skepticism or disdain that post-Enlightenment thinkers typically approached “pre-modern” religious rites. Instead, he seems entranced by their performativity, persuaded by their believability, and infatuated with their seemingly supernatural power.

At the heart of these observations lies the reverence and appreciation for Amerindian culture for which many Squier apologists laud the ethnographer. To conflate Bard and Squier, however, is not only an intentional fallacy, but a distortion of the complex geopolitical and racial project undergirding Squier’s Central American corpus. Bard is not, ultimately, an avatar for Squier. His romantic meditations on Amerindian culture and his homoerotic relationship with his Amerindian guide, Antonio, do not (only) belie unconscious homosexual desires, nor do they suggest that Squier had any doubts about the inevitable consummation of Manifest Destiny. As a romantic, fictional complement to Squier’s anthropological studies of Central America, *Waikna* serves as a laboratory for the author to explore two main questions: 1) what are the epistemological limitations of holistic anthropology, ethnography, and naturalism, especially when these sciences confront the supernatural?; and 2) how can the scientific study of people who inhabit the regions that Manifest Destiny covets reconcile its sympathy for its subjects with the genocidal operations of USAmerican imperialism? I argue, in what follows, that *Waikna* delineates a careful distinction between atavistic, “semi-civilized” cultures like the Incas, Aztecs, and Mayans from the purportedly degenerate and savage Amerindian tribes that pose obstacles to USAmerican expansionism.

Bard first betrays his fascination with Amerindian culture aboard the *Prince Albert*, the vessel transporting him from Kingston to Bluefields, in his attention to “Antonio, the Indian boy, who cooked and pumped, and then pumped and cooked”:

Antonio attracted my interest from the first; and it was increased when I found that he spoke a little English, was perfect in Spanish, and withal could read in both languages. There was something mysterious in finding him among these uncouth negroes, with his relatively fair skin, intelligent eyes, and long, well-ordered black hair. He was like a lithe panther among lumbering bears. (26-27)

Bard’s ethnographic gaze here vibrates with homoerotic desire. Not only does the boy’s rhythmic cooking and pumping attract the artist’s interest, but Captain Ponto further entices Bard by creating an air of mystery around Antonio, who “was from the Yucatan, and had presented himself on board only the day previously,” and then “Captain Ponto indistinctly intimated that he had taken the boy solely on my account” (27). The same egocentrism that subtends the white supremacy and USAmerican exceptionalism manifest in Samuel’s ethnographic gaze also exacerbates his homoerotic desire for the racialized Other. That Antonio joined the voyage at the last minute and offered to work in exchange for his passage to Central America is a hardly unusual maritime occurrence, but it fuels Bard’s fantasy that the mysterious, young *yucateco* is present “solely on [his] account.” As the two grow “intimate” throughout the voyage, Bard eventually shared his drawings Antonio, who, in sharp contrast to the head-scratching Black creoles of Jamaica, “several times in glanced over the drawings” and “looked up, his face full of intelligence, as if about to speak” with “a cold, filmy mist settled over the clear eyes which had looked into mine” (28-29). Despite swearing off portrait paintings forever after rendering a portrait of his Black landlady in order to fund his voyage to Central America, Bard includes a

portrait of Antonio, though the prose literally bordering the embedded woodcut make no reference to his composing such a painting.

Figure 6.



ANTONIO.

Source: Samuel A. Bard, *Waikna, or Adventures on the Mosquito Coast* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1855), 28.

With the gentle curvature of his stance and the tropical flora framing the portrait, Antonio assumes a classically aesthetic posture that signals his easy incorporation into Euro-American artistic tropes. Moreover, his naked chest, bare feet, and dark skin are the only markers of his non-whiteness – his facial expression belies the insight and compassion that the narrator expounds upon in the adjacent prose, the subtle crane of his neck and half-smile perhaps bespeaking a seductive invitation to the artist. The portrait is the artist’s fantasy, however. Although the men have only encountered one another on the *Prince Albert*, a lush jungle setting provides the backdrop to Antonio’s casual posture, a far cry from his apparently constant “cooking and pumping” aboard the ship. Whether the fictional artist rendered such a portrait later in their travels, but included it here to complement his introduction to Antonio, it is impossible to say. For readers, though, such a potential temporal lag is inconsequential, as they encounter the

woodcut amid an account of the *Prince Albert's* voyage regardless. As a result, *Waikna* testifies to Antonio's capacity to appreciate and even emulate Enlightenment art, at the same time that the setting and erotics of this portrait restore him to an uncivilized, sylvan setting; it restores the "lithe panther" to his "natural" habitat.

In this simultaneous and muddled eroticization, orientalization, animalization, and humanization of Antonio, we can recognize the popular trope of the "noble savage." Like Crusoe and Friday, Duncan Heyward and Hawk-eye, and Ishmael and Queequeg before them, Samuel and Antonio form an ostensibly fraternal, overtly homoerotic bond that drives their adventures and the novel's plot. Not only does Samuel elevate Antonio above the "filthy, lazy negroes" of Kingston, the "uncouth negroes" of the *Prince Albert*, and the "miserable" *zambos* of Bluefields, but he also differentiates his companion from the Native Americans that populate the rural regions of the Mosquito Coast and operate largely outside of British authority.<sup>63</sup> After their reception in the town of Bluefields, the men venture into the interior with the assistance of young Amerindian guide that Samuel, within the space of a single page, variously identifies as a member of the Poya/Paya/Poyer tribe.<sup>64</sup> The journey invigorates Bard:

The Robinson Crusoe-ish feeling of my youth came back in all of its freshness; I had my own boat, and for companions a descendant of an aboriginal prince, the

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<sup>63</sup> The contrast between the noble savage and more barbaric, vicious, and uncivilized Native Americans was a popular trope in USAmerican fiction, most famously in the differentiation between Hawk-eye and Uncas in James Fennimore Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* (Philadelphia: H.C. Carey and I. Lea, 1826).

<sup>64</sup> Both Paya and Poyer refer to an Amerindian group now known as the Pech, who are indigenous to what is now Honduras; Poya refers to an entirely different indigenous group, a subpopulation of the Tehuelche people of Patagonia (Chile and Argentina). Although Bard consistently refers to this character as the "Poya boy" after the initial confusion, I refer to him as the "Paya boy" as a corrective to Squier's error.

possessor of a mysterious talisman, devotedly attached to me, half friend, half protector, and a second strange Indian, from some unknown interior, silent as the unwilling genii whom the powerful spell of Solyman kept in obedience to the weird necromancers of the East. (77-8)

Although Bard attributes a supernatural aura to both Antonio and the Paya boy (whose name the artist never cares to learn), the power dynamics in which their purported magic manifests bespeaks a telling difference. Antonio's supernatural powers stem from a "mysterious talisman," which previously augured the sinking of the *Prince Albert* and which was bequeathed to him from "an aboriginal prince." Not only does this gloss literalize the noble savage trope by portraying Antonio as descended from Amerindian nobility, but it also locates his mystical powers in an object outside himself (e.g. the talisman). Moreover, because Antonio utilized the talisman to save Bard, he proves that he was then and is now "devotedly attached to" the narrator. With his allegiances fixed in place, whatever supernatural powers Antonio possesses pose no threat to Bard and, therefore, become an object of fascination, instead of unease, for the artist. The Paya boy, by contrast, possesses supernatural powers not in an external source, but within himself. In an orientalizing simile, Bard imagines that the boy serves the Paya equivalent of the "weird necromancers of the East" and a tyrannical Solyman rather than the artist. Indeed, despite identifying the unnamed boy within a recognizable albeit muddled tribal affiliation, Bard regards him as a "strange Indian, from some unknown interior." Much like Miss Ophelia's assessment of Topsy in Chapter Two, this passage slips into the register of the uncanny. Bard can cognitively locate the obsequious, literate polyglot Antonio into the noble savage trope by assigning any supernatural powers he might possess to his enchanted talisman, but the silence and inscrutability of the Paya boy is so unnerving that his failure to perform a single supernatural

act notwithstanding, he is assumed to possess some dark, atavistic magical power. Neither a noble savage like Antonio nor a savage *indio bravo* (literally, “wild/ferocious Indian”) like the hostile tribes that the party will eventually encounter in the interior, the Paya boy is orientalized and mystified precisely because he defies the white, USAmerican gaze’s tropological imagination for Native Americans.

Antonio’s talisman not only becomes an object of fascination for the artist; Bard eventually begins to believe in its power. Immediately prior to their audience with Mr. Bell and the Miskito king, Antonio confides in Bard that “his heart had become lighter since he had reached this continent” and shows him the glowing talisman as evidence: “It emitted a pale light, which seemed to come from it in pulsations, or radiating circles. It may have been fancy, but if so, I am not prepared to say that all which we deem real is not a dream and a delusion!” (60). In this declaration of sincere belief, Bard firmly professes himself more inclined to believe that all reality is actually a dream before he would admit that the talisman’s radiance was a deception or illusion.

Antonio’s glowing talisman supersedes Bard’s hermeneutics of suspicion precisely because he associates it with the atavistic Mayan culture of the Yucatán rather than the “superstitions and habits” of the Miskitos, which are decidedly “African rather than American” (243). Put differently, the *creolized* culture of the Mosquito Coast is discounted as superstition precisely because of its syncretic incorporation of African rituals and religious beliefs. We see this differentiation most intensely in the contrast between two *Sukias* that the party encounters deep in the interior of the Mosquito Coast. *Sukias*, according to Bard’s account, are “usually women” who undertake the trials of the wilderness in order to commune with nature and “seal their compact with the mysterious powers which rule over earth and water, air and fire”; upon

the mastery of the elements, *Sukias* are regarded by the communities to which they return with “all the terrors which superstition has ever attached to those who seem to be exempt from the operations of natural laws” (242-243). Dismissing the indigenous cultural practices of the Mosquito Coast as mere “superstition” which only *seems* to exempt *Sukias* from the laws of nature, Bard betrays the ways in which race informs his understanding of mystical power.

We see this racialization in the case of the first *Sukia*, who presents herself among the “Sambo settlement” outside Sandy Bay Lagoon, where “the attempts at art” and the many pretensions to doing things in the “English fashion” were “melancholy failures” (218). Amid “the grossest and most shameless debauchery, such as I have never heard ascribed to the most bestial of savages,” Bard becomes deeply uneasy when he observes himself to be under the close surveillance of a wizened, emaciated, and haggard woman on the fringes of the community. Defying his own disavowal of portraiture yet again, the artist records a drawing of the grotesque *Sukia* for his readers.



Figure 7.



Source: Samuel A. Bard, *Waikna; or Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1855), 228.

Bard notes her “long and matted” hair, her “shriveled skin” which “adhere[d] like that of a mummy to her bones,” her fingernails “like the claw of some unclean bird,” and her eyes, “bloodshot, but bright an intense... constantly fixed upon me like those of some wild beast on its prey” (228, 229). The bestial language applied to the *Sukia* codes her as a woman of African descent.

Similar to Squier’s detection of “Indian blood” among men and women passing for Spanish *criollos* in Nicaragua, Bard’s detection of Blackness in this particular *Sukia* emanates from his perception of non-physiognomic markers of race. Despite the fact that he records none of the traditional phenotypical markers of African ancestry in the above portrait and accompanying physical description, Bard develops the impression of her Blackness by contextualizing her within the community at Sandy Bay. He learns from Antonio, for instance, that the particular powers assigned to *Sukias* include defying “the poison of snakes, and the effects of fire,” and that, as medicine women, their preferred treatment methods include “a

savage taste for blood, and the cutting and scarification of the body” (232, 243). While the allusions to anthropophagia and scarification could have signified a diverse range of non-European religious practices (e.g. the cannibal Queequeg’s elaborate tattoos in *Moby-Dick*), for nineteenth-century readers as for today’s readers, mastery over serpents held strong associations with syncretic Black religious practices in the USAmerican South and Caribbean. Additionally, the *Sukia* lives among men and women that Bard refers to as “Sambos,” a conflation of the Spanish ethnonym *zambo* with its English homophone *Sambo*. Bard treats the terms as cognates, though they are far from it: *zambo* refers to men and women of mixed African and Amerindian ancestry, while *Sambo* operates as an anti-Black racial epithet that typically emphasizes exaggerated Black phenotypes and later came to name the “happy slave” stereotype prominent in minstrel shows.<sup>65</sup> In this simple slippage through translation, Bard cognizes the cognation. By regarding the terms as cognates, he renders them ontologically coextensive; they are assumed to name the same thing in different languages and then made to do so in practice. In this way the African ancestry of the *zambos* at Sandy Bay becomes the exaggerated Blackness of the USAmerican *Sambo*. As a result, readers develop the distinct impression of the *Sukia*’s Blackness even though her racial identity remains ambiguous; as the section title atop one of the novel’s pages suggests, she is “A Witch in Ebony” (239).

Bard’s uneasiness with the Black(ened) *Sukia*’s surveillance apparently finds merit. Shortly into the party’s stay in the village, they learn that the *Sukia* has condemned the outsiders to death, a valid threat considering her “commands were always implicitly obeyed by the superstitious Sambos” and that she had already been exiled from Cape Gracias á Dios for her

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<sup>65</sup> For more on the minstrel stereotype of *Sambo*, see Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise and Demise of an American Jester* (New York: Oxford UP, 1986).

“complicity in the murder of a couple of Englishmen” (230, 231). After all, her supernatural powers amount to nothing more than a capacity to manipulate her followers into committing base murders for political gain. As the men flee from Sandy Bay, Antonio informs Bard that “[a]nother reason for her departure had been the advent of a more powerful and less malignant *Sukia* woman, who, he assured [the artist] was gifted with prophecy, and a knowledge of things past and to come” (231). Intrigued, Bard accompanies his man Antonio and the Paya boy in search of the *Sukia* known as Hoxam-Bal, which Antonio translates to “the Mother of the Tigers” (242).

Described as a more powerful *Sukia* than the haggard *zamba* woman of Sandy Bay, the Mother of the Tigers resides outside Cape Gracias á Dios in a sanctuary amid ancient ruins of Amerindian civilization. Bard explicitly compares the “ruined structures” and “strange figures” carved into the enormous stones as ““having a close resemblance, if not an absolute identity, with those which have become familiarized to us by the pencil of [Frederick] Catherwood” (258, 259). Catherwood, an artist and architect who had accompanied Squier’s diplomatic predecessor John L. Stephens on his voyages throughout Mesoamerica, had provided illustrations of predominantly Mayan ruins for Stephens’s influential *Incidents of Travel in Central America, Chiapas and Yucatán* (1841). Immediately, then, readers of *Waikna* sets the Mother of the Tigers apart from the other *Sukias*. In addition to commanding more atavistic, potent, and prophetic powers than her counterparts at Sandy Bay and Cape Gracias á Dios, Hoxam-Bal has a Mayan name and lives among ruins, prompting readers to associate her more strongly with “pre-historic” Mayan culture rather than the syncretic African cultural backgrounds attributed to other *Sukias*.

The novel continues to bear out this contrast in its physical descriptions of Hoxam-Bal. Upon his first impression of her, Bard admits his astonishment at her disarming and ingenuous character. “I had expected to see a bold pretender to supernatural powers,” he recalls, “whose first efforts would be directed to work upon the imaginations of her visitors, and was surprised to find the ‘Mother of the Tigers’ was after all only a shy and timid Indian girl” (255).

Figure 8.



“THE MOTHER OF THE TIGERS.”

Source: Samuel A. Bard, *Waikna; or Adventures on the Mosquito Shore* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1855), 256.

An exoticized beauty, Hoxam-Bal stands in stark contrast to the grotesque *Sukia* of Sandy Bay, though the visual resonances between the two depictions make comparison inevitable. The exhausted hunching and sagging breasts of the elderly, enervated *Sukia* at Sandy Bay have been replaced with the gently curving hips of Hoxam-Bal, who stands erect, her youthful figure and naked breasts now a focal point of the staged portrait. Each woman holds a stick in her hands, the former using a crudely trimmed tree branch in order to support the weight of her time-worn

posture, and the latter standing with a neatly cropped, perfectly straight staff as an aesthetic accessory; combined with replacing the former's plain white skirt with the latter's rustically elegant leopard-skin attire, the stick appears as a scepter that complements Hoxam-Bal's regal air. Much like Bard's earlier individuation of Antonio (as a *yucateco*) from the Miskitos, Bard's eroticization of Hoxam-Bal betrays both his fetishization of "pure" Amerindian culture and his anti-Black disdain for syncretic African cultures; and much like Bard's genuine belief in the magic of Antonio's talisman, he regards the mystical powers of Hoxam-Bal with faith and reverence. Following a spectacular ceremony featuring inexplicable vibrations and noises that harmonize together, Bard initiates a section break on the page and launches into an apologia for the supernatural content of his narrative and defends the sincerity of his belief in what witnessed (257).

The corollaries between Antonio and Hoxam-Bal do not end here. We learn later that this is because they are both descendants of the Mayans, the significance of which *Waikna* unveils in its strange ending. Before even meeting Hoxam-Bal, Bard is struck by a moment that Antonio shares with one of the *Sukia*'s commissaries, an older woman at Cape Gracias A Dios who "[i]n bearing and dress... differed much from the rest of the people" (253). Bard observes that she and Antonio, "exchanged a glance as if of recognition, and spoke a few hurried and, to us, unintelligible words" (253). Combined with their capacity to speak in a shared language that is foreign to both the linguistically nimble artist and the Paya boy, Antonio and this messenger betray a much deeper and more transcendent than mere personal recognition. When Antonio finally confronts the Mother of the Tigers, a similar moment transpires: "They gazed at each other in silence, then exchanged a rapid signal and a single word" (256). Once more inscrutable to Bard, this "exchange" (a metaphor common to both descriptions) is more distant than the

previous, but nevertheless communicates a profound recognition between Antonio and the *Sukia*, the nature of which we learn in Bard's apologia:

It is true, I was somewhat puzzled, I will not say impressed, with the perfect understanding, or relationship, which seemed to exist between the *Sukia* and Antonio. This relationship, however, was fully explained in the sequel. Among the ruling and the priestly classes of the semi-civilized nations of America, there has always existed a mysterious bond, or secret organization, which all the disasters to which they have been subjected, have not destroyed. It is to its present existence that we may attribute those simultaneous movements of the aborigines of Mexico, Central America, and Peru, which have, more than once, threatened the complete subversion of the Spanish power. 258

In the same way that, according to Wilson Moses, the shared oppression of racial slavery contributed to "a sense of common experience and identity" that would provide the basis of Black nationalism, the shared experiences of deracination, subjugation, and genocide provide, according to Bard, the basis for a Native nationalism among the Amerindian peoples of Mexico, Central America, and Peru. Bard's theorization of a transnational anticolonial revolution among the Native Americans and his observation of these collaborative rebellions in practice are no doubt a radical and surprising revelation in the novel, but his circumscription of this revolution to everywhere south of the Rio Grande is revealing. Bard's delineation of Native nationalism as coextensive with the geographies of Spanish colonialism notably excludes Amerindians throughout what would become the USA and Canada – Anglo America.

The reasons for defining the limits of Native nationalism in this manner are ideologically consistent with white (Anglo-Saxon) USAmerican exceptionalism: not only does this

differentiation of Native Americans in Spanish America suggest that their transnational revolution responded to the excessive oppression that the Black Legend ascribes to Spanish colonialism, but it also confirms the logic of Manifest Destiny, which authorized the USAmerican deracination and destruction of Native American populations through westward expansion. Furthermore, though Bard asserts outright that Native outrage and the attempted subversion of Spanish colonialism are justified, he also regards these “movements” patronizingly. Despite the fact that the collaboration between “the ruling and the priestly classes” is ubiquitous throughout political history and persisted in many of the political arenas that defined the novel’s present, Bard describes such collaborations as a “mysterious bond” endemic to the “semi-civilized nations of America.” Again, the logic of USAmerican exceptionalism prevails: the separation of church and state forms a central tenet of USAmerican democratic republicanism and thereby distinguishes the USAmerican nation-state from purportedly “less” and “semi” civilized, modern nations. For the time being, Manifest Destiny and a transnational Native American revolution south of the Rio Grande could remain ideologically harmonious. The anticolonial removal Spanish (and British) colonial governance in Central and South America would remove the primary obstacle to the USA managing the geographical, natural, and economic resources of the Americas as it pleased. A successful anticolonial revolution would result in Native sovereignty and would, in turn, facilitate USAmerican paternalism in those regions.

The potential harmoniousness of these two geopolitical movements actually manifests at the novel’s conclusion. After a lengthy journey along the Patuca River (in what is now Honduras), the Poyer boy departs the group suddenly and without warning, leaving the artist anxious that Antonio will soon leave him as well. Now that the men have only each other,

Antonio finally reveals the secret which he has been withholding from Bard throughout the novel: he is the descendant of the original Mayan monarch, whom he calls *Baalam Votan*, and his mission is to lead “not only the Indians of Yucatan and of Central America, but even those of Mexico and Peru, in one grand and terrible uprising against the Spanish dominion. (331).<sup>66</sup> Bard also learns that the strange moments of recognition between Antonio and Hoxam-Bal, “the seeress of the river Bocay,” owed to the fact they were both Mayan missionaries that had “ventured afar from the homes of their people, and among distant and alien tribes, became the propagandists of the meditated Revenge!” (331). Antonio, now set to return to the Yucatán and assume a seat of power in the nascent revolution, invites Bard to accompany him. The artist, disenchanted with “the dull, unsympathizing heart of the crowded city” and the “follies and vices of artificial life” obliges, and “plunged into the untracked wilderness, with no other friend or guide” (327, 328, 332). Although Bard frames his decision in the terms of a Thoreauvian communal with “the grand arcanum of Nature,” he accepts Antonio’s invitation with full knowledge of the revolutionary project upon which they are embarking. In the collaboration of the USAmerican artist and the Mayan monarch, we see how Manifest Destiny, the Monroe Doctrine, and Native American sovereignty over the lands south of the USA could operate simultaneously, for the time being. Indeed, the symbiotic relationship between Bard and Antonio

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<sup>66</sup> Baalam Votan does not correspond directly to any historical figure, though there are a number of references to this figure in works published after *Waikna* in the mid-nineteenth century. According to the novel, “*Baalam*, in the language of Yucatan, signifies *Tiger*, and *Votan* is understood to denote *Heart*. The Maya tradition is, that Baalam Votan, the Tiger-Heart, led the fathers of the Mayas to Yucatan, from a distant country. He is conspicuously figured in the ruined temples around the Lake of Itza, as well as at Chichen and Palenque” (329). Most likely, Baalam Votan is an amalgamation of the *Chilam Balam*, a collection of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Mayan writings detailing the history of that civilization, and Three Votan, a ruler of the Mayans in the late post-classic period.



portends how the USA and Native Americans might collaborate in order to expel non-American peoples (e.g. the Spanish and eventually the British).

There is another way of understanding *Waikna*'s conclusion, however, and at this juncture, it merits noting that much of what Bard learns of Native American culture throughout the novel comes from a mixture of observation and Antonio's instruction. Everything the narrator discovers about *Sukias*, in general, and about the Mother of the Tigers, in particular, he learns directly from Antonio. With the knowledge that Antonio and Hoxam-Bal are both propagandists (in Bard's parlance) of the Native Nationalist revolution, we should understand communication in a language undiscernible to the artist (or the Poyer boy) differently; while Bard insists that "nothing occurred during our visit" with the Mother of the Tigers "which appeared to have been designed for effect," the revelation of collaboration between Hoxam-Bal and Antonio suggests otherwise. Indeed, the sincerity of Bard's beliefs in Antonio's talisman and the supernatural, clairvoyant powers of Hoxam-Bal contributes directly the artist's decision to join the revolution: "never did a suspicion or a doubt," he reflects, "darken for an instant my confidence, or impair my faith in the loyal heart of Antonio Chul — once the mild-eyed Indian boy, but now the dreaded chieftain and victorious leader of the unrelenting Itzaes of Yucatan!" (332). The transformation of Antonio in the artist's eyes is truly remarkable and his earnest belief in the tremendous powers of the Mayans prompts the inversion of what has heretofore been a stereotypical white-adventurer/ethnic sidekick trope. "I grasped his hand and swore, by a name holier than that of Votan, to justify a friendship so unwavering by a faith as boundless as his own" (332). While Bard maintains his Christianity, his vow of loyalty to Antonio reciprocates the vow that Antonio made to him following the shipwreck that bound them together; now he, not Antonio, becomes the faithful servant.

Much like readers of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* have long questioned the extent to which Jim was *only* a loyal slave to Huck, we might also read Antonio as a kind of trickster who understands the need to rely on the authorizing figure of whiteness in order to traverse the landscape unquestioned and undetained. By attaching himself to Bard as a traveling companion, Antonio takes advantage of the ease with which Bard, as a white USAmerican, moves through the Mosquito Coast and he can disseminate his revolutionary message to the Amerindians throughout that region without his peregrinations inciting suspicion. In Antonio's obsequious dedication to Bard, we witness the kind of Native "unsettlement" that Anna Brickhouse details in her speculative reading of how the indigenous men that Christopher Columbus held captive as interpreters who "actively dispatched" a number of "motivated mistranslations" to their captor; Columbus, cognitively unable to imagine their disloyalty or deception, nevertheless "regarded [them] as his to control" and assumed their translations to be just as faithful (93). Antonio's performative loyalty to (which does not preclude affection for) the itinerant, directionless artist facilitates his own determination of an itinerary while also cloaking his subversive movements throughout the region in the veil of authorizing whiteness. All the while, Bard, his fetishization of "pure" Amerindian culture notwithstanding, is a white supremacist who can only conceptualize his man Antonio as a faithful servant; Antonio's obfuscation of his ulterior motives becomes much easier under the pathological underestimation of the racist white gaze.

Notably, Antonio is not the only Amerindian to deceive Bard over the course of the novel. When the Poyer boy departs the party without announcing his intentions to do so and without saying goodbye to the men he has been accompanying for several weeks, Bard is confused and dismayed: "I strained my eyes to penetrate the darkness, if only to catch one

glimpse of my Poyer boy; and that I wept when I turned back to the village” (315). The intensely emotional response of the artist indexes the abruptness of the Poyer boy’s departure as much as Bard’s sadness at losing a cherished possession (“*my Poyer boy*”), but his disappearance is hardly as unexpected as the artist imagines. He absconds only a week after the party passed through a Poyer village, and during that week, the party had been accompanied by several additional Poyers. It seems obvious enough that the Poyer boy returned to his home and his tribe. This return signifies differently, however, if we reexamine the circumstances under which Bard initially “procur[ed] the additional services of young Poyas or Paya Indian, who had been left from a trading schooner” (77). Given the persistence of slavery in Brazil and Cuba, the prominence of the intra-Caribbean slave trade, and the perceived Blackness of many of the Amerindians along the Mosquito Coast, it is entirely possible that the Poyer boy had been sold into slavery. It seems far more likely that the Poyer boy escaped from the “trading schooner” than was left behind by it, and it is entirely possible that that ship’s trade involved illegal human trafficking. Furthermore, Bard’s consistent, possessive references to the Poyer boy and the language of “procuring” him intimate that even if the Poyer was not enslaved in the traditional sense, he was almost certainly an unfree servant. Much like we can understand Topsy as brokering her return to Africa in the previous chapter, we can imagine the Poyer boy exchanging his services as a guide to Bard in order to broker his escape from slavery and his return to his village. As a result, the Poyer boy’s decision to slip away without notice signifies less an attempt to spare the sensitive artist’s feelings by subjecting him to a tearful departure and more a pre-meditated escape from, at best, coerced servitude, and, at worst, proper slavery.

Combined with Antonio’s tactical deceptions, the Poyer boy’s manipulations of Bard once more index how the cognitive limits of the white anthropological gaze restrict the

USAmerican artist's capacity to imagine the possible motivations and actions of non-white people beyond the stereotypes he maps onto them. It is precisely this failure of imagination that would allow readers to understand the transnational Amerindian revolution that Antonio is beginning to organize as in any way compatible with the USAmerican notion of Manifest Destiny. Readers develop this impression because Bard develops this impression and Bard, now the sidekick to "the dreaded chieftain and victorious leader of the unrelenting Itzaes of Yucatan," comes to understand these geopolitical ideologies as potentially cooperative because that is exactly what Antonio wants him to believe:

He told me of the ancient greatness of his people, when the race of Baalam Votan reigned over the Peninsula of Yucatan, and sent the missionaries of their religion to redeem the savage nations which surrounded them, even to the country of the Huastecas, on the river of Panuco. It was then, he said, that the Lord of Life smiled on the earth; then the ears of maize were many times larger than now, the trees were loaded with unfailing supplies of fruit, and bloomed with perennial flowers ; the cotton grew of many colors ; and, although men died, their spirits walked the earth, and held familiar converse with the children of the Itzaes. (329)

Antonio's gloss on the atavistic political ethos of the Mayans frames it in the familiar imperial, providential, and exceptionalist register in which Anglo USAmerican understood their own Manifest Destiny. Antonio describes how "the Lord of Life smiled on the earth" and rewarded "the race of Baalam Votan" for proselytizing the "savage nations" adjacent to their own. Put differently, Antonio rehearses for Bard a mythology in which his own race has been divinely promised sovereignty over a vast majority of the Americas because of their racial exceptionalism, the authenticity of their religion, and their capacity to implement broadly an

effective, unique form of government – this is exactly the mythology of Manifest Destiny. Moreover, Antonio knows that Bard will buy this narrative: the artist regards *yucatecos* like Antonio and Hoxam-Bal as racially superior to the many other Amerindian tribes he encounters; he regards their religious practices with reverence, awe, and a suspension of disbelief, while deriding similar practices among the Miskitos as mere “superstitions”; and although Bard learns comparatively little about Mayan governmentality, the transformation of Antonio from a “mild-eyed Indian boy” into “the dreaded chieftain and victorious leader” of an entire empire in the artist’s eyes takes little more than Antonio rehearsing a monarchical genealogy that culminates with his impending ascension to the Mayan throne of his ancestors.

Moreover, it is Antonio who is careful to restrict the purview of the transnational Amerindian revolution to Mexico, Central America, and Peru. In part, this preserves the unity, in Bard’s eyes, of the “pure,” ancient Amerindian cultures (the Aztecs, the Mayans, and the Incas, respectively). With regards to the compatibility of this revolution with Manifest Destiny though, Antonio cleverly suggests the current political boundaries of the Southern USA to be the most northwardly ambitious boundaries of his anticolonial revolution. Both Bard and Antonio, however, knew as well as any modern reader that the political boundary dividing the United States of America from the United States of Mexico is porous and artificial, delineating a political speech-act more than a meaningful division of peoples, histories, and cultures; and the constructedness and inconsistency of The Border was perhaps never more obvious than it had become during the decade preceding the publication of *Waikna*. The only fantasy more far-fetched than The Border’s capacity to divide neatly one nation-state from another would have been the idea that The Border would also delimit the geographical ambit of USAmerican Manifest Destiny or the Mayan Manifest Destiny that Antonio describes. The US- Mexico border

had recently crossed thousands of Mexican citizens (many of whom were Native Americans and *mestizos*) with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) and the Gadsden Purchase (1853-1854), who were now residents (though decidedly not citizens) of the USA. It seems preposterous to suggest that the many Mexican Amerindians who were eager to join Antonio's revolution but whose lands were now within the political boundaries of the USA would simply abandon their anticolonial convictions. For these Amerindian freedom fighters, one settler-colonial government had simply displaced another and, as they would realize over the decades, the US American government was much less interested in assimilation than its Mexican predecessor. More likely, these Amerindians would reorient their desire for anticolonial vengeance toward their current colonizers (the United States of America). Given that Antonio's articulation of Native Nationalism emanates from a shared history of colonial oppression and genocide, and given the substantial anticolonial Mexican Amerindian community now in the USA, it seems inevitable that Antonio's transnational revolution would eventually expand north of the Rio Grande and into the western plains.

Despite its best efforts to contain the anticolonial mission of Native Nationalism within a transamerican project directed toward the complete expulsion of the Spanish (and, by implication, the British and French), *Waikna* poses a problem: what happens when the geopolitical ambitions and white supremacy of Manifest Destiny collide with the justified efforts of Amerindians to contest colonial domination? This problem was particularly acute for Squier, who no doubt recognized the contradictory impulses of his scientific approaches to Native American culture. On the one hand, his studies betrayed a deep, sincere reverence for Native Americans. His legitimation of their religious rituals, governments, and languages cut sharply against the beliefs of many of his peers, who regarded the First Nations of the Americas as

uniformly savage. On the other hand, many of these same studies also furthered ethnological arguments that upheld the epistemological of white supremacy and, moreover, justified, even facilitated the dispossession of Native American lands and racial genocide of the same populations he revered. *Waikna* ultimately offers no conclusion to this problem. Instead, it concludes abruptly, leaving readers to ruminate on the genocidal implications of Manifest Destiny's geopolitical ambitions.

## **Conclusion**

Squier's pseudonym "Samuel A. Bard," might also read as "Samuel, a bard." In the Bible, Samuel is a prophet who straddled two eras of governmentality, transitioning Israel from the dominion of judges (e.g. his sons, who were failures) to the dominion of kings (Saul and then David). Understanding himself as the "Samuel" of Nicaragua, "Squier the Seer" conceptualized *Waikna* as a gospel that positions the Mosquito Coast in flux between its current state of government (a loose confederation of isolated, regional authorities and tribes) and a more "divine" state of government (consolidated state power under the paternal guidance or direct governance of the USA). For Squier, the providential rhetoric of Manifest Destiny provided a solution, and the romantic, prophetic plot of *Waikna* harmonizes sonorously with his scientific, ethnological study, *Nicaragua*. As two sides of the same imperialist coin, these texts ask readers to consider both the advantages and consequences of USAmerican economic and infrastructural impositions onto Nicaragua.

By approaching these distinct but related projects through the genres of ethnographic study and scientific travelogue respectively, Squier attempts to partition his scientific, diplomatic author-persona in *Nicaragua* from Bard's romantic adventures and amateur anthropology in

*Waikna*. Squier attempts to differentiate his scientific labors from his speculative, fictional writings. The problem was that Squier's anonymity as the author of *Waikna* was short lived. Despite his best efforts to disavow authorship, including reviewing the novel for *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in September 1855, Squier was outed by a reviewer at the *London Times* in August 1856.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, the review grapples with the cognitive dissonance of a serious anthropologist writing adventure fiction:

Imaginary tales have not been rare of late; but whether these are imaginary or not, in whole or in part, they are unusually amusing. On their first appearance they were published as the production of one Samuel A. Bard, but they are now the acknowledged work of Mr. Squiers, [sic] who as the United States Chargé d'Affaires for Nicaragua obtained some rough materials for the improvement by his Bardic invention... It is alleged that he accomplished this task in consequence of a bet, and that his appearance in artist's costume is due to one of those freaks which almost bespeak the artist in reality.<sup>68</sup>

For *The Times* as for many readers of *Waikna* in the USA and England, Squier's artistic alter-ego "improved" the "rough materials" of the anthropologist's ethnological observations in his scientific writings. Thus, while early readers encountered *Waikna* as the autobiographical travel narrative of an artist who recounted and illustrated his first-hand experiences in Nicaragua, later readers encountered *Waikna* as an embellishment to the scientific writings of a highly regarded anthropologist. Whether Squier's attempts to compartmentalize his novelistic/artistic persona

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<sup>67</sup> Although the review is unsigned, Squier's biographer, Charles Stansifer, attributes "Something about the Mosquitos," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* Sep. 1855, 456-66 to Squier ("The Central American Career of E. George Squier," 219).

<sup>68</sup> "*Waikna*," *The Times*, 16 August 1856, 7.



from his scientific persona owed to a lost bet or a conscious self-distancing remains uncertain. It is clear, however, that this barrier quickly dissolved, as the genres of science, adventure, fact, and fiction all became subsumed under the heading of “Squier’s writings.” This is to say that although many of the incidents that constitute *Waikna*’s adventurous plot were likely regarded as “imaginary” in *The Times*’s parlance, the extensive sketches of “the Mosquito people and scenery” that form the various intermissions between suspenseful almost-confrontations and daring escapes were regarded as factual findings that “increase our acquaintance” with Nicaraguan culture. Moreover, once readers understood *Waikna* to be part-fact, part-fiction, many felt authorized to attribute the anti-Black portraits of Miskitos to the realm of science, while relegating Squier’s imagined Native Nationalist Revolution to the realm of fancy.

## AFTERWORD

As I prepared to submit this dissertation to the Vanderbilt Graduate School in the summer of 2016, a troubling local news story began to ripple out to national news sources. In Polk County, Tennessee, a mere three hours from the trendy East Nashville coffee shop in which I was encamped composing this afterword, an independent congressional candidate named Rick Tyler had purchased a highway billboard to announce his campaign:

Figure 9.



Source: Rick Tyler for Congress, “Make America White Again,” accessed 28 June 2016, <http://ricktylerforcongress.com/2016/06/07/the-billboard-strategy/>

The advertisement displays four panels, featuring scenes of Puritan settlers triumphantly expressing gratitude to God for their survival in the New World, a white-haired, white-skinned revolutionary-era soldier kneeling to pray beside his horse, a young blond woman bowing her head in prayer beside a west-bound wagon, and a modern family of light-skinned, light-eyed, blond people, grinning ear to ear, their own whiteness amplified by the sunshine, as if bestowed by God himself. These panels both visually evidence and spatially frame the campaign’s call to

arms, “Make America White Again.” They collaboratively testify to the inherent, unchanging whiteness and Christianity endemic and essential to the USA.

To call the billboard it a “controversy” would be disingenuous, as the public response was both swift and uniform. USAmerican commentators from across the political spectrum were vehement in their condemnations of Tyler’s advertisement, denouncing its bold and uncensored display of racism, xenophobia, and white nationalism. Many also noted that the slogan was a clear riff on presumptive Republican presidential nominee, hotel magnate, and reality television star Donald J. Trump’s own campaign slogan, “Make America Great Again,” itself a riff on Ronald Reagan’s 1980 campaign slogan, “Let’s Make America Great Again.” Tyler himself acknowledges as much on website. Thus, while some news outlets like local ABC News affiliate WTVC were eager to reassure viewers and readers that Tyler was a marginal candidate expressing marginal views (“he ran for the same office in 2014, receiving 5,579 votes, or 0.4 percent of the total votes cast”), others took a longer, more incisive view of how much overt bigotry manifested.<sup>1</sup> Lindsey Bever at *The Washington Post* contextualized Tyler’s overt bigotry not only within the fiery, nativist rhetoric of the Trump campaign, but also in the quotidian fear-mongering of Fox News talking heads such as Anne Coulter, whose *¡Adios, America!: The Left’s Plan to Turn our Country into a Third World Hellhole* (2015) the Tyler campaign cites directly. Tyler claims that “the overhaul of America’s immigration law in the 1960’s [sic],” that Coulter derides in her book, “has placed us on an inevitable course of demise and destruction,” adding ominously that “[w]ithout [the white American super majority’s] expedited restoration[,] little

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<sup>1</sup> “‘Make America White Again’: Tenn. congressional candidate's billboard ignites uproar,” *News Channel 9 ABC*, June 22, 2016, accessed June 28, 2016, <http://newschannel9.com/news/local/congressional-candidates-controversial-billboard-has-polk-county-abuzz>

hope remains for the nation as a whole.”<sup>2</sup> As so many USAmerican citizens and residents know all too well, the hateful, fearful white nationalism expressed so unapologetically in Tyler’s billboard is hardly as marginal as the media’s unequivocal, enthusiastic disavowal of those views would suggest.

*The Race for America* provides historical, literary, and political context for the assumptions undergirding Tyler’s troubling campaign slogan, which, to be clear, only received such unambiguous disparagement because it so aggressively and plainly surfaced the submerged racist, xenophobic, and white nationalist undercurrents of USAmerican culture that the Trump campaign had emboldened. Put differently, *The Race for America* explains how Tyler, in 2016, could make the claim that the USA had been “white” and that God intended that nation to remain so. The panels of the billboard narrate an all too familiar and all too white-washed narrative of USAmerican nationalist triumph: the courageous colonization of the New World eliding how genocide and chattel slavery made it possible, the often violent hegemony of Christianity reframed as religious freedom and moral righteousness, and a pious, westward-bound white woman (an avatar for Lady Liberty) standing in for the bloody deracination and imperial conquest of western North America. The implied continuity between the lily-white Puritans in the top left panel and the lily-white suburbanites in the bottom right panel narrates the unchallenged supremacy of a white race throughout USAmerican history, a supremacy that Tyler and many others imagine to be suddenly at risk amid a global immigration crisis and the changing demographic composition of the USA.

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<sup>2</sup> Lindsey Bever, “‘Make America White Again’: A politician’s billboard ignites uproar,” *The Washington Post*, June 23, 2016, accessed June 28, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/06/23/make-america-white-again-a-politicians-billboard-ignites-uproar/>; “Rick Tyler for Congress: The Billboard Strategy,” accessed June 28, 2016, <http://ricktylerforcongress.com/2016/06/07/the-billboard-strategy/>.

Tyler’s fantastical hearkening for “the ‘Leave it to Beaver, Ozzie and Harriet, Mayberry’ of old” and “that Norman Rockwell America” exemplifies the kind of thinking that characterizes much contemporary, originalist, conservative political discourse.<sup>3</sup> In her critique of the Tea Party’s reliance on similar rhetoric, Jill Lepore argues that such logic and the ideology behind it rely on the idea that “time is an illusion. Either we’re there, two hundred years ago, or [the Founding Fathers are] here among us.”<sup>4</sup> For Tyler, the Beavers, Nelsons, and Taylors of the 1950s are indeed present today, barricading themselves in suburban bunkers, living in fear of undocumented valedictorians, civil rights protestors, and domestic terrorists targeting people of color (Dylan Roof) and the LGBTQ community (Omar Mateen).<sup>5</sup> They are afraid for their white lives. Such a return to the 1950s or such a present-ing of the 1950s in the twenty-first century is only possible through what Lepore calls a kind of *historical fundamentalism*, in which “a particular and quite narrowly defined past” becomes sacred and that any “ambiguity, self-doubt, and introspection” regarding the coherency of that history becomes blasphemous.<sup>6</sup> To long for the post-World War II years of USAmerican “whiteness”—or as Trump more subtly terms it, “greatness”—is to celebrate a moment that never existed. Moreover, it is to overlook the past 70

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<sup>3</sup> Facebook, Inc. “Rick Tyler’s *Facebook* page,” accessed June 28, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/ricktylerforcongress/posts/490961574442251>.

<sup>4</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party’s Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2011), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Katie Rogers, “2 Valedictorians in Texas Declare Undocumented Status, and Outrage Ensues,” *The New York Times*, June 10, 2016, accessed June 28, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/11/us/2-valedictorians-in-texas-declare-undocumented-status-and-outrage-ensues.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/11/us/2-valedictorians-in-texas-declare-undocumented-status-and-outrage-ensues.html?_r=0) Notably, Pulse, the nightclub where Mateen murdered 49 men and women, was also a Latinx nightclub.

<sup>6</sup> Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes*, 16, 15.

years of USAmerican foreign policy, USAmerican “whiteness,” and USAmerica “greatness,” which have created the current demographic shifts and global crises that Tyler and his ilk would attribute to external forces. It is an antihistorical attempt to rescript decades of the USA manipulating foreign economies, funding coups to depose leaders who oppose the USA’s economic will, and installing oppressive regimes throughout Latin America, the Caribbean, and the Middle East resulting in refugee families fleeing to the USA from brutal USA-sponsored dictators.

But as *The Race for America* makes clear, such white anxieties and fantasies are hardly unique to the present moment. Tyler longs for the USA of the 1850s much more so than the 1950s. While he claims that the contemporary immigration crisis is the handiwork of “cunning globalist/Marxist social engineers” who have conspired and “succeeded in destroying that great bulwark against statist tyranny...the white American super majority,” the rapid expansion and ever-shifting borders of USAmerican Empire in the mid-nineteenth century spawned similar concerns among white USAmericans.<sup>7</sup> It is no accident, for instance, that Tyler’s Facebook press release following the blowback against his billboard invokes the racial mythology of Manifest Destiny, declaring that “[t]he Caucasian race has been inordinately blessed and favored by the God of scripture... Western Christian civilization evolved in the ensuing centuries leading to the eventual rise of our beloved America of yesteryear.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Tyler’s alarmist rhetoric echoes the concerns of scientific racialists who feared the dilution and enervation of the Anglo-Saxon race in the mid-nineteenth century through “miscegenation.” Indeed, another proposed billboard on his website adapts the lyrics to a well-known 1978 Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson duet:

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<sup>7</sup> “Rick Tyler for Congress: The Billboard Strategy.”

<sup>8</sup> “Rick Tyler’s Facebook page.”

“Mamas Don’t Let Your Babies Grow up to be Miscegenators,” it urges. The interweaving of classic country music and angsty, hateful white supremacy claims both as integral components of Tennessee, and indeed USAmerican, history.

As I have shown throughout this study, discourses of racial identity and racial nationalism have a long history of serving political programs for imperialism, expansion, expulsion, segregation, migration, and genocide. In the mid-nineteenth century, the unprecedented migratory flows of African Americans throughout the hemisphere catalyzed a surge in discourses on the relationship between race and nation, political borders and ethnic distinctions. By and large, these conversations normalized the idea that the American hemisphere was supposed to be a “white” geography, rendering visible the linkages between different, transnational veins of white supremacy throughout the circum-Caribbean region. While many white supremacists leveraged these theories to champion political agendas that would exclude, disenfranchise, or deport people of color, many African Americans also took up these same discourses to broker power for themselves against regimes of racist oppression. And even though these instances of resistance were sometimes modest or even speculative, they model how insurgency can operate within systems of power and provide insights into how African Americans imagined and theorized the American hemisphere differently from their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

Faced with our current global migration crisis, we must once more examine the ways in which race operates both explicitly and implicitly to normalize nationalist claims to space and underwrite xenophobic foreign and domestic policies. It is not enough to condemn the slogan “Make America White Again,” when popular understandings of USAmerican history confirm the idea that America was once “white.” It is not enough to condemn the racism without questioning

that narrative that makes such racism possible. Attempts to combat these forces must rely on the voices of the disenfranchised and the displaced; they must consider models thinking and practicing history that differ from the fundamentalism and celebratory nationalism that has authorized USAmerican hegemony in the American hemisphere. America has always been an ideologically contested space, and in these submerged narratives, we find unrealized histories that run counter to the purportedly natural dominance of the Anglo-Saxon tribe and the USAmerican nation-state. In the Topsy, Juan Placidos, and Antonios, we find strategies for resisting and unraveling the history of how white supremacist discourses have imagined and instantiated political boundaries throughout the Americas, strategies for contesting those dominant narratives and for thinking the Americas differently.



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