In Transit:

Women, Photography, and The Consolidation of Race in Nineteenth-Century America

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
English in the Graduate School
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2017

ABSTRACT

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Abstract

In Transit: Women, Photography, and the Consolidation of Race in Nineteenth-Century America charts the accretion of historical and often obscured memory upon our textual and visual world. Rapid innovations in transportation and photographic technologies developed alongside processes of violent racialized conflict in the antebellum United States. The coincidence of these phenomena in the long nineteenth-century elaborated racial and gender differences through textual and visual production. This dissertation analyzes the evidences of these naturalized narratives in the oscillating movements of women required to navigate multiple, indiscrete, and often unconventional identity categories.

In Transit traces the physical, textual, and imagistic movements of three figures of intrigue—colonial Peru's tapada limeña, the sensational white captive Olive Oatman, and the famed abolitionist Sojourner Truth. It does so at three flashpoints of United States policy that mark the violent refinement of racial and gender formations: the specter of Latin American independence, Indian Removal, and the protracted Abolition of Slavery. This project demonstrates the ways in which white Americans of the nineteenth-century turned to cultural and commercially available representations of gendered and racialized difference to make sense of their quickly shifting world. These cultural products of Enlightenment-era Europe—travelogues and art works that could help piece together the meaning of new persons represented by new media—are deeply

implicated by long histories of colonialism, enslavement, and empire. This project contends that formations of race and racist ideology in the United States are the outcome of the dense transfer of interracial intimacy across global networks. By demonstrating the permeability of narrative and photographic frames for these women and others like them, this project exposes both penetrable national borders and porous boundaries of abiding racial identities.

For Mary, Catherine, and Ann

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Introduction: Lookout Points

And piles of solid Moan –
And Chips of Blank – in Boyish Eyes –
And scraps of Prayer—
And Death's surprise,
Stamped visible

\- *Emily Dickinson*

For the great violences hidden inside women
For the women hidden inside great violences;

- Vanessa Angelica Villareal

In the summer of 2014, in the same year that I embarked upon this project, the body of a young black man was found hanging from a swing set in Bladenboro, North Carolina, about a hundred miles south of Durham. There was no local, regional, state, or national coverage regarding the unsettling circumstances surrounding the death of 17-year-old Lennon Lacy in the United States. But, on October 9, 2014, some six weeks after his body was discovered, the U.K.-based newspaper, *The Guardian,* ran a 2,825-word, full-length, feature article dedicated to Lacy. It was the first account that detailed the suspicions harbored by Lacy's relatives and friends. These misgivings were enunciated by the Revered William Barber, the president of North Carolina's chapter of the NAACP at Lacy's memorial service. "The image of a black boy hanging from a rope is in the souls of all of us. It is in the DNA of America," Barber said. "In 2014, our greatest prayer is that this was not a lynching" (Pilkington). *The Guardian* echoed Barber's concern with the photographic frame. The headline of the article reads: "Teenager's Mysterious Death Evokes Painful *Imagery* in North Carolina" (emphasis, mine).

When the story broke in *The Guardian*, the *Wilmington Star News,* the closest city paper serving the rural town of 1,750, had not reported the story. The local television news affiliate, WWCY, produced and aired two short spots of under a minute apiece covering the death and memorial service, but never casting aspersions upon the bureaucratic narrative of Lacy's death-as-suicide or the circumspect police investigation. At that time, *The Guardian* article was the most substantive piece of reportage that had appeared on the Lacy case for months. It features in-depth coverage chronicling the inconsistencies of the case, the involvement of the NAACP, Lacy's romantic relationship with an older, white neighbor, and anecdotal bookends that invoke Lacy's wholesome high school football career. *The Guardian's* reporter, Ed Pilkington, who came across the story while researching voter suppression in North Carolina, tweeted at me then that he was amazed at the "virtual silence" surrounding the story. Though local authorities continued to say there was no evidence of foul play in the on-going investigation, Lacy's body was found strung with two ligatures from a playground structure. The coroner who received the body from police two days after its discovery reported that it showed lacerations across the shoulders and down the arms, indentations and bruising on his face and head. This admission corroborated earlier statements about visible contusions given by Lacy's family. Lacy's new Air Jordan sneakers had disappeared, and instead he wore a pair of unlaced and unidentifiable white sneakers that have now gone missing despite being initially logged as evidence by the state bureau of investigation (Frankel).

Figure 1. Andrew Craft, [Playstrcuture at The CottonMill], *The Guardian*, 9 October 2014.

To accompany the article, *The Guardian* ran a wide-angled photo on the newspaper's website. The caption indicates that it is the precise site of Lacy's death—a swing set at the center of an open area in a trailer park. This complex is called, not unproblematically, The Cottonmill, and is surrounded by thirteen white-washed mobile homes. Observers noted the desolate vulnerability of the spot. Pilkington indexed the potential for spectatorship and wrote that it was like a "sports field surrounded by grandstands." The photo is tipped slightly, its horizon line is slanted, causing the viewer a moment of disassociation and conjuring the psychological dis-ease of the cinematic Dutch angle. The frame encompasses grass and sky. The white, box-like structures of the trailer homes with their trappings of electrical lines, streetlights, and

satellite dishes enclose the perimeter of the scene. A line of grained wooden play structures occupies the foreground, the 4x4 weather-treated lumber hewn together at 45-degree angles and plunged into southern ground—the conceit of the visual narrative restaging a kind of modern southern pastoral. The photo is shot from the hip. Not quite a low angle, it produces a vantage that is reminiscent of bygone portraitists, agents of Americana, like Vivian Maier or Ken Heyman. The lens flare, I would argue, is intentional. Typically, this kind of light ghost is to be avoided in photography, but here, with the sun shot straight on, the lofted beams are transformed into a haunted would-be scaffold, the flare's presence metonymic for Lacy's absence from the frame.

This photograph's scrutability, the immediate menace it conveys both to domestic audiences and those abroad, is implicated by a long history of horrific racialized violence and the shared graphic vocabulary that was instantiated for its dissemination across the globe. This photographic grammar, what Christina Sharpe might term the "dysgraphia of disaster" (21), is enabled by the infrastructural transit of image and text begun in the late nineteenth-century. Thousands were murdered in the extralegal, racialized killings of black men and women in the United States during the post-Reconstruction Jim Crow era. While the Tuskegee Institute estimates some 3,436 lynchings occurred between 1882 and 1950, this number is likely a paltry approximation of the many whose violent murders carried about by white supremacists remain unremarked and unrecorded (Allen). In the midst of these simmering archival lacunae,

however, there are hundreds of photographs taken by professional and amateur practitioners to mark these treacherous events. In 1915, Thomas Brooks of Fayette County, Tennessee wrote:

> Hundreds of kodaks clicked all morning at the scene of the lynching. People in automobiles and carriages came from miles around to view the corpse dangling from the end of a rope…Picture card photographers installed a portable printing plant and reaped a harvest in selling postcards showing a photograph of the lynched Negro. (qtd. in Allen 11)

The yield of these practices was much more than their immediate revenue. These pictures were often printed and distributed as souvenirs to the gathered white crowd, or sent through the mail to relatives, friends, acquaintances, or opponents (Apel 1). The capture of this spectacularized violence structures the very methods and pathways of sight.

The photo featured in *The Guardian* functions as a transatlantic dispatch, reminiscent of the nineteenth-century's turn to the movements of ritualistic public discourse via the postcard. Like the travel pictures and the lynching photographs that were mechanically reproduced, printed, and sent through national and international mail systems, *The Guardian* also presumes a readership, a return. The noteworthy landmark looms on the face, the pertinent and personal inscribed on the blank verso space of the postcard's underbelly or in the article beneath the photographic header. The newspaper marks regularity of written notice, standardization of a communication from different locales. "…This in the imagination of a displaced correspondent," writes

David Henkin, historicizing the exchange of the post, "…also came to represent a system of circulation whose regular opening and transmissions rendered absent people always in some sense accessible" (4-5). At a remove, the population of Bladenboro, the specter of Lacy at the forefront, is made available via the *Guardian*. The article and interest from an international community (in a stark and woeful foil to our lack of domestic media vigilances) reveal the highly mobile nature and easy identifiability of lynching's fraught visuality—its cross-cultural footholds.

Recall Barber's construction. It is not the black boy hanging from a rope that has been transmitted as a kind of national imperative, but rather "*the image* of the black boy." Its import has seeped past the filmic, subcutaneous surface to become a visceral memory. But *The Guardian's* coverage, I suspected then and know keenly now, points to the permeable layers of the national boundaries that Barber invokes. Lynching is not endemic to the rural, agrarian south. It is not, as Jacqueline Goldsby writes, "best understood as regional and aberrant" (21). The violence predicated in and preserved upon this photographic image is an indexical record of the long-standing networks of global power that work to maintain white, masculinist supremacies in the United States and the world. The knowability of that light flare, the presence encysted in visual absence, is at the core of this project.

So, too, are the women whose presence, labor, and activism offer a corrective to the truancy of the visual record. In the days after Lacy's story was finally reported, a

mid-December march was organized in Bladenboro to demand further investigation into the case. Lacy's mother, Claudia, offered her first-person account of her son's death to *The Guardian,* in anticipation of that event. "I spoke out loud and clear," she writes, "'Whoever did this,' I said, 'they took him down, because he didn't do this to himself.'" [1]

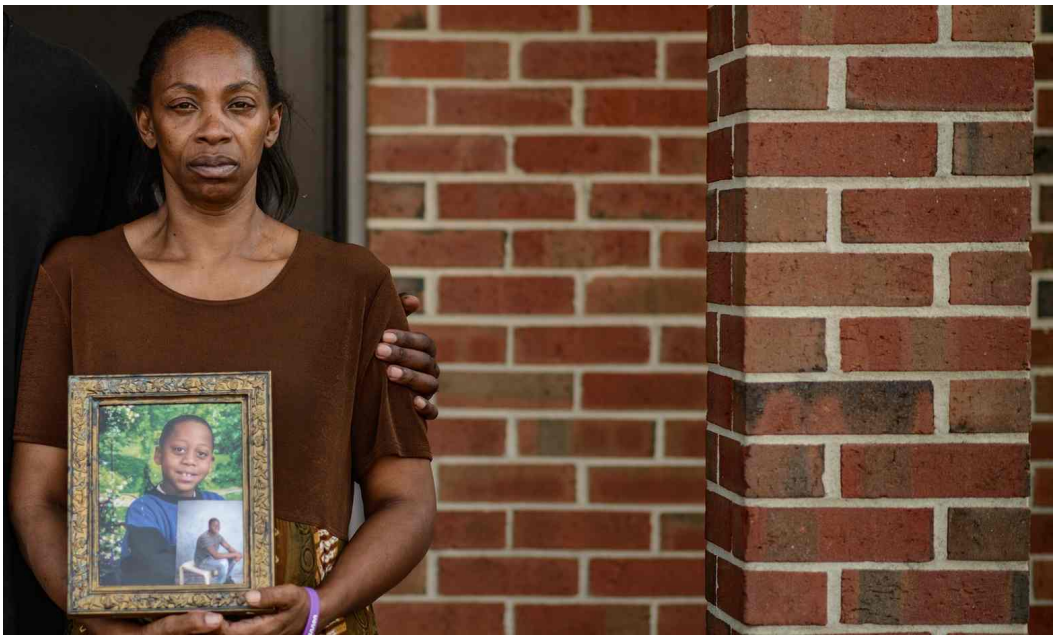

Figure 2. Andrew Craft, [Claudia Lacy holding portraits of her son, Lennon], *The Guardian,* 12 Dec 2014.

The article was accompanied by a photo of the author. Claudia Lacy stands in the brick entryway of her home. She is pictured off center, her body occupying the left third of the photo. Lacy wears a brown, short-sleeved dress, only a few shades darker

[1] Claudia Lacy told her story to *The Guardian's* Ed Plinkington who transcribed it for publication. Lacy is given the byline and referred to as "the author" in the photo caption that accompanies the story. There is a brief note at the end of the story that reads, "—as told to Ed Pilkington."

than the adobe-colored brick of her home.[2] The frame of the front door is visible behind her, marking the limits of the frame's depth of field. Just next to Lacy in the foreground, situated in the opposite edge of the photo, is a brick pillar that upholds the eave of the front porch. The visual symmetry of Lacy with this structural element gives the impression that she, too, is part of the edifice. Like the pillar, it appears as if she is supporting the very integrity of the home.

Lacy's situation in this threshold space between interior and exterior, public and domestic, gives her the quality of a harbinger. The strain of her shoulders and collarbone is visible above the scoop neck of her dress. Her face is pained. Lacy grimaces slightly. The simultaneous puff and hollow of her facial features give the impression that she has been crying. Claudia Lacy cradles an 8x10 gilt frame in her arms in the space between her waist and her breast where one might cradle a small child. In the frame is a professional childhood photo of Lennon Lacy. Elementary school-aged Lennon smiles out against a lush, green backdrop. In the right bottom corner of the frame, a more recent professional photo of teenaged Lennon is tucked. In this smaller photo, we can see Lennon in blue jeans and t-shirt, sitting casual against a white back

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[2] Claudia Lacy also wears a purple rubber bracelet. The Bladenboro Medical Examiner's report logged two rubber bracelets among Lennon Lacy's personal effects, including one purple rubber bracelet meant to commemorate and raise awareness for the March of Dimes—the organization that works to prevent birth defects and premature birth, and uses the slogan, "A Fighting Chance for Every Baby" for their directed research and fundraising. Lennon Lacy's most severe vulnerability, I cannot help but consider, came neither as an infant, nor an adult, but in the threshold age of his late teens.

drop. To represent Lennon Lacy, his family chose to illustrate his youthfulness in a continuum of childhood to his teen years. His discernable childhood, though now over a decade past, looms larger, more pronounced, perhaps to combat against what Sharpe calls "the impossibility of Black childhood" (79). The family does not select family snapshots, but rather the posed, professional photographs of a studio that script respectability, family values, and a middle class position that could prioritize such expense.

The shoulder of Claudia Lacy's son, Pierre, is visible at the edge of the frame, his arm wrapped around his mother, his disembodied hand resting on her bicep. The rest of Pierre's body has been cropped from the photo. The photographer, or perhaps the editorial staff of *The Guardian*, chose to partition Claudia Lacy off from her family support. The purpose of this extirpation is unclear. Is it to establish Claudia Lacy as the sole author of the attendant article? Is her pain believed to be more express when she is untethered from a familial support network? Or is the suffering of the lone black mother simply more iconic, as immediately scrutable to an audience as the light flare pictured above?

This photo can be read as part of a legacy of black visual culture in which women are tasked with restoring what life and lives are absent from view. This legacy is as old as the photographic form. Consider the early U.S. Civil War-era portraits of famed abolitionist Sojouner Truth sitting with a carte de visite of her enlisted grandson in her

lap while the institution of slavery was arbitrated on the battlefield. Consider the pains the writer and activist Ida B. Wells took to have the families—the wives and children—of lynching victims photographed during the pervasive racial violence of the Jim Crow era. The above photo of Claudia Lacy is the first in a series of publicly circulated pictures in which she appears holding portraits of her son, Lennon, trying to displace the violence that has organized his death, attempting to restore his life to the visual and narrative frame.

The under reported story of Lennon Lacy, his mother, his family, and his community, animates a long-trod track of communication and commerce that facilitated the consolidation of race in the United States and around the globe. While these transits of empire were not originary to the nineteenth-century, their modes and pathways were transformed irrevocably by the innovation of transportation and visual technologies in this period. The extension of canalways and the railroad system in the United States, in collusion with the invention of photography and the rise of telegraphy, provided new means of representation and transmission. Bodies, texts, and visual artifacts began to move differently through the world. The concurrence of these neoteric circulations with the violent encounters that defined the antebellum period in the United States is more than mere coincidence. It is the very means by which these violent encounters came to be shorthanded, naturalized, and affirmed by narrative technologies. The possibility and

portability of the racialized violence intimated by Lacy's case and the images that surround it have their origins in the nineteenth-century.

In Transit: Women, Photography, and The Consolidation of Race in Nineteenth-Century America attends to the accretion of historical and often obscured memory upon our textual and visual world. The dissertation charts the creation and dissemination of persons, texts, and images at three flashpoints of United States policy that mark the violent and anxious refinement of racial and gender formations—the antebellum specter of Latin American independence, Indian Removal, and the protracted Abolition of Slavery. My dissertation poses analysis precisely upon the fault lines of visibility: in the oscillating movements of women required to navigate multiple, indiscrete, and often unconventional identity categories.

Women pushed social boundaries to sculpt notoriety through physical travel and the dissemination of text and images that narrativized their passages. To make sense of these novel identities, the American public turned to available representations of gendered and racialized difference in the cultural products of Enlightenment-era Europe—travelogues and art work that could help piece together the meaning of new persons represented by new media. By demonstrating the permeability of narrative and photographic frames for these women and others like them, this project exposes penetrable national borders and the porous boundaries of contracting racial identities. Formations of race and racist ideology in the United States, this project contends, are the

outcome of the dense transfer of interracial intimacy across global networks. These intimacies have been preserved and internalized, decocted from their visible, discernable presence to their inscrutable, haptic absence.

Cultural objects, cultivated by earlier forms of colonial violence perpetrated around the world, became primers of gender and race representations within the congealing boundaries of the United States. The dissemination of empire produced by the emergent technology of photography, *In Transit* argues, is not novel or newly instantiated. Rather, photography protracted the arc of empire's haul, rode in the wake of its portage. In the words of Coco Fusco: "Rather than recording the existence of race, photography produced race as a visualizable fact" (60). This so-called "fact" is instructively unmoored when considered alongside women who occupied the intersectional rifts that plagued the century's diminishing identity categories. The aim of this project is to disclose the transit of influence and impression, etch and echo, upon imagistic epistemology.

The imperative for this work is indebted to its point of intellectual departure, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). Said's deft schematization of the ontological instability of Western identities ushered in a range of scholarship necessarily preoccupied with the relay of this "supreme fiction" (xvii). That is, that all subjects are willfully manufactured from self-consciously constructed affirmations and identifications of the Other. Said's demarcation of the ambit of colonial domination to colonial discourse, the movement

from comprehension to knowledge, outlines the naturalized artifice that organizes the way the world is seen. Scholars like Mary Louise Pratt, who mobilized Said's reciprocal influences from the Orient to colonial Latin America, and Laura Ann Stoler, who refined Foucault's history of intimacy by adhering it to the interracial transmission of empire, offer a further illumination of this work. Susan Buck-Morss, Mary Pat Brady, Jodi A. Byrd, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sadiya Hartman, Lisa Lowe, Walter Mignolo, Cedric Robinson, and others have all demonstrated the ways in which cultural production has been, in the words of Lowe, "commensurate with, and deeply implicated in colonialism, slavery, capitalism, and empire" (2). This work has made possible my conceptions of the undulation of selfhood and its re/presentations possible.

In recent years, postcolonial studies has turned away from its methodological origins in travel writing and literature which served as the critical ground for early theorists like Said, Pratt, Stoler, and others. This attempt to distance our literary and historical understandings from the dominant narrative of colonizer has been fruitful in many ways—forcing scholars to interrogate archival absences, to read slant the accepted histories of conquest and migration, to cultivate and revere speculation as scholarly practice, to "try her tongue" as M. NourbeSe Phillips might say. What the pivot away from travel narratives has sacrificed is not polyvocality. Instead, it is an infrastructural yield: the purely logistical facts of who and what had access to travel, by what modes, and at what costs. *In Transit* returns to the lens of travel writing not as a belated return

to an early moment of theoretical engagements, but for the specificity of movement, the particularization of transfer.

In Transit shows how Latin American women were made synonymous with Turkish Muslims, and the ways Amerindian identities are collapsed into Europe's prejudicial interpretations of South Pacific islanders through travel writing; it demonstrates that the abolition of slavery was valorized by lauding North African characters painted during the European Renaissance, and that lynching photography was influenced by the aesthetics of Orientalism popularized by white Westerners. Modes of thinking that are condemned as isolated and uninformed regionalisms, are, in fact, virulent demarcations of colonial difference whose roots are bound up in global networks of culture and commerce. Like the scholars named above, *In Transit* seeks to identify moments of transference in the concomitant projects of colonization and racialization. In what follows, the critical work reorients this project to the precinctive territory of the United States where violent colonization of native populations and persons compelled onto the continent through barbaric networks of forced migration is carried out on the selfsame ground the colonial metropole. Furthermore, the project's interdisciplinary methodology, wedding literary scholarship with art criticism and history, is attentive not only to the objects of racial consolidation but also to its modes and motilities.

Visual technology is certainly the most heralded and pervasive modality for conveying these seemingly static positions in regimes of Western knowledge production. Yet, as Robyn Wiegman asserts, "the visual moment is itself a complicated and historically contingent production" (24). Roland Barthes contends in his landmark and elegiac text, *Camera Lucida* (1980), that the photograph "is an image that produces death while trying to preserve life" because its preservation is of a fleeting past time that no longer exists (92).[3] *In Transit* refutes this still, lifeless frame, and, instead, relies upon those scholars who have theorized the ways in which the photographic emulsion or its digitized correlate is seething with life. Scholars like Elizabeth Abel, Dora Apel, Eugenia Brinkema, Tina Campt, Nicole Fleetwood, Anna Pegler-Gordon, Leigh Raiford, Shawn Michelle Smith, Kyla Schuller, Christina Sharpe, Gerald Vizenor, Maurice Wallace, and Laura Wexler have provided a primer to think the ways in which the photographic frame, even in the instances where it encapsulates abject violence, is very much alive—still operative and operating on its viewer.

[3] Barthes is, by no means, meant as a strawman to this argument. He elsewhere conjures a pulp and pulse in the inanimate graphic encounter. "Endlessly I sustain the discourse of the beloved's absence;" he writes in *A Lover's Discourse* (1978), "actually a preposterous situation; the other is absent as a referent, present as an allocutory. This singular distortion creates a kind of insupportable present; I am wedged between two tenses; that of the reference and that of allocution: you have gone (which I lament); you are here (since I am addressing you). Whereupon I know what the present, that difficult tense, is: a pure portion of anxiety" (15).

In Transit particularizes the promiscuity of our pictures and texts. It seeks a return of what has been occluded from sight. It is a story about the presence of freedoms—plural—in the absence of freedom—singular.

The first chapter locates itself on the cusp of photographic invention. "Chapter 1, Peering Across the Plaza: The Shrouded Women in Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno,"* excavates the figure of the saya y manto from Melville's 1851 novella. When the ship that is the site of the ongoing slave revolt is first spotted in the narrative, the vessel is immediately racialized and feminized. Referencing a style of dress popular among women in the Viceroyalty of Peru during the colonial period, the ship, writes Melville, "show[s] not unlike a Lima intruigante's one sinister eye peering across the Plaza from the Indian loophole of her dusk saya-y-manta." The saya y manto, or the tapada limeña, is literally a covering—a skirt and veil used to disguise the wearer's identity. The tapada came to denote both the costume *and* the woman who donned it. It is an essential emblem of the impossibility of recognition and a signifier of freedoms marshalled under constraint. What's more, the tapada is associated with the subversion and republican spirit that fueled Peru's independence from Spain in the early nineteenth-century. This chapter traces the confounding role of the critically neglected tapada through the Transatlantic historical record. Attention to the tapada enables a reading of "Benito Cereno" that foregrounds the women of this story—both the black women on board the ship and those conjured by dusky allusion. The shroud's titillating symbology in textual

and illustrative form demonstrate the transit of stereotype from the Orient to the European metropole to its TransAmerican colonies. The women of "Benito Cereno" emerge as more than just allegorical foil to shipboard masculinity. Instead, it is the women characters who carry out Melville's critique of colonial knowledge projects, easy identifications amidst the zeitgeist of Victorian classificatory sciences, and attempts at definitive racialization. The interdependencies of willful identifications foisted upon raced and gendered individuals emerge more precisely. It is in the contemporarily familiar space of racial crisis provoked by the threat of violence then, that the narrative stages the multivalent misunderstandings at the intersection of consolidating categories of race and gender.

This chapter establishes an extravagant network of physical, textual, and visual transmissions that catalog the anxious impulse of white colonial powers to ensnare the shifting categories of race and gender. Against the backdrop of Latin American and Haitian independence and the foment of U.S. slave insurrection, the mechanical processes of early photography were developed. The saya y manto's popularity had waned by the time the camera's lens was trained upon Peru. Those early photographs that we do have of the tapada, the covered woman, were likely created ahistorically and with a pornographic impulse—antiquated clothing worn to arouse a bygone intrigue. This intrigue is born of both repulsion and attraction; it denotes racial and sexual difference. The chapters that follow take up particular case studies of this complex

relationship to women in textual and photographic form. These women, like the figure of the tapada, were well-known during their lifetimes, but are forgotten or misremembered by the literary and historical canon.

The second chapter moves from the figuration of women to an individual woman. Following the photographic lens to its formal and material innovations in portraiture, "Chapter 2: 'Had I Home': The Circulations of Olive Oatman" examines the under considered narrative and visual legacy of Olive Oatman. Oatman emerged from a five-year captivity with the Mohave Indians in 1856, at age 19, bearing the traditional facial tattoos of the tribe. She is the first white woman known to be photographed with tattooing. Her striking image—disseminated via photographic portraits, illustrations, a best-selling biography (*Captivity of the Oatman Girls* [1857]), an American Ideal sculpture based on her titillating story (Erastus Dow Palmer's *The White Captive* [1857]), and Oatman's own lecture tours—made Oatman famous. Her intimacy with Amerindians during the most barbaric years of U.S. Manifest Destiny and the obvious epidermal permeability of (her) whiteness caused Oatman to renegotiate the attributes of her raced womanhood. Her story reveals the pains white Americans took to fashion indigeneity as synonymous with racialized others narrativized and pictured in travelogues such as Herman Melville's *Typee* (1846) or the popular *Voyages of Captain Cook* (1771). Her tattooing—the obvious perforations of Oatman's whiteness—places her at the center of Western epistemologies of racial difference being cultivated in the South Pacific. These

trajectories of otherness render Oatman's visible presentation of racial permeability more easily and incorrectly interpretable in the meager terrain of white womanhood of the era.

Historicizing Oatman's public life and archival remnants—her movements against the axis of the juridical and military imperative for Indian Removal and her discussions of captivity within debates about the institution of slavery waging during the U.S. Civil War—reveal that these large-scale systematic acts of violence are mutually constitutive. They are not atavistic regionalisms nor nationalisms, but rather phenomena that are rendered non-contiguously and globally. The interconnectedness of oppressions displayed in Oatman's case make visible popular anxieties about maintaining the fictitiously inviolable boundaries of unremarked whiteness. Her travel and careful subject positioning are indicators of the precarity of intersectional identity. Oatman's captive status should not be understood as mitigated by her return to white society despite the absence of overt interdictions upon her freedom.

The third and final chapter takes up exactly these societal, juridical, and violent injunctions against liberty. Following the travels, writing, and photographic production of Sojourner Truth, "Chapter 3: 'I Did Not Run, I Walked': The Liberatory Ambulations of Sojourner Truth," demonstrates the ways in which Truth employed modes of circulation to emancipate herself from a fixed and prevailing understanding of black womanhood during the piecemeal distribution of freedoms to enslaved and formerly

enslaved Americans. By performing a sustained analysis of her first existent photograph, taken to commemorate Truth's travels under the threat of physical violence during the operative years of the Black Codes in Indiana, this chapter reveals myriad practices of Truth's unboundedness. Her consciously crafted public persona, taken together with a rereading of Truth's 1850 autobiography, *The Narrative of the Life of Sojourner Truth*, points to the ways in which Truth theorized her own material freedom in relation to mobility. "I did not run away," Truth says about her escape from slavery, "I walked."

The chapter stages an analysis of William Wetmore Story's American Ideal sculpture, *The Libyan Sibyl* (1860), modeled after American author Harriet Beecher Stowe's simultaneously demeaning and approbatory account of Truth. The idyll of the Libyan Sibyl offered a Classical-era analog to the pervasive racist depictions of African Americans that plagued the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but it also drew on ancient stereotypes to produce its imagistic heft. This sculpture demonstrates that, despite all the pains Truth took to fashion herself a true sojourner, her contemporary interlocutors were intent upon setting her in stone and fixing her in place. The chapter closes with an examination of the possibility and the performance of Truth's multiraciality—she was rumored to be of both of African and Mohawk origin. This potential, I argue, unmoors her from the violent forces that sought to hem Truth's movements within state and national boundaries imposed upon autochthonous lands.

Questions of self-sovereignty and national sovereignty loom in this chapter. Truth's insistence upon her own mobility animate travel's relationship to visibility—its dual capacity to command and thwart sight. Far from being a progressive pendant to the questions raised by considerations of visuality in the cases of Olive Oatman and the tapada limeña, the final chapter reflects the primal and instantiating scenes of violence that are the purview of this project. To reformulate Hartman's construction: absolutist distinctions between freedom and non-freedom are untenable. They are inalienably imbricated.

In the final coda I return to lynching's visual legacy to demonstrate the way in which the banal, modes of looking discussed throughout *In Transit* have prescribed the possibility of enframing this spectacularized racial violence. Using the work of journalist and anti-lynching activist, Ida B. Wells, at the turn of the century as a departure point, this section sketches briefly the unnerving resonances between the camera work and circulation of Orientalist travel photography and lynching photography. Wells sought to restore dignity to the images of lynching during the Jim Crow era by extending the narrative and photographic frames. In addition to compiling the statistics and anecdote for which she became famous, Wells also commissioned a series of photographs intended to recover the domestic spaces of black life. She circulated portraits of the family members of lynching victims alongside the reproduced gelatin prints of these extralegal murders. She reestablished these women and children in photographs from

which they had been completely effaced. By attending domestic boundaries of home and nation adjacent to the photographic frames of lynching images, Wells not only demonstrates the threat of lynching's brutality to country and kin. She also exposes the ways in which these arbitrary epistemic scales were exceeded by the aesthetic representations of lynching. By drawing her audience's attention to the implication of the private and domestic, Wells also opened a portal to public, capitalist, and international influences. The photographic epistemology—the acculturated habits of looking—indexed by these photos is not precinctive to the families, the homes, the communities, the regions, or the nation of their geographic location. Lynching photography, this section demonstrates, is informed by and complicit with travel photography and the emergent tourist market championed by Victorian-era Orientalism. The meticulously organized system of attractions popularized by the tourist photography of white Americans and Europeans traveling to North Africa and the Middle East during the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-centuries functioned as a standardizing mechanism for rendering foreign people and landscapes interpretable. Its transit of colonial empire was manufactured concomitantly with the colonial superimposition of American slavery, and is preserved in the scrutability of its visual tropes. The forcible vantage of the tourist, I conclude, is operative in lynching's photographic remainder.

Do not mistake these chapters for a progress narrative. Their organization and ordering is not that. Instead, the stories amplified in this project are meant to draw attention to their simultaneity—the buttressing of imbricated forms of captivity punctuated by the primers of graphic violence. Truth writes her *Narrative* in 1851, the same year Oatman is taken into captivity. Melville writes "Benito Cereno" in 1855; Oatman returns to Fort Yuma in 1856 and has her first photograph taken shortly after. By then, the tapada limeña has disappeared from view and the republic spirit is in full foment. Truth famously stands off against Midwestern Copperheads in 1861 and her first photograph is taken to commemorate the skirmish. Meanwhile, Oatman is traveling on a lecture tour, circulating cartes-de-visite of herself as a souvenir and testament to her bygone captivity. These histories and their circulation magnify the landscape of bondage, confinement, and custody.

Thinking with Tiya Miles and Saidiya Hartman, however, these accounts also point to the impossibility of thinking these histories fully. *In Transit*'s horizon lines are as Hartman describes her work in *Venus in Two Acts*: "both to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling" (11). To that end, just as I take great pains not to over assign the unknowable agency present within these chapters, so too, I take pain not to indelibly mark these textual and visual legacies with unknown violences. This project is much less concerned with the fact of violence as it is with the suggestion of it—the menace that lurks on the periphery of our visual and textual fields. The

diagrammatic labor, the graphic registers, that discipline our ways and modes of understanding.

As I finalize the pages of this project, Lennon Lacy's case has been closed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation after a review undertaken by request of the North Carolina NAACP. Despite lingering questions, the U.S. Attorney's Office of eastern Carolina stated obliquely that there is "no evidence to pursue federal criminal civil rights charges." Photographs of bygone lynchings, however, are still transmitted unseen in our national headlines. These are the vestiges of what Lowe has called "the economy of affirmation and forgetting"—the resurfacing of internalized processes of history and conformed consciousness (3).

In November of 2016, emboldened by the U.S. presidential inauguration of Donald Trump, white supremacists created a group on the social media site, GroupMe, that targeted over 100 freshman of color at the University of Pennsylvania. At least three college-aged students in the state of Oklahoma sent a barrage of vile racist messages to the group. They enabled a "Daily Lynching" calendar that scheduled ritualized hangings of group members. The assailants transmitted at least one lynching photograph. This photo, reported the *Huffington Post*, was written over with the words, "I love America." The enmediation of transportable word, image, and time in this assault illustrates an essential component of the miasma of race—that our past is

inextricably linked to our present, our futurity reliant on the meanings that are seen and those that continue to be ignored.

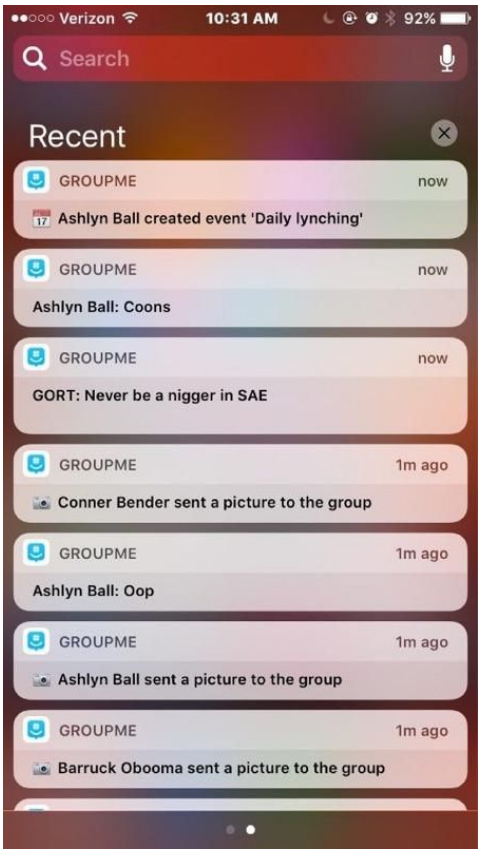

Figure 3. [Screenshot of GroupMe Messages], *The Verge*, 11 November 2016.

In a contemporary moment where consideration of the violence done to black, latina/o, and native lives within the United States has come belatedly to the fore of national and international conversations precisely because of the circulation of photographs and videos, this scholarly project is particularly urgent. Fred Moten has posited that the violence perpetrated against women and ethnic minorities is "the state's diurnal renewal of the lynch law" (ASA 2014). The visual cues that comprise its banal

appeal require desperate interrogation. The correspondences between people and photographic forms, their openings and transmissions, always render what is absent, somehow accessible, somehow present. The presences that haunt unwittingly our current photo/graphic frames require unmasking and unmaking.

Chapter 1. "Peering Across the Plaza": The Shrouded Women of Herman Melville's *Benito Cereno*

"his words were lost / because Cereno stole my mind
with a litany of silent signs"
-Yusef Komunyakka

Early in his 1855 novella, "Benito Cereno," Herman Melville deploys the freighted simile of the "saya-y-manta" (47), a style of dress popular with elite women in the Viceroyalty of Peru during the colonial period. This largely unconsidered feature of the novella signals a range of meanings and associations that highlight the global referents that informed the circulation of bodies, images, and texts in the nineteenth-century. With this simile conjuring a concealing mode of dress and numerous allusions to its presence within the pages of the novella, Melville challenges epistemological projects of American and European Enlightenment that sought to consolidate categories of race and gender. In citing the highly feminine fashion, Melville also draws the role of women to the forefront of the tale. Women, both those present in the story and alluded to by the suggestion of the "saya-y-manta," buttress this story of slave insurrection with a history of freedoms marshalled under constraint. By tracing the confounding role of the "saya-y-manta" and its orientalist transmissions in the historical record, this chapter demonstrates that the European and U.S. world conspired to create violent equivalencies between discrete colonial outposts through literature and pre-photographic visual technologies. It further demonstrates that the presence of women in "Benito Cereno" is not merely a foil to the construction of shipboard masculinity, but rather an aesthetic

strategy that complicates easy recognition and attempts at racialization. This complex analogy brings into relief an alternate reading of the text and its challenge to colonial knowledge projects.

"Benito Cereno" is a tale about perception. The novella is a fictionalized version of Amasa Delano's 1817 travel narrative which contains his account of discovering a Spanish slave ship off the coast of Chile in the midst of a revolt. Melville's adaptation follows the unwitting, New England-born Delano as he boards the slaver, the *San Dominick*. The insurgents organize a sham interaction for Delano's benefit in which the deposed captain and title character, Benito Cereno, is forced to act as if he is still in control of the ship. All the while, the formerly enslaved persons surveille Cereno and the remaining crew members under the threat of violence. This deception produces a range of inconsistent behaviors, all of which Delano observes, but cannot recognize as part of a rebellion.

When the ship that is the site of an ongoing slave insurrection is first spotted in the novella, the vessel is immediately alienated, feminized, and racialized. The *San Dominicks*'s careless navigation as it maneuvers through an ad-hoc sealing outpost off the coast of Chile, "*seemed to prove* her a stranger" (italics mine). Even in avowed proof, there is still the suggestion of something specious. This prevarication—identity as always already illusory—constitutes the slippery misperception of the narrative. The aforementioned analogy follows and illuminates the depths of that zealous

misrecognition: As Delano observes the ship's progress into the harbor from his own vessel, the androcentric *Bachelor's Delight*, he peers through the single lens of a telescope. Melville writes:

> With no small interest, Captain Delano continued to watch her—a proceeding not much facilitated by the vapours partly mantling the hull, through which the far matin light from her cabin streamed equivocally enough; much like the sun—by this time crescented on the rim of the horizon, and apparently, in company with the strange ship, entering the harbor—which, wimpled by the same low, creeping clouds, showed not unlike a Lima intriguante's one sinister eye peering across the Plaza from the Indian loophole of her dusk saya-y-manta. (47)

The feminization moves beyond the historical standard, common in Latinate languages, to refer to a seafaring vessel as "her" or "she." Instead, it is as if the ship is dressed or veiled as a woman. Pitting the alluring mantle against the chastened wimple long associated with religious orders, Melville produces an equivocal portrait of feminine advance—at once titillating and unavailable. With special emphasis on its gendered and raced attributes, Melville invokes the saya y manto. Delano's scopic gaze is met and mirrored with another monocular technology.

Figure 4. [Carte de visite of saya y manto], ca. 1860.

The saya y manto, also known as the tapada limeña, is an essential emblem of the impossibility of recognition. It is also a signifier of mobility fashioned under restraint. Translated as "covering" or "covered woman," the tapada is comprised of a saya and manto. The saya is a skirt meant to obscure the wearer's body below a high waistline. Its early iterations were worn tight and close to the body. Later the garment evolved into a broad, pleated version. The manto is a veil of nondescript black fabric worn as a hood over the entire head, save for a single eye. This ensemble, which disguised form and particularity, remained popular for some 300 years—from roughly 1540 to 1840—

because of its capacities to conceal the wearer's identity. The costume is associated predominantly with the elite Creole class—those women of Spanish descent born within the colonial bounds of the Americas. While wearing the tapada, women could eschew the constraints of patriarchal domestic life and circulate unrecognized in public. The anxieties produced by these limited freedoms were vast. The potential for female agency, as well as the possibility for women of other races and classes to travel under the guise of this elite costuming, became a flashpoint of colonial discord in Latin America.

By illuminating the high anxieties of categorical misrecognition of race, class, and gender that surround the tapada, I demonstrate that "Benito Cereno" uses the simile of the Lima intrigante as a dense signposting, a metaphorical figurehead. As Stephen Matterson observes, "Melville's interest in clothing is in its signification, its symbolism" (4). The symbol of the woman that subverts a knowing gaze and eludes immediate understanding resists the classificatory observations tendered by the Victorian sciences and physiognomy of the era. This chapter seeks to excavate the role of the tapada limeña—a largely unconsidered feature of the novella. The invocation of the tapada highlights Melville's awareness of the common anxieties produced by the unknowability of the other and the relentless transmission of stereotypes from one colonial geography to an incommensurate other. Foregrounding this simile produces a critical stance on the novella that draws attention to the presences and notable absences of women within the

text. With this feminist lens, the status of women under the imbricated and frail power structures of the nineteenth century's colonial domination come into focus. The efforts and agencies of the enslaved women on board the San Dominick to maintain their limited freedoms become more clear. The conjuring of absent feminine figures at critical moments within the text are more notable. The interdependencies of interpretation foisted upon raced and gendered individuals emerge more precisely. In short, women are drawn to the fore of the story.

1.1 "The One Anomaly": Women on Deck

"Benito Cereno" is one of the most written about stories of the American Renaissance, if not the whole of American Literature. Though the tapada has the pride of place as the *San Dominick's* initiating image, it has only been given peripheral attention by scholars. This may be because of the tapada's necessary situation within a TransAmerican archive. It may also find its origin in the historical, but quickly evolving, scholarly stance that Melville's work does not pertain to women.

The critical inclination that women are all but absent from Melville's fiction is pervasive. It extends at least as far back as the late nineteenth century when, in an 1888 essay, Nathaniel Hawthorne's son, Julian, characterized Melville's work as "Man-Books" (qtd. in Schultz 6). In his 1929 biography of Melville, historian and critic Lewis Mumford identifies the conceit that enabled this perceived exclusion: "[A]ll Melville's

books about the sea have the one anomaly and defect of the sea from the central, human point of view: one-half of the race, woman, is left out of it." Notably, Mumford discounts the black women featured in "Benito Cereno" as able to constitute ample representative power, their race an exclusion to the human race. "Melville's world," he continues, "all too literally, is a man-of war's world" (qtd. in Schultz 7 [137]). This notion of the ship-as-state persists critically. In the 1940s, F.O. Matthiessen used Melville to laud U.S. exceptionalism; in the 1950s, C.L.R. James mobilized *Moby Dick* (1851) to track the beginnings of the U.S. security state; in the 1990s, Wai-Chee Dimock argued that Melville's vision of democracy is appurtenant to the existence of imperialism and individuality. The obvious exception to the public life, the would-be state, on board Melville's ships, is the notable exclusion of women from the merchant and military crews that people these texts and their associated theoretical frameworks. More recent work on Melville through the lens of queer studies, as Juniper Ellis aptly summarizes, ignores the presentation of women characters in lieu of commentary on a non-normative American masculinity that allows for alternative forms of sociality among men (62). Melville's women appear, many scholars contend, only as the raced other encountered in the contact zones of eroticized disembarkation as in *Typee* (1846), *Omoo* (1847), and *Mardi* (1849). The most celebrated fictions of Herman Melville, then, would be historically understood as gendered, characterized by a masculinity that was tied to matters of war, nation, and diplomacy.

For contemporary scholars of Melville, this critical genealogy may overstate the case. Women are very present in Melville's (landed) fictions such as *Pierre* (1852), "The Paradies of Bachelors Tartarus of Maids" (1855) and "The Piazza" (1856). The appearance of the Chola Widow in the "Encantadas" (1854) extends his range of characters. Furthermore, mainstays like Ruth and Agar in *Clarel* (1876) and Urania in "After the Pleasure Party" (1891) point to the growing prevalence of and concern for women in Melville's later poetry. The excavation of these texts owes much to the feminist scholarship of Elizabeth Hardwick, Charlene Avallone, Wyn Kelley, Maria Felisa López Liquete, Elizabeth Schultz, and others. This chapter contends, however, that the myopia produced by Melville's initiating criticism has persisted particularly in the instances of non-speaking women characters at, or out to, sea.

When the tapada has been taken up in studies of Melville, it is done to indicate a shrouding that stands in metonymically for the story's primary deceit—the disguised slave revolt. The setting of "Benito Cereno," writes Robin Magowan, "is a world of masquerade that has been present from the very first page—from the initial description of the…*saya y manta*" (349). While it is not incorrect to draw correlations between this fashion and narrative costuming, accounts like Magowan's flatten a mobile and interwoven network of possible association. This chapter complicates and historicizes the particular dissimulation figured through the tapada. What aggregate meanings were indexed for Melville and his contemporary readership? What significations have been

shorthanded and subsequently effaced in our current understanding of the novella? How do these meanings structure our (mis)understandings of race, class, and gender? To uncover women in "Benito Cereno" is to return to Delano's formulation upon first sighting the *San Dominick*, to work to determine what he cannot discern: "what she wanted or what she was about" (47).

The following argues that there are three particular areas where the saya y manto can be can be understood to signal Melville's often overlooked preoccupation with women and their situation as both nodes of and participants in the consolidation of dense epistemological networks. In the mid-nineteenth century these meaning-making networks of American and European Enlightenment had particular implications for the structuring of race, class, and gender to support the hegemony of white supremacist and colonial agendas. First, the tapada intimates the critical role of women in staging dissent. Second, that tapada limeña calls attention to the obfuscating implications of feminine identity upon racial surveillance and categorization. Finally, this fashion as represented in "Benito Cereno" is situated on the fault lines of interpretative practice. Its deep ties to Orientalist aesthetics carefully sculpted by an elite class of European and American travelers reveal what Edward Said might call a "strategic formation" (20). The accrual of indexes and associations form the mirthful and terrifying backdrop of the nineteenth-century colonial world that Melville renders in the text.

1.2 "Angels with Claws": Hiding in Plain Sight

The public sphere of the burgeoning Viceroyalty of Peru became participatory grounds for classes of women who would have normally been excluded from such sites precisely because of their identity. The saya y manto was at the epicenter of what Mary Louise Pratt has called Lima's "feminotopia" and implicates the critical role of women enacting republican dissent (163). The French traveler Maximilian Radiquet writes that the women of Lima "ruled as veritable sovereign queens" (*xii*). The French feminist Flora Tristan dedicated an entire section of her 1838 travel narrative, *Peregrinations of a Pariah,* to the limeñas who she notes were carving out an extraordinary mobility, a new geography of state and social spaces that occupied the nexus of political and cultural import. When Tristan attended the Congress of the Viceroyalty, for example, she was surprised to find that "all the women present were veiled, reading the newspaper or conversing about politics" (264). In the theater, too, she observes that the mantled limeñas were privy to a kind of brazen social equality and smoked just as prodigiously as the men (266). The tapadas were able to circulate in public, interact with individuals outside of their immediate families, often outside of their class, and eschew retribution for what would be considered a clear breech of social decency. While these lauded freedoms could be easily circumscribed, and I would argue often were, the value of the tapada as a symbol of potential is irrefutable—a presage of the New Woman ideal that would emerge in the U.S. and European imaginary at the end of the nineteenth century.

Figure 5. Johann Mortiz Rugendas. ***The Paseo in the Alameda gardens, overlooking the Romac and Lima,*** **ca. 1843.**

The perceived coquettishness of the limeña was also of note to Lima's social scene. The Franco-Argentine literary critic Paul-François Groussac wrote of the limeñas: "They are exquisite and complicated beings. A single one of these wizards is enough to animate a social gathering as a nightingale is enough for a garden" **(#).** But not all of the limeñas observers thought of their social prowess so favorably; in 1798 the Andaluisan poet Simón Ayanque, described the limeñas as "angels with claws" (28).[1] While these lauded freedoms could be easily circumscribed, and I would argue often were, the value

[1] "Que vés bellísimos cuerpos/Con las almas de leones,/Y las peiles de corderos. Qué son angeles with uñas…" (Translation mine). The writer, Esteban Terralla y Landa, employed the pseudonym Simón Ayanque for only one of his many published works entitled, *Lima por dentro y fuera* [Lima Inside and Out] (1798).

of the tapada as a symbol of potential is irrefutable—a presage of the New Woman ideal that would emerge in the U.S. and European imaginary at the end of the nineteenth century. The tapadas were able to circulate in public, interact with individuals outside of their immediate families, often outside of their class, and eschew retribution for what would be considered a clear breech of social decency.

The tapada limeña endured for some three centuries despite myriad attempts to prohibit it. The perceived menace of the saya y manto's opacity created a steady and schematic stream of fears for those trying to maintain control over the population within the Viceroyalty of Peru. The tapada limeña was unsuccessfully outlawed by the Spanish Crown by order of monarchs Felipe II, Felipe III, Felipe IV, and Carlos III. The Roman Catholic Church, sighting an impingement on the city's morals, issued a number of decrees over the years of the tapada's popularity, most notably at the Third Council of Lima in 1583, and again at an ecclesiastical council in 1601 (Poole 88). "Indeed, one of the proposals discussed," writes Fray Reginaldo de Lizárraga in his 1605 *Descripción breve del reino del Perú, Tucumán, Río de la Plata y Chile*, describing the proposed severity of one such measure, "…had in view the abolition of the saya y manto under penalty of excommunication" (190). Even the provincial governments became enmeshed in attempts to censure the trend by legal means as in the cases of the governments of Diego López de Zuñiga y Velasco in 1561, Francisco de Toledo in 1571, the Marqués de Montesclaros in 1609, the Marqués de Guadalcazar in 1624, Count Chichón in 1633, and

their many viceregal successors (Poole 88). Its persistence became a testament to the republican spirit of Lima's residents and a hallmark of colonial revolt (Whipple). Perhaps, it was this potential that Melville recognized in the tapada, and in turn, in the women aboard the slave ship. Each undermined immediate disclosures.

If most characters in "Benito Cereno" are inscrutable to Amasa Delano because of an inversion of anticipated social order, the women of the novella are doubly shrouded by flawed perceptions leveled at their gender as well as their race. Women are hidden from Delano, and in turn the reader, in plain sight. Delano's inability to recognize individual agency in women precludes him from understanding the rebellion in which he is embroiled. If Delano is to believe that something askance is happening aboard the *San Dominick*, "then every soul on board, down to the youngest negress, was [Cereno's] carefully drilled recruit in the plot: an *incredible* inference" (69, italics mine). That (black) women could be deceitful, duplicitous, and disguised is unthinkable for Delano. Yet, though they take up little space in the novella, the presence of these women fuel the action of the narrative.

The extraliterary inclusion of a deposition in the story's final pages states decisively that there are "thirty-nine women and children of all ages," on board the *San Dominick* (104). Delano observes these women more generally and in the abstract, saying "there were not a few" (49). For him, the black women on board the ship are significant only as part of the "multitude of living freight" (54). In Delano's mind through which

the bulk of the novella is narrated, the women are seldom individuated, referred to most often as "the Negresses" when they become pertinent to the plot. Their presence on board is often disembodied and registered sonically, as in the moment when Delano first boards the *San Dominick* to be greeted by the communal account of what has transpired, "in which the Negresses," he notes, "exceeded the others in their dolorous vehemence" (54). This calliopean clamor occurs again at the height of the action when Cereno escapes the ship, the revolting men give chase, and "the Negresses raised a wailing chant, whose chorus was the clash of steel" (102). When Delano does regard a single woman, he focuses again on composite parts: "youthful limbs" and the woman's "breasts." She is seen through the "lace-work of some rigging," valanced like the tapada. Though this woman is alone and nursing a child, Delano moves away from this single woman and immediately back to a consideration of all the women on board. He is unable to comprehend the individual black woman. Instead, this interaction causes him to "remark the other Negresses more particularly than before" (73). This is one of the few moments that he remarks upon the women at all.

In relief, Delano conjures bygone women in lieu of those who are present before him. The *San Dominick* is sutured to the feminotopia of Lima when Delano summons the women of Peru onto one of the ship's water balconies. Contemplating the former grandeur of the ship as an uncanny breeze brushes his cheek, Delano muses that, "the

forms of the Lima viceroy's daughters had perhaps leaned where he stood" (74). It is precisely these daughters who would have donned the tapada's veil.

The transcript of the court proceedings dedicatess much more significant attention to these women. "That the Negresses, of age, were knowing to the revolt, and testified themselves satisfied at the death of their master, Don Alexandro;" the story's final section reads, "that, had the Negroes not restrained them, they would have tortured to death, instead of simply killing, the Spaniards slain by command of the Negro Babo" (112). The deposition continues:

> [T]hat the Negresses used their utmost influence to have [Benito Cereno] made away with; that, in various acts of murder, they sang songs and danced—not gaily, but solemnly, and…sang melancholy songs to the Negroes, and that this melancholy tone was more inflaming than a different one would have been, and was so intended; that all this is believed, because the Negroes have said it. (112)

The women on board the ship largely avoided the surveillance and scrutiny of the would-be American emissary, Delano, as he relied heavily on archetypes of raced and sexed bodies to identify what he saw before him. It is these same persons, these unnamed and now unknowable women, who are attributed with the most radical and violent aspirations for the slave insurgency. Ironically, the least considered members of the human cargo, the women to whom not a single line of dialogue has been attributed, speak for themselves in a court of law, soliciting the belief of their male, republican adversaries, and revealing the depth of their revolt.

1.3 "The Treacherous Shawl": Ethnic Fugitivity

Through its particular geographic ties to Lima, a site of amplifying racial diversity, the tapada limeña threatens the possibility of the visual surveillance of racial identity. "There are few places the inhabitants of which present so great a diversity of complexion and physiognomy as in Lima," reads an 1851 article in *Harper's* (to which Melville subscribed):

> There is every gradation and intermixture of race, from the faire Creoles of unmixed European descent, who pride themselves upon the purity of their Spanish blood, to the jet black negro of Congo, whose unmitigated ebony hue bears testimony equally unequivocal to his pure African lineage. Between these two extremes is an almost innumerable variety of mixed races, each having its own peculiar designation, indicating the precise proportion of European, Indian, and negro blood in their veins, each marked with its own peculiar physical, intellectual, and moral characteristics. (600)

The costume's location within Lima, a city that Wyn Kelly identifies as a fraught "imperial site" in the context of *Moby-Dick* that "reminds American readers of their own colonial history" (275; 179), forms a constitutive backdrop to the tapada's power. At the end of the colonial era, only 12.6 percent of Lima's more than one million inhabitants were reported as white. Pardos or mixed-race individuals and enslaved blacks (emancipated in 1854) accounted for roughly 8 percent of the population. The vast majority of Lima's residents were indigenous persons (Poole 93). As a result of this vast disparity, white Europeans and their descendants insistented upon the visual perception of the body producing meaning to maintain status, title, and political and social power.

Though the tapada is meant to delineate racially and socially dominant classes of women within the Viceroyalty, references to the unknowability, the opacity, of the limeña abound. This impenetrable anonymity is often couched in terms of sexual liaison. "In this dress, it is said, a wife will pass her own husband when she may be walking with her lover, and the husband may make love to his wife, without being aware it is she," writes Charles Wilkes in an antebellum travel account that Rodrigo Lazo has suggested that Melville drew directly from (238;227-229). "Women's use of tapadas to travel has reached an extreme that has resulted in great offenses against God and done considerable harm to the Republic," reads another nineteenth-century account of one prohibition against the tapada limeña issued by the Spanish crown, "because there is no way for father to recognize daughter, husband to recognize wife, nor brother to recognize sister" (Lafuente 186).[2] The perceived potency of the tapada's mobility is not only the implied menace of rape and/or the incest that might occur when men are unable to recognize their women relatives during sexual encounter. Accounts like these also register the fear that penetration, forcible or not, of the unrecognized woman could compromise family ascendancies and racial purity.

Accounts are prevalent of (men's) mistrust of the shrouded whiteness denoted by the tapada. In an 1865 travel memoir, the U.S. envoy to Peru, Willis Baxley, registers

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[2] "Ha venido a tal extremo el uso de andar tapadas a las mujeres, que de ello han resultado grandes ofensas a Dios i notable daño a la república," reads the Cortes Act of 1586, "a causa de que aquella forma no reconoce el padre a la hija, ni el marido a la mujer, ni el hermano a la hermana" (Translation mine).

anxiety that the woman covered by the tapada will be less white than her "white-gloved arms and whitened eyelids" might suggest (Poole 113). The aforementioned Radiquet comments on the pure whiteness of the tapada, describing the particular tone of alabaster skin and cautioning that it is "nothing sickly."[3] He writes in his narrative:

> One is never sure how to overcome the extreme severity with which the shawl is held closed, above all if, contrary to the Limeña's custom of going bare armed, a long sleeve goes just up to the glove in such a way that it does not allow [one] to guess the color of the skin. Have no doubt, the treacherous shawl conceals an African, black as the night [and] flat-nosed as death, before whom it would be superfluous to sow the pearls of gallantry. As one can see, the saya and manto has afforded women only advantages [and] men only with discomforts. (qtd. in Poole 93-94)[4]

The idealized male "one" is discomforted by the gendered body and its physiognomic characteristics concealed beneath the fabric of the saya y manto. The potential of discovering racial difference bespeaks treachery executed both by the shrouded individual and the coalition of women from diverse classes and newly forming ethnic communities who have conspired to make possible this dissimulation. To show to advantage for women of this period is to not show at all.

Melville tellingly populates "Benito Cereno" with a wide stratum of race and class representations that mirror Lima's inclinatory heterogeneity. There are the formerly (and soon to be again) enslaved persons identified as being from distinct

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[3] "mais qui n'a rien de maladif" (Translation mine).

[4] The phrase "flat nosed as death" is likely cribbed from Théophile Gautier's *Les Grotesques*, collected in 1844, in which he writes in a treatment of Cyrano de Bergerac" that "The reason that negroes are usually stupid…is because they are flat-nosed as death itself" (163-164).

backgrounds, cultural groups, and regions—Guineamen (57), Senagalese (104), Nubian (87), and Ashantee (99). Cereno and his officers hail from Spanish nobility, located on the Spanish main and its Latin American outposts. There are several classes of crew member from Europe and South America. In other words, the paradigm of black and white on board the *San Dominick*, as in Lima, is made diffuse.

Though limited to the terminal dimensions of the ship, the range of mobility assumed by the seemingly enslaved persons aboard the ship is constantly commented upon in "Benito Cereno." "Wonted to the quiet orderliness of the sealer's comfortable family of a crew," Melville tell us, Captain Delano is struck by the contrast aboard the slaver. "The noisy confusion of the…suffering host repeatedly challenged his eye. Some prominent breaches, not only of discipline but of decency were observed" (54). This will, but ultimate inability, to execute organized visual surveillance (the order that would produce an unchallenged eye) provokes Delano's sense of New England Puritanical decency. This need for order is not couched in terms of logistical or safety concerns, but upon a spectrum of moral correctness. The anxiety about unfettered mobility and organized visual space that will allow for proper comportment reveals an element of fugitivity shared by the women of Lima and the inmates of the slave ship.

Melville produces narrative slippages within distinct and intersectional groups. Each attempt to classify the perceived crew and their "living cargo" demonstrates the impossible labor of trying to stricture a paradigm between white and black. The boat's

population is referred to alternately as "Spaniards and blacks," "whites and blacks," or "white-skins" and "coloreds" or "Africans," each indexing a different kind of identitarian logic and categories in historical flux. The black persons on the boat at times seem homogenous and constitutive of Delano's perceived "shadowy tableaux," as when the oakum pickers police "their countrymen, the blacks" (54). At other moments, these same individuals are differentiated. "Those Negroes have always remained upon deck," Cereno justifies for Delano, "—not thrust below as in the Guineamen" (57). These raced men in Delano's troubled and oscillating perceptions at once pertain to, but are not of, the rest of the black population of the *San Dominick.* Unfeasibility of racial generalization is also made apparent. Delano observes "some petty underling" whom he describes nebulously as "either a white, mulatto, or black" (53). A Spanish sailor is compared to "an Indian [creeping] from behind a hemlock" (74); while, later, a North American indigeneity is invoked when the black men are said to be hurling hatchets "Indian like" (101). "Spanish boys" are made interchangeable with "slave boys," and both are described "like pages or pilot fish" (53). Even a reliance upon what Said might describe as "considerable geographical ambition" is made operative when the steward Francesco is described as "a tall, rajah-looking mulatto" conflating a man of presumably mixed race background from North or South America with the nobility of Southeast Asia (88; Said 50). Melville, concludes Timothy Marr, both "exposes...the ignorance of the ethnological imagination" and "radically dramatizes the boundaries of ethnocentrism by

revealing the peripheral possibilities that escape its purview" ("Melville's Ethnic Conscriptions" 27). It is these peripheral possibilities in which the imagistic heft of the tapada dwells.

Emergent typologies are deployed in the novella by Delano through whom much of the narration is routed. "Indeed," Marr writes, "the portion of Melville's narrative that plays back the internal monologue of Delano reads as an anthropology of racist rationalizations" ("Melville's Ethnic Conscriptions" 26). Delano's flawed interpretations are insidious because of his presentation as an educated, cosmopolitan subject. He is well read, well-traveled, and speaks foreign languages. "He could—," Melville writes, "thanks to his frequent voyages along the Spanish main—converse with some freedom in [the Spanish sailors'] native tongue" (51). Delano is a veritable expert. As a New Englander, he signifies a tempered political standpoint of enlightenment liberalism and "republican impartiality" in relief to a vehement proslavery stance tied to the American South (80). His interpretive impulse and confident classifications throughout "Benito Cereno" are unrelenting. Delano identifies the fine global goods on board the ship: a "Chili jacket" [sic] (57) from South America, the settees of "Malacca cane" from Sumatra (82), and "Canary" wine from the eponymous islands (89).[5] His authority is rendered not

[5] In this way, Melville also artfully foregrounds the cross-pollination that is operative in the highly nuanced transit of a mercantile trade system. He places material goods throughout the novella to demonstrate the incredibly mobile course of goods and information. The *San Dominick* is trading in Paraguayan maté from Latin American while the cabin is furnished with settees made of cane from Sumatra. Benito Cereno is sporting a velvet Chile jacket and a Toledo sword brought from the "Spanish main," while members of the

only in the identification of these items, however, but in his self-assured analysis. The "provincial costume" of Chile is "picturesque as any in the world" (58), he says for example. His objectifications seamlessly move from products to people. He notes that Cereno is a "gentleman," his surname immediately recognizable and "belonging to one of the most enterprising and extensive mercantile families" (64). The black men are recognized by Delano as "Africans" and promptly characterized as "unsophisticated" (50), "uncivilized" (73), and "ignorant" (57). Again, he maneuvers observation to interpretation. "Negroes," Delano explains matter-of-factly, "are natural valets and hair dressers; taking to the comb and brush congenially as to the castinets" (83). These racist explanations are subjective interpretations disguised as axiomatic and informed scientific fact.

Cereno becomes a particular object of case study in the novella as the coordinates of his race, ethnicity, and origin slip with Delano's alternating perspective of him. Grappling with Cereno's strange behaviors as he operates under the duress of the imposed masquerade, Delano alternately thinks him a well-mannered "gentleman" or a rude host implicated by racist or classist assumptions about ill breeding. Cereno's origins are unclear, his demeanor "mysterious" (67), demonstrating the slippery imprecision of racial and social distinction operative in the Spanish colonial system—the

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crew and the presumed enslaved are wrapped in Madras handkerchiefs from India and bedecked in rope sandals common to indigenous communities of the Andes. Melville is flagging an insidious supply of people and profit.

ambiguities present between classes of Spanish, creole, Afro-Latina/o, mulattoes, and indigenous peoples. Delano refers to Cereno both as a "Spaniard" and a "South American." He is described as "the Spanish captain," but is bedecked in "South American gentleman's dress." "Though on the present voyage from Buenos Ayres," Melville writes, "[Cereno] had avowed himself a native and resident of Chile" (57), undercutting Delano's characterizations of his fellow captain executing "Castilian" bows as "Spanish" or "hidalgo" marking unblemished gentility natal to the Iberian mainland. Physical descriptions of Cereno mark both gleaming whiteness and menacing swarthiness. Delano refers to Cereno's "pale face," for example (57, 65). In another instance, he scrutinizes his "small, yellow hands" (58), an image that resounds with the treacherous "yellow arms" of Malay pirates referenced later in the novella (68). At other moments, Cereno subverts knowability, as when "his face became hueless" (90). At the height of Delano's uncharitable outlook on Cereno, he is described as "the dark Spaniard himself, the central hobgoblin of all" (69)—his perceivably white body taking on the attributes of a raced one. At some moments class transects these racial identifications. Delano, for example, observes that Cereno's sumptuous clothing corresponds to the attire of a Latin American gentleman "of his class" (57). Or again, when, as Delano is giving weight to his suspicions, he intuits, "The man was an impostor. Some low-born adventurer…masquerading as an oceanic grandee" (64). Again and again: Delano seems to harken back to Victorian physiognomy, declaring as

he is struck by Cereno's profile that he is a true "hidalgo Cereno," his physical features marking a hereditary title of Spanish origin.

Delano's presentation produces a will toward bodily knowledge. At one moment Delano observes the "raw aspect of unsophisticated Africans" (50). At another, he observes that, "the complexion of the mulatto was hybrid, his physiognomy was European—classically so" with features "more regular than King George's of England" (89). Samuel Otter has convincingly mapped Melville's fascination with corporeal knowledge tied to the raced body generally, and physiognomy specifically. Yet, Melville does not let these physiognomic generalizations stand alone. When Delano speaks of a Barbados planter's remarks about miscegenation between whites and blacks, Cereno replies that he has heard the same of "Spanish and Indian intermixtures in our provinces" (89). As Kelley notes, "Lima, as a colonial city with a long history of European subjugation of native populations, reminds American readers of their own colonial history…Lima associates Incas and Spain, native and colonial empires, infidels and autos-da-fé" (179). There is a decided emphasis on the portability of prejudice, the slippages in easy identifications.

1.4 "Decidedly Orientatlist Flavor": Incommensurate Equivalencies

The invocation of the saya y manto reveals a willfull transmission of stereotype between colonial epistemologies and knowledge projects. "At first glance," wrote the French naturalist, Alcides d'Orbigny, in 1842, "[the tapadas] could be taken for those

phantoms of invisible women that travelers to the Orient find in Constantinople and all the Muslim cities" (qtd. in Poole 90). He notes, markedly, the specter of raced and erased bodies that similarly captured the attentions of Western audiences. It is popularly suspected that the dress was imported, in part at least, from the Spanish Moors by way of Sevilla in the 1560's. The *Harper's Monthly* article quoted above promulgated this theory, noting that the costume, "resembles that of the Moors, to whom it owes its origin" (602). Attempts to pinpoint an exact antecedent have been inconclusive.[6] Today, scholars generally characterize the veil as having an "Arab influence" (Gamio HAHR). This influence is not as tenuous as the generalized language surrounding the tapada would suggest, however, but rather a byproduct of carefully constructed citational practice.

A genealogy of interpretation is imperative to the construction and cultural understanding of the tapada limeña, Melville's novella, and their concomitant function. Tracing the assemblies of meaning and perception that surround the tapada and "Benito Cereno" from Orientalist knowledge projects into the Americas demonstrate the portability of interpretive practice from one colonial geographic and cultural realm to another. This genealogy also historicizes consolidating notions of race that become

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[6] This theory was likely popularized by Ricardo Palma's *Tradiciones Peruanos,* a serialized newspaper column published from 1872 through 1910, and later be collected into a two volume book. Palma, notably, is not always reliable as he attempts to account for the new nation's history and picturesque folklórico. Of the saya y manto's origins, he writes, "Más fácil fue para Colón el descubrimiento de la América que para mí el saber a punto fijo en qué año se estrenó la primera saya [It was easier for Columbus to discover America than it is for me to know in at exactly what point the first saya premiered] (183, translation mine).

anchored to physiological "types" during this era. Melville signals this naïve portability with the saya y manto and plumbs with irony in the confused observations of his protagonist, Delano.

The saya y manto captivated the imaginations of traveler and armchair tourists alike throughout Europe and the U.S. during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. It was frequently described in literature and depicted in artwork and the extra-literary etchings of travel narratives in the Anglophone Atlantic world. References appear, for example, in W.B. Stevenson's popular *A Historical and Descriptive Narrative of Twenty Years' Residence in South America* (1825), Tristan's aforementioned travel diaries, *Peregrinations of a Pariah* (1838), Charles Darwin's *Journals and Remarks* (later, *The Voyage of the Beagle*) (1839), Charles Wilkes's *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expeditions* (1849), and George M. Colvocoresses's travel narrative, *Four Years in a Government Exploring Expedition* (1852). Contemporary artists and illustrators also participated in the zeitgeist surrounding the saya y manto, such as the German painter, Johann Mortiz Rugendas, the French artist and diplomant, Léonce Angrand, and Darwin's cabin boy-cum-scientific illustrator, Syms Covington. These texts relied heavily upon Orientalist models to evoke the mystifying appearance of the tapada.

"There are two things in Lima, which all Travellers have discussed;" writes Charles Darwin in his 1839 *Journals and Remarks* (later collected as *The Voyage of the Beagle*), noting the prevalence of his chosen subjects, "the ladies 'tapadas', or concealed

in the 'saya y Manta', and fruit called 'Chilimoya'. To my mind the former is as beautiful as the latter is delicious." Immediately, the tapada is placed within the "strategic formation," the epistemological structure of travel—an unavoidable subject in the currency of European and Anglo-American conversations and texts. The reader's sensorium is confounded as Darwin conflates the sight of the tapada with the taste of the cherimoya, or custard apple, indigenous to the Andes. This referential observation performs a synesthetic and sexualized shorthand and circumscribes the women of Lima into a precinctive geography. Darwin continues:

> The close elastic gown fits the figure closely and obliges the ladies to walk with small steps which they do very elegantly and display very white silk stockings and very pretty feet. They wear a black silk veil, which is fixed round the waist behind, is brought over the head, and held by the hands before the face, allowing only one eye to remain uncovered. But then that one eye is so black and brilliant and has such powers of motion and expression, that its effect is very powerful. Altogether the ladies are so metamorphised; that I at first felt as much surprised, as if I had been introduced amongst a number of nice round mermaids, or any other such beautiful animal. And certainly they are better worth looking at than all the churches and buildings in Lima. (349)

There is much at work in this passage which Darwin wrote after only a five-day stay in Lima (Keynes 304). Lavishing his taxonomic attentions, honed through the practices and protocols of Victorian natural sciences, Darwin renders these women as a collection of parts—"very pretty feet," "waist," "head," "hands," and "one eye." This dissembling is brought further into relief by the absence of a single observed individual. Rather, Darwin begins from the collective: "ladies." The tapada is never described in a lone appearance; the women are always featured as a group ("them" or "they"), even when

Darwin's observation telescopes to a single attribute—like the lone eye. Registers of relation are not found, for Darwin, in other modes of dress or human population, but rather in the elements conjured by comparisons to plants, animals, and even fantastical beings like the remarkably voluptuous, highly feminine and fetishized mermaids. The description is titillating. The close fit of the gown repetitiously fits "closely" to the above mentioned body parts, the production of a "nice round" silhouette, the restraint evidenced by the constricted fit of the skirt, all serve to produce a heightened sexual objectification. The silks deployed in the drapery of the saya y manto place the tapadas at the nexus of an imbricated transatlantic slave trade. Most interestingly, these observations are staged through the gaze of a tourist who could just as easily, but less pleasurably asserts Darwin, be taking in the imposed colonial architecture of Lima—a lucrative jewel of the far-reaching Spanish empire, the "City of Kings" as Melville notes in "Benito Cereno" (103).

Figure 6. "Coming From Mass," *Harper's Weekly*, 1851.

The tapada's depictions in literary and visual culture, as they traveled across the Atlantic, are drawing on earlier and geographically disparate prototypes. French feminist Flora Tristan dedicated much of her travel memoir, *Peregrinations of a Pariah,* to her observations of the saya y manto in Lima, but did so with what Mary Louise Pratt has called a "decidedly orientalist flavor" (165). "[The saya] is respected as part of the culture of the country," she writes, stating provocatively that it is "just as the Muslim woman's veil is in the Orient" (273). Pratt contends that Tristan finds her literary antecedent in the travel diaries of Lady Mary Montagu who writes about her time in Constantinople while in the company of her husband, Britain's Turkish Ambassador from 1714 to 1718. These letters, published in the 1760's, Pratt tells us, "were widely read

in Europe" and "Tristan has surely read them" (167). Montagu's account of Turkish women is neatly conscripted to serve Tristan's observations of and about the tapadas. Both Montagu and Tristan offer a prototype for feminist readings of the Muslim veil and the tapada limeña, noting both veils' will to subvert surveillance and offer extended (if still limited) mobilities. Yet, the contamination between the two authors marks a reliance upon a racist conflation of identity and willful geography.

Similarly, visual artists found ready models for illustrations of the tapada in the

Figure 7. Syms Covington, [Illustration of a tapada limeña], ca. 1835.

"illustrative 'other'" fashioned by European artists in India, Africa, and the Middle East (Poole 87). These images, circulated in travel books and popular periodicals, maintain

what art historian Deborah Poole calls a "disturbing resemblance" to European representations of Arab women. Poole cites the highly stylized depictions of the veil that link these dissimilar subjects. The artist's tendency to depict tapadas in pairs also conspicuously suggests similitude between illustrations of Arab women who traveled in the company of a servant. Poole draws out other colonial realities in the visual genealogy of the tapada. Citing Cuvier's 1812 dissection of the Hottentot Venus, she notes the tractabily of newly emerging typology. The wealth of illustrations in which the buttocks of the tapada is especially emphasized, featured prominently and perspectivally overblown are a testament to the operations of this typology. In many of these works, the tapadas are pictured only from the side or the back, their faces never meeting the artist's gaze. "By reducing the tapada to her buttocks," Poole writes, "the Europeans displaced the vision of the whole with a metonymic logic informed by contemporary racial and gynecological theories" (89). It is precisely at this moment in the early part of the nineteenth century, in the years immediately before Melville composes "Benito Cereno," that "the eighteenth century's ethereal sexual fantasies and disembodied notions of race as a historically mutable essence were giving way to a modern—and more visual—understanding of race as affixed biological or physical 'types'" (Poole 87). These writings and paintings, then, situated as they are in repurposed aesthetics from one colonial landscape to the next, perpetuate a cross-

cultural, geographically expansive type that helps to confuse identity and conflate once disparate sexisms and racisms.

Figure 6. Léonce Angrand, *Announcement of a Cockfight,* ca. 1833.

One such painting, Angrand's watercolor *Announcement of a Cockfight,* provides a ready example. In the work, three tapadas flank a well-dressed organizer and his two attendants of the peasant class as they hype the afternoon's sport. The figures crowd the foreground. The organizer offers one of the tapadas, her back turned but her head inclined flirtatiously toward her interloctuor, a ticket to the hyper masculinized and metaphorical event of the cockfight. One of the attendants holds a caged cock aloft

above his head—the pinnacle of the painting's frame. The muted colors of the background offer line over form, to suggest the arcades and public sphere of a colonial plaza as the site of the unfolding scene. The tapadas, as Poole has suggested, sport highly stylized veils. They are the darkest points of the painting's palette and Angrand has textured them using horizontal lines to connote a sumptuous fabric, folded in and upon itself. The veils are the most detailed nodes of the painting and form balanced focal points on either side of the work. The tapada on the left faces forward. Her veil is draped over her shoulders to reveal her collarbone and the shadow of her breasts. The two tapada limeñas on the right are seen only from the back, their veils, their backs, and their buttocks in full view. As Poole has forecast, the posterior is exaggerated significantly. On both visible tapads, haunches are noticeably rounded, the line of their burgeoning figure moves from a small waistline through a bowed and bulky buttocks to narrow legs and small feet. The material of these women's skirts, appears ruffled and seamed to accentuate the convex shape. Not one of the tapadas is pictured with their feet flat on the ground. Instead, the women are painted off kilter, their dainty toes pointing, angled, and engaged with men, both in the frame and outside of it. The men that are pictured are dark skinned and one of the servants appears to be wearing braids. The front man wears a gentleman's clothing, but his attendants are painted in ill-fitting, cheap clothing. One of the men is barefoot. The suggestion is that the picture is titillating not only because it depicts an interaction between men and highly sexualized women,

but also because it illustrates a vignette that transects race and class divides. "In her unsolicited representation by the European male artist," Poole writes, "the upper-class white woman of Lima thus acquired those racially marked attributes of promiscuity and deviancy that her own aristocratic ideology would have vehemently rejected" (89). This concomitancy of inconsonant forms obscures indexicality and fortifies the entanglement of othering.

"Nearly every nineteenth-century writer," observes Said in his landmark *Orientalism*, "was extraordinarily well aware of the fact of empire" (14). Said's poststructuralist critique of Western examinations and explanations of the East allow us to approach these "expert" texts with intellectual suspicion. Melville's novella carries the transmission of that "geopolitical awareness" rendered into aesthetic form (Said 12), as well as the attendant suspicions. Anglophone travel writing of the Victorian era posed a problematic and extremely Orientalized account of the non-Western world. The imperfect explanations developed by European and Anglo-American observers in the Orient are readily deployed upon individuals who are othered by their origins in Africa and the Americas.[7] This maneuver displays "the way in which groups of texts, types of texts, even textual genres, acquire mass, density, and referential power among themselves and thereafter in the culture at large" (Said 20). As Marr convincingly

[7] For more on this see Pratt, Said, and Stoler.

demonstrates, Melville was deeply aware of and "invested in the multivalent conventions of nineteenth-century Islamic orientalism" ("Circassian Longings" 230). While others are reproducing the flawed interpretations of the Orient throughout colonial elsewhere, Melville's directed reading allowed him to identify these conflated interpretive conventions.

Interpretive misdirection pervades the novella from the moment the reader is transported to the deck of the *San Dominick.* "Always upon first boarding a large and populous ship at sea, especially a foreign one," Melville writes from Delano's perspective, "with a nondescript crew such as Lascars or Manila men, the impression varies in a peculiar way from that produced by first entering a strange house with strange inmates in a strange land" (49-51).[8] Delano's observations are collapsed accounts of unspecified alterity. He establishes a broad binary between foreign and domestic, known and unknown, tethering the space of the boat to the rootedness of a "strange land." He suggests that the inhabitants, the "inmates," are racialized, captive, and unindividuated. This commutability extends not only between these distinct South and Southeast Asian men, but also between the black African men and women that Delano is actually beholding. As Greg Grandin writes, Delano "is hollowed out, trapped by the

[8] For Melville this construction is a familiar one. As Marr points out ("Melville's Ethnic Conscriptions" 9), this strange triplicate is preceded by a similar sentiment in his earlier novel, *Redburn* (1849). "People who have never gone to sea for the first time as sailors," Melville writes, "can not imagine how puzzling and confounding it is. [I]t must be like going into a barbarous country, where they speak a strange dialect, and dress in strange clothes, and live in strange houses" (65).

superficialities of his own perceptions of the world" (234). As he continues to take in the ship and "the living spectacle" it contains, Delano notes that initially "these strange costumes, gestures, and faces [are] but a shadowy tableau" (50). Melville calls attention to the necessity of interpretive practice in the face of this unrecognizability. The monolithic sights are made scrutable to Delano as he breaks them into composite parts—dress, delivery, and, finally, the individuals in front of him. These components are then subjected to a battery of comparison with other ready models of difference, namely those established through practices of Orientalism.

Melville's grasp of the evolution of racialized and gendered stereotypes is evident. His knowledge and appropriation of a diverse set of contemporaneous texts is well documented. In the early part of his career, Melville buttressed his own voyages with literary sources. As a more mature writer, distant from his travels, he conscripted texts wholesale. Melville borrowed, supplemented, and embellished his knowledge and experience with popular travelogues. As he wrote "Benito Cereno," Melville worked closely with at least six books chronicling maritime voyages in the year or so preceding the novella's publication (Sealts 90).[9] Through deft intertextuality, Melville conveys established modes of perception and epistemology. His appropriation of these predetermined tropes, however, is not without consideration. He draws particular

[9] According to Sealts, Melville was reading the travelogues of Porter, Colnett, Cowley, Burney, Darwin, and Delano.

attention to the movements and slippages between categorical identifications, easy recognitions, and the facts that elude Delano because of an insistence upon deploying an inflexible citationality.

Consider the following discrepancy within the manuscript history of "Benito Cereno." As Delano considers the black women on board the *San Dominick,* he signals his learnedness as a barrier to his understanding. Making comparisons instead of observations, Delano notes, "like most uncivilized women, they seemed at once tender of heart and tough of constitution" (73). These women are not particularized, but rather made an abstraction. Other, absent "uncivilized women" become constitutive of the women that Delano is scrutinizing aboard the *San Dominick.* Delano underscores his ability to interpret by citing an authoritative text. In the original manuscript of "Benito Cereno," serialized in *Putnam's Monthly* in 1855, Delano observes that "these, perhaps, are some of the very women whom Mungo Park saw in Africa, and gave such a noble account of" (73). He refers to a 1799 travelogue by the Scottish explorer Mungo Park, who is believed to be the first European to visit West Africa. A year later, when the novella was collected, the text would change to: "Ah! thought Captain Delano these, perhaps, are some of the very women whom Ledyard saw in Africa, and gave such a noble account of." In this version, Delano's citation is of John Ledyard's popular 1783 travelogue, *A Journal of Captain Cook's Last Voyage* which chronicles Ledyard's conscription into the British Navy and subsequent observations of Alaska, Russia's Far

East, China, and the South Pacific Islands. The editors of the Northwestern-Newberry (NN) edition account for the inconsistency in this way:

> Neither name quite fits the sentence, since the famous African traveler Park (1771-1806) did not write the "noble account" while John Ledyard (1751-89) did write it but about women of Asia not of Africa, where he had not traveled beyond the coast. The explanation of this crux seems to be that when Melville first wrote the sentence he had in mind the passage in Park's *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* (1799)—perhaps in a reprint or excerpt—about his kind treatment by African women that quotes Ledyard's parallel "noble account"—an account which Melville mistook or misremembered as Park's own. Then, as Seymour Gross has suggested, when Ledyard's account was quoted in a *Putnam's* essay (December, 1855 [VI, 608]), either Melville or a *Putnam's* editor noticed the discrepancy and "corrected" to "Ledyard", overlooking the fact that Ledyard was speaking of Asian women. In *Moby-Dick* (chap. 5), Melville identifies the two travelers correctly. NN keeps the P[*utnam's*] reading "Mungo Park" because it is more certainly Melville's and because the factual error is unemendable—neither name is right. (585)

This chapter conjectures an alternative interpretation of this textual anomaly. Namely: that Melville was deliberately trying to draw attention to the near farcical cross-pollinations of travel literatures from diverse regions with reference to wholly separate populations of women. Park does this in its invocation of Ledyard's far away analysis. Substituting Ledyard for Park in the collected version arguably makes this point more effectively and humorously—Delano's citation is now not even on the right continent. The timely appearance of the Ledyard text in *Putnam's* would likely prevent the kind of editorial mistake hypothesized by Gross instead of enabling it; a *Putnam's* editor would presumably be familiar with Ledyard's text and not assign it erroneously to an observation made about women of African origin. Furthermore, Melville's correct

deployment of both authors in *Moby-Dick* demonstrates his competency with the texts and, therefore, lends itself to this proposed alternative. That "neither name is right" is precisely Melville's point.

Melville continues to draw out the Orientalist models that impel the descriptions of ethnic or racialized individuals aboard the *San Dominick*—references made available from accounts written by (European) travelers to the Middle East. Delano remarks that Atufal, a presumed slave notable for his magisterial frame, stands "like one of those sculptured porters of black marble guarding the porches of Egyptian tombs" (92). In another reference to ancient Egypt, Delano says that the oakum-pickers "were couched sphynx-like" upon the ship's bulwarks (50). In yet another scene, he likens the oakum pickers to whirling dervishes imported by way of early travel literature from Turkey, saying, "Like delirious black dervishes, the six Ashantees danced on the poop" (99). At times, these Orientalist adornments are not merely simile, like the moment when Delano describes the mulatto slave Francesco as "orientally set off with a pagoda turban formed by three or four Madras handkerchiefs…approaching with a salaam" (88). The architecture of these examples displays how assailable and preposterous the identity categories meant to mark race are. Each, like the subjects shrouded in the tapada limeña, subvert knowability or stable meaning. Beneath each term, scripted and conscripted by mobile definitions and their variant interpretations, reliant upon contrived equivalencies

and mismatched comparisons, produce the extrareal and, yet, woefully reduced meaning.

1.5 "The Past is Passed": Abandonded Memory

By the time Melville composed "Benito Cereno," the saya y manto had all but disappeared from Lima. The fashion faded out of popular usage around the time of Peru's independence, languishing drastically between the years 1800 and 1860. "The tapadas were hardly seen," complains nineteenth-century Peruvian commentator, Ricardo Palma, in an 1860 column in Lima's *El Comercio*. "Our señoritas have abandoned their incomparable dress" (qtd in Calligros 106). It is, perhaps, this waning presence, the impending nostalgia that impels Melville's usage of the Lima intrigante as a capacious symbol for the structuring of his global gothic. His world, Melville notices, is in decline. Instead of the optimistic republican spirit, he attends the grotesque, the sinister, the ironic—the forgotten projects of knowledge formation.

At the end of the novella, broken by his experience aboard the *San Dominick*, Benito Cereno grows silent and "moody." He convalesces in Lima, feminized, himself like an intrigante, "slowly and unconsciously gathering his mantle around him" (116). "But the past is passed;" enjoins Delano, to the flagging Cereno "why moralize upon it? Forget it. See, yon bright sun had forgotten it all, and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves" (116). Benito Cereno, by way of Delano's rampant citationality in the hyper present, clings to the past. The act of forgetting is a shrill

impossibility: "Because they have no memory," Cereno replies dejectedly to Delano's litany, "because they are not human" (116). To abandon memory, according to Cereno, is to give up humanity. To forget the origins of our knowledge making, according to Melville, is to capitulate the possibility of recognition.

The novella ends where it begins. In the finale, the slave revolt is discovered and quelled by Delano's crew. The *San Dominick* is brought to port in Lima and the case tried in the Viceroyalty's courts, adjudicated by officers of the Spanish crown. At the grisly conclusion, the leader of the revolt is executed and his decapitated head, described as the "hive of subtlety," staked on a pole in the center of a plaza in Lima. The head is described as returning the gaze of onlookers, "unabashed" staring out into the distance (116). This denouement marks the implicit narrative importance of the tapada. The head echoes the initial conjuring of the Lima intriguante—a dark visage gazing out upon Lima's colonial Plaza. These inscrutable faces become linked in the location, their challenge, and their subversion.

As the fulminations of independence in Latin America and the Caribbean seeped into the collective consciousness of what would become North America, the U.S. government was battling indigenous resistance to the forcible seizure of autochthonous lands. By the 1830's most American Indians had been removed from their former territories on the eastern seaboard and the government was pressing west with the sanction of Manifest Destiny and the social, juridical, and military mandate for the

extermination of native tribes. While "Benito Cereno" is most often credited with conjuring anxieties related to slave insurrections on land and at sea, this chapter has also shown its necessary and imbricated index of subversion among indigenous and mestiza communities.

A year after Melville published this novella, a young woman by the name of Olive Oatman would emerge from a five-year captivity among the Tolkepaya and Mohave tribes in what would soon be the southwestern United States. Her face was tattooed with the traditional marks of the Mohave people and she is thought to be the first photographed white woman with tattooing. The spread of her image and story traveled against the grain of westward expansion. Moving from the outposts of the west to the east coast, the sensational tale of Olive Oatman elicited the intrigue of her white contemporaries who struggled to understand the cultural and social specificities of Oatman's experience in the abstract "West." Much like those observers who sought to comprehend the unusual figuration of the tapada limeña, Olive Oatman's audiences turned toward literary and pictorial objects from elsewhere to make sense of her altered epidermalized appearance. It was not only women considered to be foreign and faraway that became repositories for the arc of racialized colonial discourse, but also women who were the products of singular domestic projects. The next chapter turns to consider the the circulations of Olive Oatman in the antebellum United States to demonstrate that

despite the advent of the photographic portrait and her hyper-visibility in the 1850s and 60s, Olive Oatman's individuated history is just as shrouded as the tapadas of Lima.

Chapter 2. "Had I Home": The Visual and Narrative Circulations of Olive Oatman

In these Leaves every thing is literally
photographed. Nothing is poeticized.
-Walt Whitman

At first glimpse, the history of Olive Oatman seems decidedly entrenched in the precinctive regional particularities of the American West. Sustained and contextualized analysis of her literary and visual fashioning, however, produce a glimpse of the global fault lines that pervade the construction of whiteness, womanhood, and nation building in the United States of the nineteenth-century. Oatman's intimacy with Amerindians and the obvious epidermal permeability of (her) whiteness, caused Oatman to renegotiate the attributes of her raced womanhood. Her story and its attendant visual artifacts reveal the pains white American took to fashion indigeneity as synonymous with racializations narrativized and pictured in travelogues in other, geographically separate colonial locales. This chapter makes visible the concerted and simultaneous project that these same writers, artists, and photographers took to maintain the fictitiously inviolable boundaries of unremarked whiteness. Oatman's arc of notoriety—from unmistakable celebrity to her contemporary obscurity—demonstrate a willful erasure of racial formation and the imperative to resuscitate the content and infrastructure of American violence executed in its service. The permeability of narrative and photographic frames—their content as well as their materiality—exposes penetrable national borders and the porous, subcutaneous boundaries of racial consolidation.

Olive Oatman sat for her first photograph in 1857. Her dramatic story swept the United States the previous year when Oatman emerged from a five-year captivity among the Yavapai and Mohave Indians. She was 19, had lost nearly her entire family in the attack that led to her sojourn in the Mohave Desert, and was marked with the traditional facial tattooing of the Mohave Indians. Five dark blue lines of varying thickness, some with embellishments, ran from Oatman's lower lip to the underside of her chin. Emergent technology made it possible for Oatman to be photographed shortly after her dubious ransom at Fort Yuma in the Quechan ancestral lands that would soon become the Arizona territory. She is the first known white woman to appear in a photograph with tattoos.

Figure 7. Olive Oatman, Tintype, 1857.
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Oatman's appearance is austere in this photograph. She sits against an empty studio wall or plain backdrop, facing the camera squarely. She wears a dark dress, pinpricked with a lighter color embroidery or polka dot print. Oatman's dark sleeves are ruffled with white cuffs peeking out at the pulse of her wrists. One white hand clutches the other in the lap of her full skirt. This is not a gesture of poise. Her hands are not clasped tranquilly, but rather gripped unevenly, a thumb loose to soothe the other hand

still. Her bared knuckles give the impression of a fidget fixed in time. The narrow, black lace collar of Oatman's dress is buttoned tightly at her alabaster throat. Her dark hair is parted neatly and pinned securely behind her head. Her facial tattoos are apparent and highly visible against the light coloring of her neck and face, set off by her dark garment and thick plaits of hair. Her eyes meet the camera levelly, her jaw is set squarely and pointed forward. It appears as if she is both braced against and resigned to the camera's lens.

This trepidation is warranted. This sitting was, quite literally, Oatman's first exposure to photography. She was the third of seven children born to a Mormon family on the prairie lands of western Illinois. Burgeoning early photography would not have been as readily available in the outposts of the Midwest during the 1840s as it would have been in urban centers of the eastern seaboard. While Oatman might have seen some early examples of daguerreotypes in the frontier just east of the Mississippi river, portraiture would have seemed like a luxury to the large Oatman family whose financial struggles during this period are well documented. It was in part their paucity, that would push the family west "in search of gold and God" (Mifflin 1). No portraits of any member of the Oatman family have surfaced prior to this 1857 tintype, most assuredly because none existed.

When Oatman, aged 14, and her younger sister, Mary Ann, 7, were captured by members of the Yavapai tribe in 1851, they were further shielded from the camera's

view. Their father, visibly pregnant mother, and four siblings had separated from a Mormon emigrant train headed west to find a prophesied promise land. They were attacked, most likely by the Yavapai Tolkepaya, along the Gila Trail in what was then considered northern Mexico. Their parents and three siblings were murdered immediately. Another brother, Lorenzo, was left for dead, though eventually made his return to Fort Yuma despite his severe injuries. The Oatman sisters remained with the Yavapai for a year, under considerable duress, before being traded inland to the Mohave Indians. Here, Olive and Mary Ann appear to have been adopted by the tribe and lived with little restraint. Mary Ann would succumb to starvation in the spring of 1854 when a terrible drought devastated the region. Olive would live on with the Mohave until word of her presence in the valley reached Fort Yuma and the U.S. military made ultimately successful overtures to retrieve her in 1856.

Unlike other Amerindian groups who were forcibly dispossessed by the territorial avarice and naturalizing narrative of European arrival during what Phillip Deloria has called the "fulcrum moment" of the 1830s, the Yavapai and Mohave tribes maintained sovereignty well into the second half of the nineteenth century (206). Partly because of the natural inaccessibility of their homelands, the Mohave in particular had few brushes with white arrivants to North America until midcentury. "These Indians," wrote U.S. Army Lieutenant Amiel Weeks Whipple of the Mohave during a railroad survey through the valley in 1854, "are in a wild state of nature as any tribe now within

the limits of our possessions. They have not had sufficient intercourse with any civilized people" (236-237). This "insufficient" intercourse meant that the tide of practicing daguerrotypists and itinerant photographers hawking ambrotypes were foreign to the Mohave. During a U.S. War Department expedition to the Mohave Valley in 1858, just a year after Olive Oatman was repatriated, Joseph C. Ives recorded several members of the Mohave tribe reacting to their first look at early photographs. "Some daguerreotypes were shown to them," wrote the young Lieutenant, "but these they disliked, and were rather afraid of. I heard one or two muttering in their own language, that they were 'very bad'" (71). The cartomania—the rise in availability and popularity of the cheaply produced carte de visite photographs that swept the United States during the 1850s took place entirely during the years of Oatman's adolescence and stead in the Mohave Valley. It would be no surprise, then, if she shared the Mohave's outlook on this new pictorial technology.

This was not an atavistic sentiment. Disdain for early photography was shared by many, including those who were solidly embedded in white society and its worldviews. The writer Herman Melville, for instance, declined a request for a daguerreotype in 1851 from his friend and editor Evert Duyckinck. Duyckinck requested the photograph for publication in a magazine. "[The daguerreotype] I can not send you, because I have none," he wrote. "And if I had, I would not send it for such a purpose." Melville goes on to cite the commonness of the daguerreotype. "The fact is, almost

everybody is having his 'mug' engraved nowadays." He continues humorously, "I respectfully decline being *oblivionated* by a Daguerretype [sic] (what a devil of an unspellable word!)" (*Correspondence* 180). More than a decade later in 1862, the reclusive poet Emily Dickinson would similarly decline a request for a photograph from noted abolitionist and Unitarian minister Thomas Wentworth Higginson, with whom she had a correspondence. She wrote that she "had no portrait." This, she noted, was a fact that she discussed often with her father who worried he would have nothing to remember Dickinson by if she should die. "[B]ut I notice the quick wore off those things, in a few days," she writes of daguerreotypes, "and forestall the dishonor" (Higginson). The luster and liveness of the photographs, in other words, wore away.

What luster there is in Oatman's tintype (known as a ferrotype or melainotype during the 1850's) is embedded in its photographic emulsion. Its materiality manifests its deep history. The portrait is made by creating a direct positive on a thin sheet of metal. The iron plate is covered with dark lacquer through a process known as "japanning" developed during the seventeenth-century to mimic the coveted lacquered furniture of the Far East. A silver collodion emulsion is then laid on top for the photographic impress. Exposure to light triggered the transfer of the silver, making the photograph appear a creamy white color. Highlights appear shiny with silver deposits, and shadows are caused by a thin or absent layer of silver over the dark japanned metal. The Orientalist shorthand of "japanning" signals a deepening dependence on the global

trade networks of the mercantile system. It additionally portends the twinning consolidations of colonization and racialization that are occurring in the imagined and amalgamated territories of the Orient, as well as the American West that Oatman comes to represent.

Figure 8. Locking Thermoplast Union Case, exterior and interior, ca. 1859. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

Figure 9. Olive Oatman and Lorenzo Oatman, Tintypes, 1857.
Beinecke Rare Book Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The photograph's presentation is undertaken with explicit purpose. Its careful preservation and positioning establishes Oatman within a sanctioned social framework of white kinship. The portrait is housed in a locking thermoplast Union case with a companion portrait of Lorenzo Oatman, Olive Oatman's only remaining sibling. The case functions like a picture locket. Open, the images are side by side, joined by metal hinges. Closed and hidden from the viewer, the two portraits mirror each other, as if Lorenzo and Olive are regarding one another. The emulsion of Olive Oatman's portrait is marred with fine abrasions in the upper quarter of the photograph, demonstrating the way in which it has been handled, stored, perhaps reframed. This particular case, manufactured by Littlefield, Parsons & Company, is called "Beehive, Grain, and

Farmtools," and features raised designs of wholesome generic agrarian symbols—a bundle of wheat, a shovel, a pitchfork, a sickle, a hive buzzing with activity and industry. The tintypes, as a result, are encapsulated by the symbology of domestic territory and its careful cultivation. The two sides are lined with a lush fabric, and the portraits framed by a gold brushed mat preserver. Littlefield, Parsons, & Company was based out of Florence, Massachusetts, and operated from roughly 1858 through 1866. That the photos were taken a year previous to the launch of this extremely popular photo case supplier suggests that the portraits were framed some time after their creation—packaged or repackaged thoughtfully and deliberately. The inclusion of Lorenzo in this keepsake is a strategic one. Since the siblings were presumably photographed in the same studio sitting, Olive is not alone for her first photograph, but rather participating in a shared enterprise. The image created at this sitting does not exist on its own. Instead, the portrait of Lorenzo offers context and symmetry. The embracing riveted hinge of the case sutures Oatman back to kinship structures she had long been without—her biological nuclear family and its attendant whiteness.[1]

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[1] These tintypes, along with the Union case, were donated to Yale University by William Robertson Coe, most likely as part of his larger collection, in 1948. Coe, a noted collector of Americana and artifacts of the American West, was pivotal in the development of the field of American Studies. Motivated by conservative political sentiment during the Cold War, British-born Coe believed that facilitating study of the history and culture of the United States would produce citizens committed to anti-communist activity. His philanthropy led to the founding of over 40 American Studies Departments at colleges and universities, and three endowed professorships at Yale, Stanford, and the University of Wyoming. Coe's preservation and curation of these tintypes situates these images within an archive reliant upon nationalistic discourses of (Anglo-) American supremacy. It also makes the absence of Oatman in dedicated academic studies of American literature and culture curious.

Far from being "oblivionated" by her portrait, Oatman became famous. This image marked the instantiation of her visual renown. Portraits of Oatman in photographic and pictorial form circulated in newspaper, books, and totally untethered from their textual supplements as cheaply reproducible cabinet cards. These images commanded strange fascination and became a gimcrack of the era. The image, the specter of Oatman's marked visage, made her notable. Her sensational story was covered widely in the popular press. Within a year of her ransom, Oatman composed a titillating biography mediated through a controversial amanuensis, the Methodist minister Royal B. Stratton. The highly embellished, illustrated, and partly fabricated account was a best seller by nineteenth-century standards. The book sold some 26,000 copies in three separate printings within a span of three years. In its pages, the Mohave people are treated with equal parts familial tenderness and racist vitriol. Oatman took to the lecture circuit shortly after the book's publication on the West Coast to undergird her precarious financial situation and compromised social status. During this time, she had several more portraits taken to distribute for publicity and to sell in the carte de visite format. In short, during the late 1850's and 1860's, Oatman's image catapulted her to celebrity.

Her rise to notoriety is one marked by telling contradiction. Oatman is fixed in place by the geographic restrictions of her captivity, even as the lands in which she resides become tumultuously mobile—control of autochthonous lands are transferred

from Mexico to U.S. territory. Barely able to speak English when she arrives at Fort Yuma, Oatman authors a book, printed several times over by the burgeoning English language press infrastructure that arose during the Mexican-American War. When the country's territorial avarice pushed west with the juridical, social, and military imperative for Indian removal and genocide, Oatman came east to give public speeches on the quickly shifting culture and habits of the Mohave Indians in the last years of their sovereignty. Seeking to secure the private, domestic, and feminine powers attributed to white womanhood of the era, she ascended the public sphere's lecture podium—a platform typically reserved for men. As conflict mounted over the black lives embroiled in U.S. oppression and enslavement, Oatman spoke publicly about white slavery. As Native Americans struggled not to be foreclosed in an already completed past time, she framed herself in the camera's lens and the still press of a quicksilver surface. It is in these contrasting spaces of Olive Oatman's circulations and fraught public life that this chapter dwells.

The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section considers the limits of language and access that plagued women transiting through imbricated modes of captivity in the nineteenth-century United States. The subsequent sections distill an aspect of Oatman's particular circulation within the world of nineteenth-century U.S. literary and visual culture—from her biography's print culture history to an American ideal sculpture allegedly influenced by Oatman's story—that traces out its rich allogamy

with literary predecessors, artistic influences, and synchronous historical context. These far-reaching inspirations and encounters produce an understanding of Oatman that resuscitates her history from the primitive U.S. frontier to a global enterprise that conscripts all available narrative resources to fix her identity in service of amalgamating and stagnating the identity of others. **Oatman's story represents the dense intercourse of epistemic meaning that adhered to discernable identity difference.**

2.1 Captive Grammar

The limits of language to describe the distinct situations that fall under the category of captivity are distilled by the particularities of Oatman's story. Words and images that oscillate between victimization and empowerment, belonging and bondage pervade the scholarship on Oatman. As David R. Sewell has written, the grammar of captivity narratives is always incomplete. These stories, in Sewell's theorization, are circumscribed to a language in which the Indian is always "categorized, comprehended, or condemned" (45). Women, too, are foreclosed in the available discourses. Despite the potential for disruption of gender and racial norms elaborated by Christopher Castiglia in his study of captivity narratives, *Bound and Determined* (1996), the discursive resources for individuals marked by gender, as by race, are inadequate.[2] The extent to which

[2] Oatman's story can be considered in a network of texts that help to unsettle dominant modes of captivity narratives within the domestic United States. Considering *Captivity of the Oatman Girls* in concert with works like Sarah Wakefield's *Six Weeks in the Sioux Teepees: A Narrative of Indian Captivity* (1864), James T. DeShields *Cynthia Ann Parker* (1866), Fanny Kelly's *Narrative of My Captivity Among the Sioux Indians* (1873) and others, broadens an understanding of frontier travel in the 19th century and women's ability to interface with it. As

Oatman felt embedded with or alienated from her white family, her Yavapai captors, the Mohave people with whom she spent her formative teenage years, or the white society—in the throes of Indian Removal and foment preceding the American Civil War—to which she returned as a young adult is unknowable. Her history is trapped in the available and inadequate grammar.

Although Olive Oatman left clues about her feelings and social strategies in the form of photographs, letters, and a highly contrived biography, any record of her is incomplete. Her archive has been twice mediated. First, Oatman is circumscribed by the social climate to which she returned the moment she set foot in Fort Yuma—the unyielding grammar of time and place. Prevailing social attitudes during this period prized the impermeability coded as respectability of white women and simultaneously sought to expunge indigenous Americans from their lands and resources. Consider the case of Sarah Wakefield, who defended a member of the Santee Dakotas, named Chaska, after she and her two children emerged safely from a six-week captivity during the Dakota Wars in 1862. After testifying that Chaska and his family group protected and cared for her during her tenure with the Sioux, Wakefield was branded an "Indian lover." Chaska, who was slated to receive a presidential pardon, was deliberately

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Castiglia notes, "While often gruesome or pathetic, the captivity narratives also depict captives possessing strengths not usually attributed to white women" (25-26). Oatman's account and those of her successors, when read for regional and cultural specificity, reveal how moves and removes took place in opposition to and in the wake of the territorial avarice that has come to characterize this moment of Manifest Destiny.

hanged by the U.S. government with 39 other Sioux conspirators. "My object," writes Wakefield, "was to excite sympathy for the Indians and in so doing, the soldiers lost all respect for me, and abused me shamefully" (60). That Wakefield expressed even a moderately pro-Indian sentiment in the midst of violent conflict and ongoing territorial aggression, gave white American detractors ample fodder to malign her account. That she was a woman, produced the suggestion (and subsequent harassment) that the penetrability of her body by the racialized other corroborated the penetrability of her account. Oatman, with the evidence of the pricks of whiteness's permeability immediately perceptible on her face, would know keenly the difficulty of appearing in a way that might command respect and avoid the abuse described by her near contemporary, Wakefield. Secondly, Oatman's story is altered by the collaborators with whom she created her texts and her images. This included the photographers who helped to stage and constitute Oatman's portraits and Royal B. Stratton, the emphatically racist Methodist minister who, as Oatman's amanuensis and perhaps with her input, selectively omitted and fabricated much of *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls* (1857).[3]. We will never know to what extent Oatman imagined herself participating in

[3] The text first appeared under the title, *Life Among the Indians: Being an Interesting Narrative of the Captivity of the Oatman Girls* (1857), and was truncated in subsequent editions to *Captivity of the Oatman Girls* (1858). While the text between editions remained substantively the same, Royal B. Stratton did add 48 pages between the first and second editions, substantially expanding the preface to combat stinging critical reception from early reviewers. For a detailed discussion of the amendments made between editions and early publication history, see McGinty, 167-68.

these narrative creations. Despite scholarship that has parsed the lacunae of her biography, significant silences in the Oatman story remain. Some, predictably in the indeterminate landscape of Oatman's captivity and her private life. "Much of that dreadful period is unwritten, and will remain forever unwritten," wrote Royal Stratton (226). Other silences manifest where silence ought not to linger—during the years of Oatman's seemingly conspicuous public life between 1857 and 1865.

It is not the creation, then, but the circulation of Oatman's body, images, and texts that is the object of this critical project. Oatman's text and images mark both proximity and distance. It is her relationship with the Mohave nation and the individuals that peopled Oatman's youth—her adoptive sister, Topeka, her adoptive mother, Aespaneo and many more, both named and unnamed in her text—that have solidified the intrigue of Oatman's story. Over the years, there have been various theories about her level of integration with the tribe. Oatman herself both affirmed and dissembled from the affections of her Mohave family group. Yet, an obvious intimacy persists. "The evidence is overwhelming that she was fully adopted into the tribe and that she ultimately considered herself a member," writes Margot Mifflin. She continues:

> Oatman was taken at a vulnerable age, had no known family to return to, and bonded with the family that both rescued her from the Yavapais and gave her their clan name. She submitted to a ritual tattoo, bore a nickname that confirmed her insider status, and declined to escape when the Whipple party [the above mentioned 150-person army survey that spent a week with the Mohave in 1854 (McGinty 102-03)] appeared in the valley or through the many Quechan runners or local Mexicans who could have carried a message to Fort Yuma on Oatman's behalf. By the time Francisco [a Yuma Indian working on behalf of the U.S.

> military] came looking for her, Olive had become a Mohave, and almost certainly didn't want to go 'home.' (195)

The wavering grammar of belonging, in Mifflin's text as in Oatman's, is mediated by the limit points of language. Words like "captivity," "slavery," "sojourn," "stead," "exile," "insider," "family," "kin," "clan," "membership," "society," "adoption," and the laden "home" set against the backdrop of autochthony eradicated, contain an excess of multivalenced meaning. Yet, none of this language moves toward a full understanding of Oatman's interiority or sociality.

If Oatman's texts are marked by this unarticulable intimacy, then so too is her body. Both become symbols of closeness and relation. The perception of Oatman's tattooed face, her malleable whiteness, undermine for nineteenth-century white American audiences an axiomatic reliance on what Hortense Spillers has called the "powerful stillness of 'Ethnicity'" (66). The impressionable and altered whiteness of Oatman's visible tattoos call to mind Spillers' much more modern construction of raced and gendered subjectivity: "Let's face it," Spillers writes. "I am a marked woman." The markedness of Oatman is immediately identifiable, but what this markedness signifies to the body of a white woman remains perpetually unsayable.

Scholarship on this and similar silences offers an homage to underrepresented women in the literary and historical cannon. Yet, as Tiya Miles cautions in her attempt to write about the difficult and unrecorded histories at the intersection of white, enslaved black, and Cherokee kinship groups: "Do not be lulled" (26). To write about the

complicated history of Doll, an enslaved woman who was gifted to the white (presumed) captive wife of a middle class Cherokee man, Miles writes, "is a wholly inadequate experience." That both women in this social construction are considered captives—"captives of a different color" says Miles (44)—despite a very apparent power differential, indicates that captivity is always a shared grammar for women in nineteenth-century constructions of kinship and marriage. This mutual subjugation does not elide the alleviations and deteriorations to these captive circumstances provided by perceivable conditions of race and class. Rather, it points to a cul-de-sac of language which fails to account for the experiences of women living in North America during this era. White domesticity is implicated by American slavery is implicated by indigeneity is implicated by immigration, and all are at stake in the formation of the seemingly sessile and contiguous nation. Women's captivities in the wavering social landscape of the nineteenth century, despite uneven distributions of power and identity, are always imbricated. That Doll would also live as her owner's husband's wife and would become the mother to his children, underscores the unknowability in the spectrums of choice and coercion, property and belonging, dread and desire.

The subtitle of Oatman's biography gives a meaningful glimpse of this snarl. "Containing," reads the long play-by-play subtitle, pro forma in nineteenth-century tomes, as it lists, "An Interesting Account of the Massacre of the Oatman Family," "The Five Years' Suffering and Captivity of Olive A. Oatman" and then, "Also, Her Singular

Recapture in 1856" (Stratton *frontmatter,* italics mine*).* Oatman's return to white society is scripted as yet another imprisonment—a recapture. In the the exhaustively constructed U.S. territories of foreign and domestic, even the smallest freedoms for women are encountered under duress.

The silences that linger in the archives are unrecorded as they are unsayable because of a lack of language that persists today. I have adhered to the vocabulary and variants of language used by Oatman and her contemporary publics, all the while recognizing the interdiction of desire upon the language and understandings of captivity. Olive Oatman's story, not unlike Doll's, occupies the fault lines of social divisions and surveilled norms. Oatman was marked by her narratively ambiguous time as a captive in intimate proximity to a group whose identity was quickly consolidating as racialized, savage, and exterminable. She has a significant paper trail in contrast to the archival omissions that surround much of black American letters, such as Doll's, during the nineteenth century. This documentation, however, has been conscripted by the heft of hegemonic narratives of white American men in both general and specific ways. Her story is inadequate, and to be soothed by the available discourses, to be lulled into knowledge, would be specious. In the case of Olive Oatman, it is sometimes her stark portraits that preclude vision, the many words that mark the absences of significant words.

2.2 "Upon My Figurehead": The Permanence of Racial Permeability

If her contemporaries believed that Oatman's dramatic story and striking visage was the stuff of novels, they were not mistaken. A decade before Oatman presented at Fort Yuma, Herman Melville released his first novel, *Typee: A Peep at Polynesian Life* (1846). This book was Melville's most popular work during his lifetime. The semi-autobiographical text depicts a protagonist who is threatened with facial tattooing at the hands of natives in the South Pacific Marquesa Islands. This fictionalized gesture hails Oatman's history with eerie anxiety, overlap, and anticipation.

Melville's story offers a powerful context for the reception of Oatman's account. Having deserted his whaling ship, the main character, Tommo, assumes a liberal and meandering captivity among the people of the island of Nuku Hiva. Several months into his stay, Tommo is confronted suddenly with the menace of a talented Marquesan tattoo artist, Karky, whom he describes as lusting after the pale, perfect canvas of his white face. Tommo becomes "horrified at the bare thought of being rendered hideous for life if the wretch were to execute his purpose" (218). Tommo eventually submits to tattooing, which he describes as "engrafting," on his arm to assuage Korky.[4] Korky,

[4] The etymology of "engraft" has fascinating resonances with the anxiety about facial tattooing that Melville narrates through Tommo. Not only does it signify the literal writing with a carving tool, stylus, or pen, but also conjures the Middle English "graff," meaning "shoot inserted into another plant" (Online Etymology Dictionary). That a graphic encounter with another could produce an unalterable change to an individual's tissue and future growth, is at the core of Tommo's racist distress.

however, refuses to commence work on anything but Tommo's face. Throughout the encounter, Tommo describes his supreme fear of this possibility, saying that he was "shuddering at the ruin [Korky] might inflict upon my figure-head" (219). That he likens his face to the wooden carving attached to a ship's prow, the masthead or figurehead, bespeaks the ways in which the construction of Tommo's identificatory white masculinity correlates with maritime taxonomies of nation and state. "[T]he true character of the vessel" could be made plain by its appearance, as Melville writes in the 1855 novella about mis/recognition, "Benito Cereno" (48). A ship's flag would identify its national allegiance; a figurehead—often a carving of a woman—would help to distinguish its origin and character. The rise of physiognomy in the mid-nineteenth century lent itself to this type of visually perceptive assessment. Tommo's face occupies the same identifcatory and diplomatic function as the masthead. His countenance is feminized by its proximity to the dearth of women's bodies carved and used for this decorative and distinguishing feature of a ship. Tommo's face as figurehead signals the convoluted tangle of personal, gender, racial, national, and foreign identities.

Figure 10. George E. Noyes, *Ship's Female Figurehead,* ca. 1860. New Bedford Whaling Museum.

At some level, Tommo seems keenly aware of this nexus of belonging. "This incident opened my eyes to a new danger;" he says, "and I now felt convinced that in some luckless hour I should be disfigured in such a manner as never more to have the *face* to return to my countrymen, even should an opportunity offer" (219). Tommo's anxiety about the permeability of his identity and the supple, epidermalized terrain of recognition is apparent. "[A] facial tattoo would change Tommo's identity," writes Brigit Brander Rasmussen, "and cost him the most important privilege of whiteness: being unmarked" (131). It is the transection of his whitness and his masculinity that allows

Tommo to transit indistinctly. Jennifer Putzi adds, "As a white man returning home with tattoos, Tommo would be regarded as an acculturated captive with questionable loyalties to his own culture and to the white race. He would be unable to save (his) face or retain his reputation as an unmarked white man" (22). The conspicuousness, the markedness, of visual difference is irreconcilable for Tommo and the white, fraternal society to which he imagined returning.

When Oatman reflected on her own tattooing, it was not with the frenzied objections of Tommo or his fantasy of a disfigured return to his countrymen. Instead, Oatman indexes a revealing, gendered, and concrete shame. The chief, Espaniole, and his wife, aforementioned Aespaneo, with whom she lived—mother and father figures in the rubric of Mohave clan adoptions—brought two physicians to their home to tattoo the Oatman sisters. These tattoos were known as hakuich thompol or "chin mark" (Taylor and Wallace 183). Oatman suggests in *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls* that she pleaded not to be tattooed, but that it was in vain. Espaniole and Aespaneo replied only that, "they knew why we objected to it; that we expected to return to the whites, and we would be ashamed of it then" (Stratton 183). Yet, in Mohave culture, the tattoos would have signaled only advantages.

Tattooing was standard practice for all Mohave tribe members, men and women. The chin marks carried spiritual and aesthetic benefits for recipients. First, the tattoos functioned as "Sil'aid," a means of passage to the afterlife. Members of the Mohave who

objected to tattoos during their youth for fear of the pain were not forced to receive them. Typically, however, these selfsame individuals requested tattoos as they grew older in order to protect their spirits as they approached entrance into the land of the dead (McGinty 99). Next, while the Mohave tattoos are designs not meant to designate meaning, they do beautify the look of the wearer. Whereas the tattoos of Melville's South Pacific are signifiers of tribal origins, the Mohave markings are said to be decorative. The Mohave people prize broad facial structure, and the patterns are meant to "create or enhance this impression" (Mifflin 78-79). In this sense, Oatman reaped an aesthetic benefit as well as a spiritual one. The points of the horizontal lines extending from the last vertical lines on either side of her chin emphasized the extension of Oatman's jaw line. That Espaniole and Aespaneo would register stigmatization and the loss of esteem given these benefits of spirituality and appearance in the context of their limited contact with white arrivants seems improbable.

Olive's memory of her tattooing was of deferred pain. The Oatman sisters were led into the outdoor area behind their home in the Mohave Valley. They put their heads in the laps of their tattooers who worked over them for several hours, painstakingly pricking their chins in "small regular rows" with cactus needles. When they had created lacerations that "bled freely," they immersed the sticks in the liquid of a weed that grew along the banks of the Colorado, and a powder made from the ashes of pulverized blue stones found "in low water, in some places along the bed of the stream" (Stratton 183).

The conjured porosity of the river stones supplements the porosity of Oatman's skin. The land that would become the American West was literally embedded in her epidermis. "Whether she wanted the tattoo or not," notes Mifflin, "the clean lines of Olive's pattern indicate that she cooperated thoroughly with both the process and the aftercare it required" (78). The initial tattooing did not hurt as much as the subsequent recovery, according to Olive, who said that the process "pained us more for two or three days after than at the time of its being done" (Stratton 183). Arguably, the real pain in this process was the perception of the tattoos when Olive arrived back in the throes of white life at Fort Yuma and beyond.

The tattoos were a significant barrier to Oatman's reentry to white life. They were presented as something to be overcome. When Royal Stratton described what should have been the joyful reunion of Olive and Lorenzo, the long separated siblings, for instance, the tattoos played a central role in his narrative. "She was changed," he wrote of Olive, "but despite the written traces of her outdoor life and barbarous treatment left upon her appearance and person, [Lorenzo] could read the assuring evidences of her family identity" (277). The alteration of her skin at the subcutaneous level and her experience outside the bounds of sitting room domesticity, alienated her from Anglo-American belonging. To understand Olive Oatman as white, related, and relatable, required an intrepid reader, one who could look beyond her engrafted face.

In the years after she departed from the Mohave Valley, Oatman would refer to her tattoos publicly in ways that reveal the stakes of her modified appearance. In a proto freak show gesture that predated the rise of such spectacle in North America, Oatman drew her audience's attention to her physical exhibition. "You see I have the mark placed indelibly on my face," she said (Oatman). In her biography, Oatman suggests that the tattoos were administered in a response to suspicions that she and Mary Ann had been plotting their escape from the Valley. "If we should get away," she is quoted as saying in the text, "and they should find us among other tribes, or if some other tribes should steal us, they would by this means know us" (Stratton 183). This situation of the tattoos as a reactionary gesture instead of a planned ritual allows the marks to be read as agential rebellion instead of hard-won belonging. "By presenting her inscribed body as evidence of her captivity—literally making a spectacle of herself—Olive pushed the boundaries of feminine propriety in appearances that could only be validated by her victimhood" (Mifflin 167-68). Oatman also told audiences that the tattoos on her face were "slave marks" meant to indicate abject servitude (Oatman). That she did so from the elevated lecture podium throughout the antebellum and Civil War period echoes the visual registers of the contemporary slave auction block and signals that it is not just the strictures of feminine propriety that are at stake. Oatman also pushed the bounds of her racial identifications to produce both the scenes of her described abasement and the necessary sympathies that would rehabilitate the "evidences" of her whiteness.

Oatman's emergence as a recognizable celebrity precisely because of her tattoo is essential at this critical moment of national narrative and solidifying racial categories. Her public life and visible persona offered a powerful opportunity for whiteness to be shored up against a multiplicity of racialized otherness. The facial tattooing offered a site of (geo)graphic and cultural collapse. As the commercial success of *Typee* attests, popular European and Anglo-American encounters with tattooing up until this moment had been scripted through the Pacific. As Jodi Byrd highlights, even "the word 'tattoo' entered European worlds and lexicons through Captain Cook's Pacific voyage that transliterated the Tahitian word into signification as 'tattow.' As sign," she continues, exploring the complex etymology, "'tattoo' bears its trace at the nexus between Western systems of knowledge production that seek to solidify its onto-epistemological meaning into 'discovery,' 'mastery,' and 'savagery,' and the Pacific ontologies of genealogy, kinship, and embodied relationships" (9). The British-born Cook was not the first white European to brandish a tattoo as is commonly thought. Indeed, there is evidence that tattooing—not yet so named—was practiced in Europe from late Antiquity through the Early Modern period (Friedman). Yet, the widely held scholarly belief that this practice was a result of European expansion into the Pacific itself undergirds Byrd's claim: the practice of understanding difference during European and U.S. Enlightenment periods is one of erasure.

When these same knowledge projects of willful Western onto-epistemology are brought to bear on Olive Oatman because of her time in the amorphous American West—as much an imaginary as an actual place in the mid-nineteenth-century—the site of the American frontier is complicated. The American public could import the readily available context and anxieties of tattooing narrated by white sailors in the Pacific onto the image of Olive Oatman. The specter of modification experienced by Tommo is indexed by Oatman's facial tattoos; the exoticized tropical latitudes of the Pacific map onto the contested western territory of the United States; the Mohave, if the American public even registered that kind of tribal specificity, are made commensurate with disparate and diffused populations in the remote Pacific. In other words, geographic and cultural diversity is shorthanded, made portable, and equivalent. If the mythology of the American West produces a national narrative of regeneration through violence, as proffered by historian Richard Slotkin, in which Americanization is tied to the obliteration and reclamation of the American Indian, what happens when Polynesia is also implicated in that register of indigeneity?

For Oatman, the receding origins of her tattoos are marked by a retrospective time, a shame that would manifest later. "We had seen them do this to some of their female children," she writes of the marks that she later claims were only given to Mohave captives to signify enslavement. Oatman continues that she and Mary Ann "had often conversed with each other about expressing the hope we should be spared

from receiving their marks upon us" (Stratton 182), the possessive pronoun "their" simultaneously undercutting her own explanation of the marks upon her face. In a moment of constructing ethnic fixity, of consolidating the racialized other, tattoos, specifically the tattoos inscribed on the otherwise white female body, are a menacing visual flashpoint to Western epistemologies—engrafting that made complicit both the body and the flesh. The face of Olive Oatman threatens to reveal what Anglo Enlightenment theories were endeavoring to belie: the permanence of whiteness's permeability.

2.3 "It Was Light Covering": Respectable Looking

When Oatman is next photographed, her presentation is notably more feminine. In this (circa) 1858 cabinet card (McGinty 117), Oatman sits in a Santa Jose, California, studio in front of a nondescript wall or plain drop. Her body is at an angle with her right arm propped on a side table. Oatman's habiliment is highly feminine. She is wearing a dress of shiny fabric. The garment has puffed sleeves, an embroidered skirt, buttons, a belt with a metal clasp, and a crocheted collar of white lace. Oatman's hair is neatly parted. While some of it is plaited away from her face, the length of her hair can be seen trailing below her shoulders and down her back. A bow is visible above the crown of her head. Oatman's empty hands hang listlessly in her lap with none of the trappings of domesticity that are often pictured in portraits of women of the era—flowers, books, photos of loved ones, embroidery, or a ball of yarn and knitting needles.

Her left hand, strewn in the foreground of her lap appears almost too large for the delicate cuff of her sleeve. Although her body is turned slightly to the right of the frame, Oatman faces the camera squarely. Her tattoos are, again, highly visible. The dark lines are set off against the pallor of Oatman's skin and the white of her wide, draped collar. Her facial expression appears tense. Her left brow is arched, her chin is set, and her lips are slightly curled.

Figure 11. Loryea & Macauly Souvenir Studio, "*Olive Oatman,*" Carte de visite, ca. 1858. History San Jose Research Library.

Oatman likely sat for this photograph as part of an informal publicity campaign that she, Lorenzo, and Stratton were conducting to promote the sale of the *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls.* The albumen print was made at a popular souvenir photographic

studio in operation for decades in downtown San Jose ("Milton Loryea"), suggesting that Oatman anticipated a fairly large initial printing, and possibly later reprintings of the cabinet card. The book had harnessed the momentum of Oatman's sensational coverage in the popular press and sold incredibly well in its first edition. The initial 5,000 copies *Captivity* printed in San Francisco in 1857 sold out within 3 weeks, causing the San Francisco-based *Bulletin* to quip that it had been an "astonishing run" (qtd. in McGinty 167). "Only two weeks had elapsed before orders were in the city for books, that could not be filled;" writes Stratton in his preface to the second edition, "and that but a few days after the whole edition was bound" (9). Subsequent printing runs were commissioned first in California, and then throughout the country. Photographs like this one would have been in demand by readers as well as members of the public who hadn't yet been able to purchase a copy of the best seller.

It is not surprising that Oatman, or perhaps her near friends and family, took an interest in her appearing more feminine in this photograph. Newspaper accounts of Oatman's captivity, repatriation, and her tattoos—which were mentioned without fail—abounded in the time between her ransom and the publication of *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls* was published. While these notices surely contributed to the book's commercial success, they called into question the boundaries of Oatman's white, feminine identity. "Olive Oatman: The Apache Captive" read the tantalizing headline on the front page of the *Los Angeles Star* which was syndicated in newspapers across the

country. The story related by the *Star* and subsequent town and city newspapers were meant to entice, rather than relate fact. "The clothes left to [Olive] wore out, and fell from her back in two weeks," the *Star* notes with lurid detail of Oatman's tenure with the Tolkepaya, "and then she matted together the bark of trees and tied it around her person like the Indians. It was light covering, but it did not leave her wholly exposed" (1). This reportage is titillating. The suggestion of the exposed female body clad in only threadbare clothing, and then cinched tightly in brittle bark clearly sexualizes Oatman. Its anecdotal importance is proportionally overblown in a report claiming to account for a five year tenure. The article makes available an escalating narrative of Oatman's respectable layering falling away.

The illustrations included in the first edition and redrawn for subsequent galleys exposed Oatman in a similar fashion. These extraliterary etchings depicted both Oatman sisters bare breasted in scenes of their captivity, gleaming in the muddied, grayscale backgrounds of native and natural life. These enmediated artifacts figured Oatman as physically and perpetually vulnerable. As they lent themselves to imagined or actual indecencies for nineteenth-century readers, the photographic portrait with its attention to the staging of white femininity undertook a corrective rhetorical adornment, a kind of dressing up that was unavailable to Oatman in her depictions in *Captivity* and the United States press.

Figure 12. "Indian Skulking to Hear the Conversation of the Girls," 1858, *Captivity of the Oatman Girls,* added as part of the 3rd. ed.

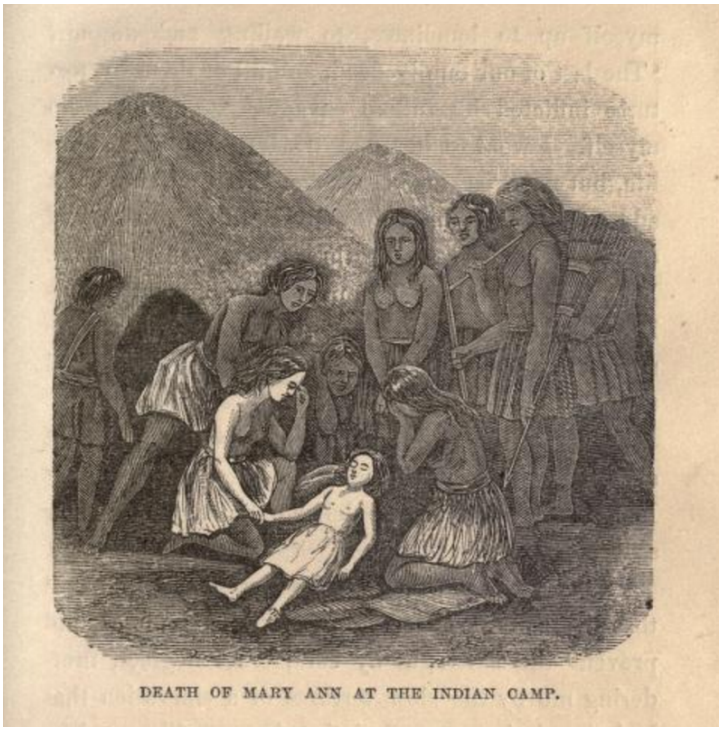

Figure 13. "Death of Mary Ann at the Indian Camp," 1857. *Captivity of the Oatman Girls.*

The photograph of Oatman, with its projected propriety, may have also been intended to position the book as a more legitimate literary enterprise. Although popular at the time of its publication, *Captivity* was always considered a low-brow pulp nonfiction narrative, not a literary autobiography. With a penchant for melodramatic language and a presentation that featured myriad misspellings, grammatical errors, and erroneous dates, the book was panned in the press. The April 3, 1857 *Bulletin,* Brian McGinty notes, "reminded its readers that the paper had reported the Oatman story in its own pages and repeated…that the book's value lay in its subject matter, not in 'any literary merit'" (165). "The story is a thrilling one," echoed the *San Francisco Herald* a

week later, "though poorly written" (2). In addition to the circulation of the photograph around 1858, there were several other simultaneous cosmetic measures taken to bolster the book's reputation between editions. The third edition was printed in larger print, on more expensive paper, and bound with a red, embossed cloth cover. The manuscript—left narratively identical—appeared with corrected spelling and streamlined punctuation. There were a map and several additional illustrations added at this time. The woodcut portrait of Oatman received a pictorial facelift. The sketch was redone in a much more sophisticated manner from the original—"the rude little engraving" *Out West Magazine* would call the first portrait in the early part of the twentieth century (227). The redrawn engraving accentuated Oatman's facial tattoos and was moved from the back matter to the frontispiece because, according to McGinty, "readers were fascinated by Olive's tattoos, and the publishers wanted to ensure that potential buyers saw them before they put the book down" (170). Despite all these improvements to the text, the resounding criticism clearly stung Stratton who fired back in his preface to the second edition, challenging:

> Let those, if any there are, to whom *reality* is a serious obstacle to engaged and sustained attention and interest, and whose morbidly created taste, has given a settled disrelish for marvels *in the facts*, while it unceasingly clamors for miracles of the fancy; to whom plain things, said in a plain way, have no attraction, whose reading heaven is a mountain of epithet on flashing epithet piled—let such lay aside the book. (10)

Stratton's shrill defense of the book and underscored "facts" reveal his complicated authorial role and an uneasy relationship with the veracity of the text.

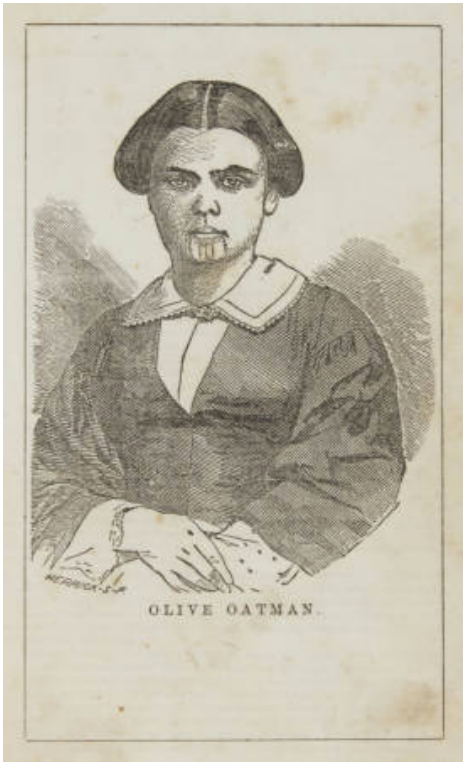

Figure 14. "Olive Oatman" ***Captivity of the Oatman Girls,*** **1st ed., 1857.**

Figure 15. "Olive Oatman," Captivity of the Oatman Girls, 3rd ed., 1858.

Stratton's "conspicuous tinkering" with the Oatman story is well documented (Mifflin 140); omissions, exaggerations, and fabrications in the text abound. It was Lorenzo who had requested Stratton's assistance writing the Oatmans' story with a significant emphasis on Olive's captivity. Stratton immediately agreed. He was a young, prominent, itinerant Methodist minister living in northern California while the surviving Oatman siblings stayed with cousins in nearby southern Oregon in the months after their initial reunion. It was Stratton, after or perhaps during the completion of the manuscript, who arranged for its printing through the ever-growing network of

Methodist publishing houses. As I have already noted there is no way to reconstruct the ways in which Olive (and for that matter, Lorenzo) participated in the writing process.

To describe the timbre of the book is to describe a receding figure marching steadily into the horizon—the vision growing more unclear while you zealously watch it move further out of grasp. The *Captivity* is presented as if in chronological order, detailing the Oatman family's westward emigration, the attack on the Gila Trail, and Olive and MaryAnn's subsequent captivity. It appears to be told from three voices—direct quotation from Lorenzo Oatman, direct quotation from Olive Oatman, and interspersed commentary from Stratton himself. Language—particularly the derogatory explanations of the Mohave—is dissonant from writing and lectures Oatman later delivered independently. The extreme hostility toward American Indians in this work is evident in the use the most racist of terms to produce generalities for native peoples including "human devils" (65), the evil-designing foe of the white race" (72), "human-shaped demons" (97), and others. The humanity of these characters, however, is simultaneously affirmed and denied within the text. Noting that none of these monikers is carried into Olive Oatman's lecture notes, scholars like McGinty and Mifflin have conjectured that these racist aspersions are the product of Stratton's narrative engineering. The timeline of unfolding events is completely erroneous, off by years in some cases. There are passages conveniently cribbed from Mary Rowlandson's classic 1682 captivity tale, *A True History of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*

(Mifflin 148-49). Information is whitewashed—there is no mention of the Mormonism at the heart of the Oatman pilgrimage for instance, nor of Oatman's many opportunities for contact with the Whipple party. There are factual inaccuracies—from illogical exaggerations to the wholly fabricated (and quite histrionic) crucifixion of a Cocopa captive woman after her futile attempt at escape. Yet, even if it is the case that Stratton and Oatman were working at cross purposes during their assembly of *Captivity*, instances of admiration, affection, and intimacy for Mohave individuals and groups seep through the book's pages.

As Mifflin has noted, Oatman was an "accidental ethnographer," recording her memories of her time with the Mohave in the last decade of their sovereignty (6). This characterization positions *Captivity of the Oatman Girls* squarely along a series of accounts of "Indian life" that came into vogue as American travel writing in the 1760's, around the completion of the Seven Years' War (Gould 18-19). Beginning with tomes like John Bartman's 1751 *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, Animals, and other Matters Worthy of Notice, made by Mr. John Bartram in his Travels from Pennsylvania to Onondaga, Oswego, and the Lake Ontario, in Canada*, these pseudo-ethnographic works would inaugurate a host of writings whose aim, as is evident from the book title, was to "domesticate these worlds—both physical landscapes and the Native American tribes…and make them comprehensible" (Gould 20). This type of writing instantiated a preoccupation with Native Americans that would come to

exemplify the United States's contribution to Victorian natural sciences. Philip Gould has noted a problematic relationship between the captivity narrative and this type of regionally and historically overlapping travel writing "because the genre's protagonists were generally not trained naturalists or surveyors" like their more canonical (and I would add: male) counterparts. However, it is because of these women's lack of formal training, the absence of disciplinarily specific epistemology, and often an inversion of power, that allow the protagonists of these mid-century captivity narratives, including Oatman, to unfasten the assumptions that are embedded in the canonical narratives that positioned themselves as anachronistic documentary.

Despite Oatman's clear influences over the text, critical studies of her involvement in *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls* reinscribe her victimization. "Though Olive starred," writes Mifflin, "it was Stratton's production" (136). The inaccuracy of the narrative as well as its anti-Indian sentiment are attributed exclusively to Stratton; Oatman is depicted by scholars as an unwitting and wholly exploited bystander. Intriguingly, the collaboration, interference, and overwriting of Stratton is always articulated in violent terms: "His voice…penetrates Olive's" (Mifflin 150), reads one account—the explanation itself reaffirming the irredeemable vulnerability of Oatman. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola is perhaps the first to characterize captivity narratives in this way. In discussing the captivities and associated texts of Mary Rowlandson and Oatman, she posits:

> …first, they were captured by Native Americans as casualties of American expansion-ism, then they were exploited by clergy and society on their return for the purpose of producing propagandist texts that rationalized white superiority. (*The Indian Captivity Narratives*, 33)

Mifflin echoes this sentiment when discussing the publication of *Captivity of the Oatman Girls* in her full-length biography of Olive Oatman. She states, "Olive was again a captive—this time to her ghostwriter" (142). The desire to read this text outside of its constitutive collaborations, and, further, to read this collaboration as a relation of unadulterated power in favor of the amanuensis is archivally unsubstantiated, ahistorical, and occludes the manifold possibilities for participation that might be proffered by Oatman.

The Captivity of the Oatman Girls has largely been excised from the literary cannon. Scholarly attention has been scant and constellated around fields outside of literary studies. The cultural anthropologist A.L. Kroeber became interested in the Oatman story for its ethnographic merit in the 1950s, for instance, and several popular histories have been completed on the Oatman story. When it has been taken up in literary studies by Derounian-Stodola and others, much of the work is archival, a kind of reconstruction of the narrative from outside in. This reputation of shoddy writing plagued the book in scholarly circles as well: the early historian of the west Hubert H. Bancroft once described its style as "literary fustian" (486n22; qtd. in McGinty 165-65). What's more, captivity narratives such as Oatman's, have long been the subject of critical generalizations. Policing the borders of this genre has produced a "typical"

reading of captivity tales by scholars like Phillips Carleton, Richard VanDerBeets, Richard Slotkin, and others that make it difficult to analyze when, as Castiglia notes is often the case, there is a "gap between what the narratives purport to say and what the anecdotes relate" (27). It is precisely that gap that merits literary study, both in spite and because of the modes of authorship.

2.4 "I Should Like To Live Here": Reading Captivity

The Captivity of the Oatman Girls occupies a range of genres and fields. Through careful modeling of travel writing, spiritual autobiography, the sentimental novel, and antecedent captivity narratives, *Captivity* arranges a cacophony of narrative voices that both subvert and support hegemonic narratives of race and nation. Through textual analysis and careful parsing of these multiple styles, this section traces the moments of adherence and rupture within the text. Oatman's observations, her affections, and her worldview emerge within and because of her captivity.

First, *Captivity* might be read as a travelogue that lauds masculinist knowledge and skill. The book suggests that there is an inherited penchant for travel and exploration in the Oatman family. This trait carefully aligns with a positive cultivation of American expansion and fits neatly with the early forms of the American road story. Oatman's father, Roys, a revered and admired character in the text, endowed with "honesty" and "industry" (27), is figured as the instigator of the family's westward overland travel. As has been documented elsewhere, Royal Stratton eradicated the

family's commitment to the Brewsterite offshoot of Mormonism that was a major catalyst for their journey. This omission both served to shield Oatman against anti-Mormon sentiment and contributed to the possibility of better book sales. Instead, the *Captivity* figures Roys Oatman as a man with a "roving disposition" (26), accessing American ideals of unfettered mobility and the open road. He has already transplanted his family several times seeking better domestic conditions, and the family, the text says, had lived a past "with its world of toil and journeyings" (25). Financial worry and an injury that he believes will be improved by the west are cited as Roys's main incentives to move his family of nine from their Illinois farm to California. Rather than presenting the warm, dry climate of the western states as a remedy for a reportedly debilitating back condition, Roys, the text tells us "…hoped that the *journey itself* might aid the return of his wonted vigor and strength" (35, italics mine).

The travel, for the family's patriarch, offers its own curative properties, not the difficulties and perniciousness of Manifest Destiny. Additionally, the narrative takes great pains to portray this decision as considered, without flippancy, and made with the family's own hearty condition in mind. "The journey now before them," after all, "had been preceded by lesser ones" (25). Nor was their physical fitness the family's only indicator of readiness for their journey. Speaking of a stop the emigrant caravan made early along their travels to observe the Sabbath, Lorenzo is quoted as justifying their commitment to the road in theological terms as well. The services he states were meant

"to remind ourselves that we were each travelers upon that great level of time" (40). These facts about the family's relationship to mobility generally, and Roys's relationship to travel specifically, are meant to shield the Oatmans from criticism. It was, after all, in part the father's ill-preparedness, greed, and poor decision making that had left the family vulnerable to attack. This long-standing relationship to the road is meant to undergird and displace responsibility onto the brutal American Indian attackers and the government officials who are depicted as callous and slow to respond to the family's distress. It keeps the integrity of white patriarch in tact. Roys, positioned as a seasoned and capable man, was intended to be understood by readers of *Captivity* as an intentional and contemplative man who prepared his family body and soul for what was ahead.

It is not only the family's preparations, but the merit of the frontier narrative that is lauded. The *Captivity of the Oatman Girls* spends a significant portion of its narrative space outside of the bounds of Olive's actual captivity. Indeed, the first two chapters (of a total seven) are dedicated to producing sentimental scenes of family and rosy depictions of a wholesome emigrant train replete with vignettes of camp life. Oatman would say that she would never forget the "novelty & excitement" of the initial part of the journey (Oatman 7). "Little groups, now larger and now smaller, by the constant moving to and fro of members of the camp" were pictured as chatting amicably, working diligently, and worshipping piously (and notably nondenominationally)

(Stratton 23). Descriptions of the western landscape in these chapters are idealized, but the foreshadowing of things to come haunts the narrative. "Rich and abundant pasturage," reads one standard description, "was stretching from the place of [the Oatman family's] halt westward, seemingly until it bordered against the foot-hills of the Indian territory in the distance" (22). Another reads:

> From Council Grove the road bore a little south of west, over a beautiful level plain," reads another observation of the passing landscape, covered with the richest pasturage; and in the distance bordering on every hand against high, picturesque ranges of mountains, seeming like so many huge blue bulwarks, and forming natural boundaries between the abodes of the respective races, each claiming, separately and apart, the one mountain, the other the vale (39-40).

Even the most picturesque of scenes is tinged with a burgeoning national narrative. The vast plains are notable not only for their beauty, but for their potential to be converted into productive swaths of agricultural pasture. Mountains are transformed into ramparts of militarized defense—boundaries conscripted into the separation and removal of native peoples. These peoples and their cultures, circumscribed to the space of the domesticated "abode," are absorbed into the scenery. The *Captivity's* early invocation of native presence comforms to Gerald Vizenor's characterization of "The *indian,*" as "simulation, the absence of natives; the *indian* transposes the real, and the simulation of the real has no referent" (15). The referents that are provided for the reader of *Captivity* are those that help make scrutable the Oatmans—hard working, devoutly Christian, and on the right side of American expansionism.

The Captivity, at times, presses away from its narrative impetus and enacts the didactic tone of a guidebook. Describing their arrival in the town of Moro (now Morro in present day New Mexico) the book reads, "This is a small Mexican town, of about three hundred inhabitants, containing, as the only objects of interest, a Catholic Mission station, now in a dilapidated state; a Fort, well-garrisoned by Mexican soldiers, and a fine stream of water…" (48). Beyond the list of scant tourist attraction, there is also information meant to be useful to other emigrants. The section that is quoted as Lorenzo Oatman's direct testimony includes such details as the type and quality of food that a pioneer might come by in their westward journey. "Abundance of mutton was in market," he says of the Mexican settlements, fresh, and of superior quality, and to be purchased at low rates" (47). Statements like these are not merely informative. Such advice positions overland emigration by white Americans as a worthwhile endeavor, and the Oatmans as purveyors of this pioneering spirit.

What would seem altruistic reportage also serves to underscore the Oatmans' correctness and reassert their white superiority. The wizened guidance of Lorenzo is cataloged in an escalating litany of expert advice. "If along this road we were furnished with a fair representation," Lorenzo is quoted as saying of the caravan's time in Mexico, "these Mexicans are an imbecile, frail, cowardly, and fast declining race" (57). These informative tidbits also, then, render the Oatmans' journey as well as the pioneer's journey unimpeachable. Rather than understanding emigration as a misplaced pursuit

in the face of native removals and national displacements, readers are asked to regard this tale as part of the inevitable progress of white European-American domination. Stratton wrote grandly in the preface to *The Captivity's* third edition that purchasers of the volume add to their library a historical reference of "an almost total revolution in the humanities that people the [American West]." He explains:

> These dark Indian tribes are fast wasting before the rising sun of our civilization; and into *that history* that is yet *to be written* of their past, and of their destiny, and of the many interlacing events that are to contribute to the fulfilling of the wise intent of Providence concerning them and their only dreaded foe, the white race, facts and incidents contained in this unpretending volume will enter and be appreciated. (16)

The Oatmans' path is contextualized by white supremacist belief, and colonial desire. This becomes a vehicle for Stratton's parasitic vision of forward-marching Anglo-American civilization.

Observations that document language, lifestyle, foodways, and tribal ritual of the Tolkepaya and Mohave are necessarily routed though Oatman. Though these sections often adhere to the formal modes of catalog established by colonial travel writing and the classificatory sciences, Oatman's captive status complicates this outsider occularity. Although she offers no similar observations in the initial chapters that chronicle the family's travels west from Illinois as they came into contact with other emigrant trains, AmerIndian settlements, remote frontier outposts, and Mexican villages, Oatman's voice is fully formed once she finds herself with the Tolkeypaya. By her own determination or at the suggestion of Stratton, who may have been familiar with the genre, Olive includes

specific minutiae on diet, dress, language, and social customs. Of the Tolkepaya, to whom the text refers to as Apache, she notes for instance, that "fire was struck by means of flints and wild cotton" (116), and that "their meat was boiled with water in a 'Tusquin,' (clay kettle)" (136). The Anglicization of native language itself signals the the interpretive work of the expert, a mode of address that Oatman inhabits fluidly in the text. "They subsisted principally," she instructs, "upon deer, quail, and rabbit, with an occasional mixture of roots from the ground" (135). Though this observation places distance between the observer and the Tolkepaya, the reality is that these foodstuff also compromised Oatman's sustenance, her possibility of survival. Of the Mohave, with whom Olive had a much longer encounter, there is information about agricultural practices: "in the spring they planted corn, melons, and a few garden vegetables" (172). Elsewhere, a note about the harvest festival menu complete with transliterated Mohave words: "Their supply for the appetite on that day consisted of wheat, corn, pumpkins, beans, etc. These were boiled, and portions of them mixed with ground seed, such as serecca, (seed of weed,) moeroco, (of pumpkins)" (203). Again, the deployed pronoun of "they" tenders a critical distance from these practices. Yet, the intrinsic press of the parenthetical explanation, the intimacy with alimental labor, indicates that Oatman was much more than mere outsider.

There are passages within the text where the performance of estrangement breaks down under the weight of its fiction. The pressure to maintain the strictures of

propriety and genre for a projected respectable readership force Olive's confident descriptions to falter. For instance, at the Harvest Festival, Olive says elliptically and without further embellishment: "I witnessed some of the most shameful indecencies" (204). Here she is both edifying and withholding. At another point, she summarizes a whole year passing by saying only: "…nothing occurred connected with my allotment that would be of interest to the reader" (233). It is here, of course, that most popular conjecture constellates around the unlikely possibility that Oatman may have married and had children during her time with the Mohave. These unspeakable or censored temporalities mark the stutter step of Oatman's alientation and belonging.

In the moving chapter that contends with Mary Ann's death, the text cleaves between these two poles. Oatman highlights the roles of Aespaneo and Topeka. "I ought here to say that neither that woman nor her daughter ever gave us any unkind treatment." She feels compelled to say this, though it has been stated twice previously in the text. Oatman recognizes a kinship in what she later calls "her exile" (166). During the final moments of Mary Ann's life, Oatman notes that "[Aespaneo] wept, and wept from the heart and aloud. I never saw a parent seem to feel more keenly over a dying child" (194). Olive, and subsequently her amanuensis, come to understand this scene as one of affinity and maternal care. After Mary Ann's death, it is Aespaneo who advocated for Olive's wishes over her own tribe's beliefs. All displaced persons, all "exiles," Derrida reminds us "share two sighs, two nostalgias: their dead ones and their

language" (87). At Aespaneo's behest, Mary Ann is wrapped in two blankets and buried in the ground as her sister wishes, and not committed to fire as would have been the Mohave funereal practice. In the harrowing days and nights after her sister's death, Oatman's strength also lags. Here, it is Topeka who comes to her rescue. "Had it not been for her, I must have perished," Olive says. Topeka pulls from the meager seeds she has set aside for the following harvest, risking her own starvation in the seasons to come, and makes from them a meal cake that restores Oatman's strength. The gesture is devastating: Topeka does for Olive what Olive is unable to for her own sister. "From this circumstance," Olive summarizes, "I learned to chide my hasty judgment against ALL the Indian race" (200). In these sentimental scenes, Oatman refrains from more zealous gratitude and instead restores a semblance of her expertise as she positions herself as a translator and a guide. For her readers, this highly personal history becomes a moral and transferrable lesson.

Throughout the narrative, *Captivity* offers its readers specific and fairly lush descriptions of the movements of its protagonists—Olive and Mary Ann's march from the site of their family's attack, their impressive move to the Mohave Valley in which they covered just under three hundred miles on foot in eight days, Olive's high stakes foraging trip made in an effort to sustain Mary Ann in the final days of her encroaching starvation, and numerous smaller journeys made daily in and around the Mohave village. This kind of rugged and physically demanding mobility continues the tenents of

travel valorized in the book's initial chapters, but at the risk of undermining the Oatman sisters' victimization.

On one of those grueling journeys, Olive and Mary Ann glimpsed the Mohave Valley from the first time. The sisters looked from elevated ground on the cusp of sunset. The colonial vanatage and internalized desire for a fecund American landscape are unbalanced by their gaze. The Oatman sisters' first impressions were of natural beauty, the "loveliness that nature had strewn": "a narrow valley covered with a carpet of green," "sloped mountains, with their foot hills robed in the same bright green," "bald humpbacks and sharp peaks." It is only through the bearing of their guides (including the newly introduced Topeka), "their movements and manifestations," that Mary Ann and Olive come to realize that there is more than natural beauty to behold in the valley below them (162). They stood gazing at their own constituted panorama only a few moments when the smoke in the distance, "winding in gentle columns up the ridges, spoke to [Olive and Mary Ann] of the abodes or tarrying of human beings." However the Mohave are described as in the pages that follow—alternately "savages" and kin—they start as humans. Their humanity, as the girls continue to gaze on, comes into what Olive describes as "the field of our steady view." There are clusters of huts, glassy river waters that "threw the sunlight in our face," says Olive, and rows of "beautiful cottonwood trees" (163). It is these cottonwood trees that cause Olive to ruminate that their arrival, "presented truly an oasis in the general desert country upon

which we had been trailing our painful walk for the last ten days." (164-65). This oasis for the Oatmans' evolves over the course of their sojourn there. For Olive, it becomes the hallowed sight and welcome comfort in her days of mourning for her sister. "Every spot in the valley that had any attraction, or offered a retreat to the sorrowing soul, had become familiar," she says, "and upon much of its adjacent scenery I delighted to gaze" (230). When she is confronted with the possibility of returning to white society, she describes it this way:

> I now began to think of really leaving my Indian home. Involuntarily my eye strayed over the valley. I gazed on every familiar object. The mountains that stood about our valley home, like sentinels tall and bold, their every shape, color, and height, as familiar as the door-yard about the dwelling in which I had been reared (264).

If Mifflin is correct in asserting that prevailing social attitudes "likely prevented Oatman from expressing her powerful feelings for the Mohaves after four formative years among them" (194), I would contend that these attitudes did not prevent her from expressing admiration, nostalgia, and longing for the place she thought of as her home, if not the people that populated it.[5] If Oatman remains notably silent or protests too vehemently about the possibility of deep friendship, sexual liaison, and familial ties in the Mohave Valley, she is not shy about lavishing her affection upon the southwestern landscape—a geography already conscripted both by the text and by those "prevailing social

[5] Mifflin specifically cites Sarah Wakefield's 1864 captivity narrative in this justification (194).

attitudes" into an acceptable narrative. By displacing her feelings of tenderness, appreciation, and yearning onto the scenery, Oatman can remain undetected and dangerously complicit with predominant racisms and territorial rapacity.

If *Captivity of the Oatman Girls* reaffirms the tenets of American expansionism, it also disrupts them. Olive does not omit the precarious conversation with her sister as they stand gazing on the Mohave village for the first time:

> "Here, Olive," said Mary Ann, 'is the place where they live. O isn't it a beautiful valley? It seems to me I should like to live here.'"
> "May be," said I, "that you will not want to go back to the whites anymore."
> "O yes, there is green grass and fine meadows there, besides good people to care for us…" (163).

Mary Ann's recognition of inhabitability is emphatic: "O yes." It simultaneously indexes and collapses the fitness of people and place, sociality and its surroundings. This recognition subverts latent belief in racial superiority. In a narrative that is organized by concepts of home—both natal and adopted—the agency to elect one's own home place dangerously undergirds the permeability of belonging. That this potential for choice is offloaded onto the foreclosed subjectivity of Mary Ann, unavailable now to account for her capacious understanding of kinship or her rote naiveté, allows the moment to pass unremarked. In relief to the long elided indigeneity of the United States, the "good people" may only be an aside to the verdant scenery, in Oatman's account, but they are still visible.

2.5 "She Is One of Us": Set in Stone

In 1857, just two months after Stratton's first edition of *The Captivity of the Oatman Girls* was published in California, the Albany, New York-based sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer began work on a sculpture he would call *The White Captive*. The sculpture is a full-length standing nude fixed to a medium-thick pedestal. This realistic figure of a young girl is carved leaning against a tree stump to which her hands have been tied, and there is a garment strewn over her ligatures. She is turned to face something outside of a direct field of vision, her brow is furrowed and her eyes downcast. The statue appears troubled: one hand grasps the tree where a branch has been smoothly removed, the other is clenched behind the girl's back. In the artist's narrative, the sculpture depicted "the young daughter of the pioneer in 'Indian bondage.'" The prepubescent girl, Palmer says is "standing bound with bark thongs at the wrist to a truncated tree," the folds of her discarded nightgown draped on the stump behind her (qtd. in Kasson 80). Palmer's inspiration for this bound captive, according to his daughter, was the story of Olive Oatman (qtd. in Webster 182).

Figure 16. Erastus Dow Palmer, *The White Captive*, 1859. Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Palmer was growing in fame and gaining a carefully constructed reputation as a distinctly American artist at the time he began work on *The White Captive*. Clamoring to distinguish themselves from European artistic influence—"our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands"—in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson (43), fine artists and craftsmen in the United States were scrupulously seeking styles and subjects that could be understood as particularly national. Palmer, especially, was cultivating his mantle of

artistic patriotism. He refused the European grand tours of American sculptors that followed Horatio Greenbough (of the controversial 1840 *George Washington* sculpture), Hiram Powers, and even Edmonia Lewis to Italy and other Classical destinations of Enlightenment-era cultural production. Instead, he preferred to vacation at his family farm in nearby Glenmont, New York. "Palmer presents a rare exception to the artistic exodus to Rome," writes Deanna Fernie of the sculptor's stateside residency and retreat (28). Palmer was deeply embedded in the social networks of the Hudson River School and sought notably local inspirations.[6] One of his first major successes was *The Indian Girl, or The Dawn of Christianity.* This sculpture depicted a bare-breasted Native American woman dressed below the waist in deerskin and wampum, holding symbolically freighted bird feathers in one hand, according to the sculptor's narrative, a newly-discovered crucifix in the other. "This simple story illustrating the Dawn of Christianity upon the aborigines, is thus embodied," Palmer wrote in summary to patron and New York State Governor, Hamilton Fish (1). *The White Captive* is often thought by art critics to be a pendant to this earlier work.[7]

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[6] Palmer and his wife, Mary Jane Seamna, were especially close with the painter, Frederic Church, and his family, calling on many social occasions at his estate, Olana.

[7] As Palmer wrote to Hudson River School painter John Durand in 1858, *The Indian Girl* was intended "to show the influence of Christianity on the Savage," while *The White Captive* meant to demonstrate "the influence of the Savage upon Christianity" (qtd. in Voorsanger 165).

Figure 17. Hiram Powers, *The Greek Slave,* 1851 [1843].
Yale University Art Gallery.

Palmer was calculated about forming this sculpture for optimum popular reception. He clearly recognized the success of Powers's 1843 *The Greek Slave,* which rose quickly to fame and became one of the most iconic works of art during the nineteenth century. Capitalizing on *The Greek Slave's* sensation, the Anglo-American public's desire for distinct cultural production, and an uncanny social and political preoccupation with capture, captivity, and enslavement, *The White Captive* is clearly formed in the earlier

sculpture's image and likeness. *The Greek Slave* depicts a full-length nude woman carved in white marble standing upon a medium thick pedestal. The realistic figure of a young woman is carved leaning against a post to which her hands have been chained. There is an ornate garment or piece of fabric draped over the post beneath her shackles. *The Greek Slave* is turned to face something outside of a direct field of vision, her eyes are downcast. One hand supports itself on the post, the other is held in front of her exposed body. According to Powers, this Greek girl has been captured by the Turks and exposed at an Istanbul slave market.

The inflection of the racialized other standing outside the frame was clear to the sculpture's vast audiences and the arm chair viewers who would encounter *The Greek Slave* by the thousands via exhibits of the sculpture and its many copies, as well as widely circulated photographs, paintings, and engravings of the work. In the words of art historian Charmaine Nelson, "Inverting the racial identifications of colonizer/colonized, slave/master, the success of Powers' sculpture hinged upon the narration of a chaste white female sexuality under imminent threat of violation by a black (Arab) sexuality" (91). Her parenthetical is imperative here—the cultural and geographic specificity of blackness was eroded as *The Greek Slave* circulated in a U.S. antebellum context. The height of the sculpture's circulation and notoriety at mid-century was simultaneous with the most heated debates about U.S. slavery in the antebellum period. The English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning would dedicate a poem

to this art work describing its "passionless perfection," and predicated on its overt Orientalism. She wrote in the poem's final lines, "East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong, / By thunders of white silence, overthrown." These readings of abasement against the strong westerner map easily onto the racist anxieties white Americans held about the abolition of slavery and black enfranchisement. Abolitionists like John Greenleaf Whittier and Maria White Lowell inverted the binary between black and white, mobilizing the statue as a visual parable against the ills of slavery.[8] In both instances, *The Greek Slave* came to index the institution of slavery within the United States.[9] There is no doubt that Palmer, in his creation of *The White Captive,* was keen to

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[8] While not all viewers of *The Greek Slave* recognized the deep irony of vilifying the ills of the Middle Eastern Slave market during the Greek War of Independence from the Ottoman Empire in the waning years of American slavery, the poet John Greenleaf Whittier was said to draw inspiration from the sculpture for his 1843 poem, "The Christian Slave" which praises the Muslim practices of slave liberation while condemning U.S. slaveholders who practice Christianity. It reads:

> Cheers for the turbaned Bey
> Of robber-peopled Tunis!
> The dark slave dungeons open, and hath borne
> Their inmates into day:
>
> But our poor slave in vain
> Turns to the Christian shrine his aching eyes
> It rites will only swell his market price,
> And rivet on his chain.

[9] There is also a famous anecdote about the famous orator and women's rights advocate, Lucy Stone, encountering the statue in Boston Common in 1848. She was so moved by its subject—recognizing it not as an emblem of anti-slavery, but rather as a symbol of men's oppression over the female sex—that she wept and vowed to take up the cause of women's suffrage (McMillen 81). These slippery and vast interpretations of captivity and enslavement further underscore the assertion that oppressions of the nineteenth century are imbricated across vulnerable identity categories.

capitalize on the aesthetic and narrative echoes he produced between the two sculptures.

Although the visual reverberations between the two sculptures function as a fixed loop of male, racialized menace—moving from the Ottoman man, to the American man of African descent, to the American Indian man—*The White Captive* emerged critically as a product of Palmer's desired intent to construct a particularly "American" piece. There are distinctions to be noted between the two sculptures. Working towards the style that would come to be termed the American Ideal, Palmer "reveals a preference for naturalism" while Powers harkens to more "classicizing Greek proportions" in his figure (Voorsanger 166). The tree trunk and rustic tongs, the conjuring of a frontier narrative, landed its mark with critics. Extolling the twin merits of Hudson River School painter Frederic Church's "Heart of the Andes" and Palmer's "White Captive," a columnist for the *New York Journal of Commerce* identified only as E.B. wrote in 1859 that "each [is] marked with that originality and daring which characterizes so preeminently the production of native talent." Here, the pronunciation of indigenous capability rings with particular irony. E.B. and other critics focused on the figure that was present in the scene, not the presence infiltrating the artwork through its absence. "Palmer in his 'White Captive,'" E.B. continues, "true to the instinct of American genius, has given us what is seen, more or less, in all the cultivated and Christian women of the nineteenth-century. Palmer looked upon the people of today" (qtd. in Carson 78 [2]).

The *Boston Journal* echoed that sentiment in February of 1860, writing "The artist has taken Nature for his teacher. He has given an American head, an American figure, and the anatomy of the nineteenth century as it is on the American continent" (qtd. in Webster 79 [2]). *The Atlantic* was perhaps the most laudatory of all, writing in 1860 that *The White Captive* is "especially true to the American type." The author continues, "It is original, it is faithful, it is American. Our women may look upon it, and say, 'She is one of us," (Jan 1860). In the artwork and these critical constructions, the white woman becomes ideal and constitutive of all Americans. Her stone-set archetype and intangible essence eclipse all other potentialities for the figure of woman.

This foregone (white) womanhood is made possible by the material impermeability of *The White Captive.* As Derounian-Stodola writes, the statue undermines its own subjection. It is "vulnerable, victimized, but eternally inviolate in stone" (*The Captive as Celebrity* 85). Or, in the words of Putzi, "Although the nudity of the sculpture…is, in fact, suggestive and mildly erotic, it is tamed, contained, even transcended by the rhetorical frame in which it is presented" (Putzi 42). The sculpture's own imperviousness, the fact of its inanimate marble, the simulacrum but absence of flesh, commends to its subject not only an "American" type, but a hegemonic American ideal.

This ideal is, of course, concomitant with a consolidating identity binary. *The White Captive* cannot escape the iconicity and Orientalism of *The Greek Slave.* Through its

content reiteration, *The White Captive* collapses a racialized other by conjuring: the Native American hailed by the white Anglo-American girl's off-center gaze, the Ottoman Turk indicated by the stare of the Greek slave which it imitates, and the black American man produced by the synchronous circulations in the landscape of antebellum and U.S. Civil War era heightened rhetoric about slavery and racial supremacy. This rhetorical overlay produces opposing identities of white—always embodied, complete, and aesthetically gratifying—and non-white—menacing, multiple, and invisible.

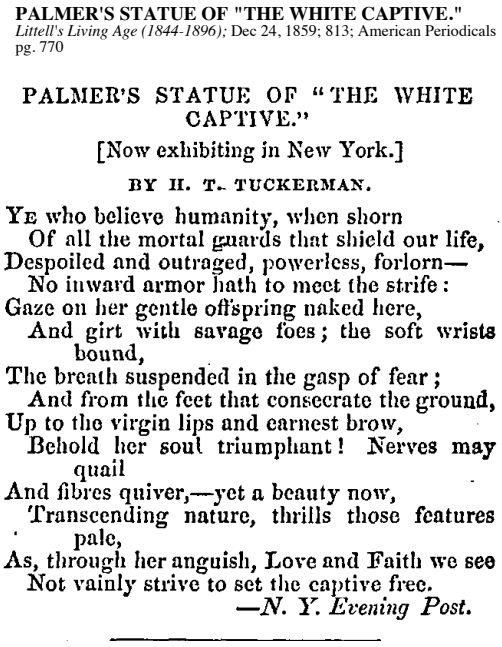
This direct influence of Olive Oatman suggested by Palmer's daughter is highly likely, but impossible to confirm. Palmer never made written reference to Oatman, though he would have likely read accounts of her captivity in newspapers throughout New York State in the year leading up to his creation of *The White Captive*. These periodicals reprinted the lengthiest and most substantive accounts from the Los Angeles and San Francisco newspapers during 1856 and into 1857. Oatman would come to live in Albany, New York, as Stratton's ward by at least the spring of 1857 when she began her first lecture tours. She may have arrived even sooner—in the days when Palmer completed his early sketches and small-scale models for *The White Captive.* If the Palmers did not know the Strattons personally, they certainly knew of them. Even years later, after the Strattons had moved once again, their reputation subsisted in New York State's Capitol Region. The *Albany Morning Express* confirmed Stratton's notoriety in 1868, for example. Reporting on the suicide of Stratton's eldest son in Oregon, Albert Stratton, the

paper stated, "was the son of Rev. Royal-Stratton, now of Worcester, Mass., who is well known in-this city as a clergyman of much talent." This distant news, many years since the Strattons had been residents of the city, speaks to the far reach of their reputation. Further notable, would have been their ward, Olive Oatman, a new and sensational celebrity who could have hardly transited in the small city without notice and remark.

Palmer's biographer, J. Carson Webster, has disputed that Oatman's story was the sole source of his inspiration. "The idea of captivity," he writes, "in the hands of the Indians was so common that there is no need to search for specific inspiration" (184). Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat also attribute his inspiration to more amorphous sources:

> With *The White Captive*, Palmer answered a persistent call for more subjects drawn from the American experience. And he was shrewdly responding as well to a contemporary fascination with stories of kidnapped white women, such as the real Jane McCrea and Olive Oatman and the fictional heroine Rooth from [James Fenimoore] Cooper's 1829 novel *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish.* (166)

Yet, the parallels of *The White Captive's* biography--"young daughter of the pioneer,"—with Oatman's (as it was presented by *The Captivity* and the popular press) lends itself to a sustained theory of influence. What's more, the narrative emphasis on Oatman's titillating nudity offers a synchronicity of visual representation between Oatman and Palmer's creation. Finally, following the tenets of the American ideal, the sculpture subject for Palmer would need to be plucked from history or mythology—Oatman's legacy was quickly becoming both.



PALMER'S STATUE OF "THE WHITE CAPTIVE."
Littell's Living Age (1844-1896); Dec 24, 1859; 813; American Periodicals pg. 770

PALMER'S STATUE OF "THE WHITE CAPTIVE."

[Now exhibiting in New York.]

BY H. T. TUCKERMAN.

YE who believe humanity, when shorn
Of all the mortal guards that shield our life,
Despoiled and outraged, powerless, forlorn—
No inward armor hath to meet the strife:
Gaze on her gentle offspring naked here,
And girt with savage foes; the soft wrists bound,
The breath suspended in the gasp of fear;
And from the feet that consecrate the ground,
Up to the virgin lips and earnest brow,
Behold her soul triumphant! Nerves may quail
And fibres quiver,—yet a beauty now,
Transcending nature, thrills those features pale,
As, through her anguish, Love and Faith we see
Not vainly strive to set the captive free.

—*N. Y. Evening Post.*

Figure 18. H.T. Tuckerman, Palmer's Statue of 'The White Captive,'" *Little's Living Age,* 24 December 1859.

More pertinent than proving Palmer's creative influences are the ways in which *The White Captive* circulated—robustly for its era. The sculpture was marshalled by Hamilton Fish's patronage. Fish was a powerful statesman, a former governor of New York, and would soon be an essential figure in the national Democratic party during Lincoln's presidency. Fish would later ascend to the Secretary of State under President Ulysses S. Grant. Upon *The White Captive's* completion in 1859 and with Fish's permission, the sculpture was displayed at a solo exhibition at the Broadway Studio of William Schaus. This was a shrewd scheme to earn some money for Palmer in entrance fees and garner further commissions by wealthy New York City-based patrons. "Between November 1859 and January 1860 viewers paid 25 cents to see the sculpture, installed

alone in Schaus's carpeted main room," write Voorsanger and Howat. "Standing beneath a canopy, the statue was illuminated by gaslight filtered through a tinted shield that lent its marble surface a realistic fleshlike tone. The figure surmounted a rotating pedestal with 'an attendant…always present to put in motion the simple mechanism at first request" (165). Its realistic features, an enfleshment, was clearly a preoccupation of its exhibitors and viewers alike. According to the *New York Herald* attendance numbered 3,000 within the first two weeks (2 Dec 1859), and Kasson calculates that the number of viewers increased from one hundred to four hundred per day within the first month of the exhibit (74). In addition to its extensive treatment in magazine and newspapers during and after its exhibition, the sculpture was even the subject of an 1859 poem by the popular American essayist and critic Henry Theodore Tuckerman, who models exactly Barrett Browning's entitled homage to *The Greek Slave.* In the poem's final couplet, ("As, through her anguish, Love and Faith we see / Not vainly strive to set the captive free"), Tuckerman alludes to an eventual liberation from captivity not unlike Oatman's. *The White Captive* "emerged not only as a financial and popular success," but the exhibit was "a highlight for the rich—and richly—American art season of 1859" (Voorsanger 166). The statue was seen by thousands of people, photographed for circulation, written about extensively, and talked about at length before assuming a place in Fish's private collection. Upon Fish's death in 1894, *The White Captive* was bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum of Art where it remains to this day. The proximity between the accounts of Olive Oatman's

captivity and the myriad circulations of *The White Captive* was a space of inevitable clarity, confusion, and cross pollinations.

2.6 "Had I Home": The Lecture Circuit

While *The White Captive* was on a slow rotation in a carpeted drawing room, Oatman herself was also transiting on a circuit. She ascended another kind of pedestal—that of the lecture stage. From roughly 1858 until her marriage to cattleman John B. Fairchild in 1865, Oatman traveled frequently to give speeches to market *The Captivity* and to furnish financial self-support. The presence of women at the podium was not unheard of during this era, but it was certainly still unusual. Oatman, especially, presents a rare case of a woman who was unaffiliated with larger lecture networks of religious ministry, women's suffrage, or abolitionist societies who harnessed the Lyceum movement of the period to further political agendas.

While there is no complete account of her travel and appearances, evidence suggests that Oatman's reach was vast. "By the end of 1859 alone," writes Mifflin, "she had lectured in New York City and upstate, as well as in Toledo, Ohio, and Evansville, Illinois, to large audiences" (169). Oatman's talent and appeal was evident. "The lecture was of a sad, but deeply affecting nature," wrote a reviewer for the *Terre Haute News* in Terre Haute, Indiana. "She will have crowds to hear her wherever she goes." (qtd. in Mifflin 169). A reviewer identified only by the initials "c.s.c" in the *Rochester Daily Union & Advertiser* gushed about Oatman's performance:

> The lecture of Miss Olive Oatman last evening for the benefit of the Comhill S. School, was one of unusual interest. She was greeted by a full house, and was listened to with that breathless attention, which, though silent, yet is the most eloquent and sincere tribute to eloquence. Her pathetic story, surpassing in interest the most thrilling romance, was told with an unaffected simplicity and grace and a touching pathos that went to every heart and drew tears from eyes unused to weep. Miss Oatman evinces much dramatic power in the grouping of incidents, and her word-painting brings before the mind a picture that engraves itself in sharp distinctness upon the memory. No one can listen to her without feeling the deepest sympathy for her misfortune, and the most proffered respect, for the depth of womanly tenderness and heroism, and the nobility of soul which could survive five long years of barbarous captivity and shine with so bright a luster.
>
> We believe that Miss O. would find a field of usefulness as lecturer in the power she possesses of awaking in the minds of her audience a lively sense of the blessings of civilization and the sustaining grace of a kind Providence amid the most trying circumstances.
>
> At the close of the lecture a resolution was unanimously adopted, expressing the interest felt in her narrative and a wish that she would repeat it in Corinthian Hall where a larger audience might listen to her. Should Miss Oatman consent to do so we can assure those who do themselves the favor to hear her, that they will be amply repaid.[10]

The imagistic etch mentioned in this account is particularly significant. That Oatman's oratory was vivid and visual is a testament to her power and the reputation that preceded her. It is also a testament to the images that preceded and would follow her.

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[10] It is also interesting to note the date of this review in April 1865—one month before the end of the U.S. Civil War. If the inaccessibility of rail line and ports during the conflict hindered Oatman's lectures, they did not cease altogether.

Figure 19. Benjamin F. Powelson, Olive Oatman Sitting Pose, ca. 1863. National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institute.

Certainly to promote her speaking engagements, and likely to sell at these scheduled events, Oatman created a carte-de-visite during the late 1850s. This image, of all the known photographs of Oatman, is the most consciously executed. Again, Oatman sits demurely against the bare backdrop of a photographic studio. Her body is turned slightly to the right of the frame, but she faces the photographer's lens squarely. Her hair is parted neatly, pinned away from Oatman's face, and heat treated into glamorous ring curls from the nape of her neck to her shoulder. Oatman's expression is

penetrating. Her hands are again folded in her lap; this time there is a finger loose—tapping the knuckle into a now habitual stillness. Oatman's costuming in this portrait is truly remarkable. She wears a dress. It is highly architectural with a full, pleated skirt, ample sleeves, and boning sewn into the waist to cinch Oatman's abdomen and accentuate a full bosom. There are large, dark buttons from waist to neck, and, again, white lace cuffs and high collar. It is apparent that the garment was custom made for Oatman, perhaps her standard costume for speaking engagements. The dark embroidery of the dress was designed to mimic, and therefore accentuate, the lines of Oatman's facial tattooing. Three concentric circles and three diagonal hash marks ring the wrists and arms of her sleeves, above the cuff and below the shoulder. The dark needlework embellishments echo the five lines on her chin tattooing. Putzi points out that "the design also hints at the presence of Oatman's arm tattoos" (42). The public would have known of these tattoos, but never had opportunity to view them. The dress provocatively intimates the epidermalized lines that Oatman's audiences could not see.

This picture is attributed to the photographer Benjamin F. Powelson, a celebrated portraitist and an itinerant daguerreotypist. Powelson was one of the first photographers based in central New York in the 1840s. His subjects and situations ranged broadly during his professional life and he occupied studio addresses in Auburn, Buffalo, and Rochester, New York, as well as Newark, New Jersey, and Detroit, Michigan. Additionally, there is evidence that Powelson worked for a time, perhaps

repeatedly, in Rhode Island and Canada. Powelson's broad reach was perhaps one of the reasons Oatman and her associates selected him as the daguerreotypist. In addition to his artistic reputation, Powelson would have had equipment, materials, and assistants to print and reprint carte-de-visites in locations that were as varied as Oatman's speaking engagements.

Figure 20. Benjamin F. Powelson, Olive Oatman Standing Pose, ca. 1863.

There are several other photographs that can be dated to this period of Oatman's public life and traced to Powelson's Studios. The first is a standing portrait of Oatman wearing the same dress as pictured in the above photo. In the photo, Oatman stands next to an ornate chair, wooden with embroidered cushions. Her hand rests confidently

on the carved ornament on the chair's back, and Oatman stares into the camera. In this iteration, the full length of the dress is visible, and the hemline reveals the same embroidered pattern as featured on the garment's sleeves. Her tattoos are almost imperceptible—as if covered with powder or intentionally overexposed. While many scholars identify these two carte de visites as part of the same studio setting, I would note Oatman's hair in the second portrait. The style is similar to the way she wears her hair in the first—pinned back with ringlet curls starting at the nape of her neck. But the hair at the crown of Oatman's head is worn slightly higher, pinned in a different shape to produce more dimension and drama for the viewer. Additionally, Oatman now wears a bow pinned above her ear on the side of her head that faces the camera. This is a flourish that is absent in the first portrait.

Figure 21. Benjamin F. Powelson, Olive Oatman, ca. 1865.

We know that Oatman sat for Powelson more than once. In a photo that appears to be taken after the two portraits above, Oatman stands with the same chair she sits with above—probably a prop of Powelson's Rochester photographic studio. Here she looks older. Oatman is wearing a more matronly dress—dark in color, belted in leiu of the corsette-like boning, with sleeves ruffled on the upper arm. There are lace collars and cuffs, but these are thin, neat, and without frills. Oatman wears a silver watch over her belt in the style of a school marm. The watch signals her practicality as well as an increasing wealth. Her hair is also styled more conservatively. She wears it tightly pinned behind her head with a neat, tight bun barely visible behind her ears and chin. It is,

perhaps, netted. There are no girlish curls to be seen in this portrait. One hand clutches the ornament of the chair, the other pulls at the fabric of her dress as it hangs limply at her side. Oatman looks directly at the camera's lens, her tattoos visible.

Given the evidence of multiple sittings, these portraits were likely taken at several different studio sessions. As demand grew for Oatman's lectures, so did the desire for a material keepsake—a souvenir of both the performance and Oatman's past. The visible markings of the tattoo signal a dual historicity: that of the event, in which the tattoos were indicated to the audience, as well as the remnants of Oatman's contact with a racial and cultural other.

There is only one remaining script of the many lectures Olive Oatman delivered between 1858 and 1865. The handwritten document has the quality and breadth of a template. It's likely that it was used for many, if not all, of her speaking engagements. In it, Oatman concludes by extolling her audiences, particularly "the young ladies" to which she directs the final moments of her address. "You have pleasant homes, kind parents, and affectionate brothers & sisters, & are in the enjoyment of comforts, and perhaps the luxuries of Christian society," Oatman writes. "I once had all these; & having experience in frightful contrast the other extreme, I think I know now how to appreciate the word Home & had I one should know how to enjoy it." Oatman lingers in the domestic spaces of home, family, and society, only to pronounce that she, in distinction to her feminized audience, is bereft of these things.

The home conceptualized by Oatman is surely informed by her homes on the American frontier, in the immigrant's caravan, in the captive space among the Tolkepaya tribe, and in her adoptive home in the Mohave dessert. It is further inflected, in the home-spaces that are given less critical attention—being passed between relatives upon her repatriation, as the ward of a Methodist minister whose own history of mental illness portend the capacity for abuse of both Olive and Lorenzo who were still quite young in his care, and in the railroad and steamship transit required for her far-reaching lecture circuit. Home, for Oatman, however, is not only a place. It is a sustained belonging that she was forced perpetually to navigate. As this chapter demonstrates, her dually-inflected identity as a white woman was constantly at issue. Through her own volition, and in spite of it, she became a mark by which to measure similarity and difference. Recall Oatman's referent of a home-place. What was familiar to her was "the door-yard about the dwelling in which I had been reared" (264). It is not the home or the hearth, but the interstitial threshold place—neither inside nor out—that marks Oatman's closest approximation of belonging.

In the years of Oatman's travel and lecturing, the military battles of the U.S. Civil War were waging throughout the southeastern United States. The laudatory remarks of the *Rochester Union,* near the end of Oatman's speaking career, were published two weeks after Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox, ostensibly ending the years-long war and military deaths that numbered 620,000. The Thirteenth Amendment

abolishing slavery would be ratified to the U.S. Constitution by December of that year. While no overt mention of the conflict was made in Oatman's lecture notes, the self-concious styling of her captivity and "slave marks" would have certainly stoked the emotions of largely northern, pro-Union audiences who were hanging on the headlines during the years of violent conflict. These audiences had also been consuming a steady diet of abolitionist literature and visual objects that vehemently denounced the ills of slavery during the war years. Oatman's traction, popularity, and positive reception can be understood in the ways she both engaged and avoided this ubiquitous narrative. Her lectures parsed polemical themes of "barbarous captivity" and enslavement without ever directly naming their relationship to the chattel slavery system of the United States that was understood as an animating principle of the Civil War. If Oatman felt herself to be in a limnal space—at once of and between two (or more) unresolvable poles of emotional belonging—black men and women in the U.S. found themselves in between two materially meaningful legal and social statuses—enslavement and freedom.

During the same wartime years of Oatman's public life, the formerly enslaved and famed abolitionist Sojourner Truth was also traveling the lecture circuit. She delivered speeches on the abolition of slavery, free speech, and the Union cause throughout the states designated as northern and border territories. These appearances were often contentious and marked with the threat of violence. They were organized by a continuously shifting terrain of legal, social, and cultural prohibitions against the transit

of black men and women. While Oatman may have felt alienated, Truth was legally pronounced alien.

The next chapter turns toward Truth's travels, texts, and visual legacy to understand the ways in which her public life coincided with the histories of captivity and freedom that Oatman's story begins to particularize. With nearly analogous circulations in physical, textual, photographic, and even sculptural form, the discrepancies between the referents and portrayals of Oatman and Truth illuminate the rhetorical stunts of their interlocutors. The echo chambers that ossify between these two women demonstrate the uneven intercourse of transnational and transhistorical objects to make sense of quickly evolving rubrics of race and gender difference. Against this epistemological scrim, Truth struggled to both be seen and unseen.

Chapter 3. "I Did Not Run Away; I Walked": The Liberatory Wanderings of Sojourner Truth

"The soil thumps like a belly / up the Hudson. //
Follow the sound Sojourner; / avoid fracturing/fugitive joy"
- *Joel Felix*

Sojourner Truth was one of the most famous and powerful advocates for Abolition and women's rights during the nineteenth-century. If Olive Oatman's circulations were incidental to her celebrity, Truth's physical, material, and spiritual movements were essential to it. This chapter argues that Truth's early philosophical formations under enslavement were organized by an understanding of personhood and freedom in relation to unfettered movement. She worked throughout her life to ensure this opportunity to travel freely for herself and on behalf of the black men and women for whom she labored. The following chapter discusses how Sojourner Truth created, administered, and fought for control of her person and personhood through enmediations of her lived experience—her autobiographical narrative and her image rendered in artistic and photographic forms. Each medium was informed by Truth's early, and infrastructurally specific relationship to motility. Her awareness and management of the circulation of these textual and photographic forms elucidate the possibilities and perils of representation for a black woman of the nineteenth-century.

The following chapter focuses on those artifacts crafted and circulated in anticipation of and during the U.S. Civil War. Militarized violence during the years of

this conflict from 1861 to 1865 caused the breakdown of many modes of transit. Railways were bombed, ports blockaded, and efforts to control the ingress of persons and goods slowed modes of transportation, mail services, and the shipment of commodities. Against the backdrop of stilted movement, two kinetic forces appear more animated. The first is the promiscuous currents of cultural production which, as demonstrated in the last two chapters, facilitate the consolidation of race and gender through the collapse of diverse and disparate narratives garnered from a range of colonial settings. The second current is that of Truth's own wartime circulations through which she endeavored to dispute these dominant modes of racial and gender epistemology. Truth's movements, this chapter shows, are both intended to command and to thwart visibility.

"You are afraid of my black face," Sojourner Truth told a pro-slavery mob gathered in Angola, Indiana, in the summer of 1861 at the outset of the American Civil War. Afraid, Truth explained to the hostile crowd, "because it is a looking-glass in which you see yourselves" (Griffing 98). The rally held at the Steuben County Court House, drew a crowd of Truth's supporters as well as the Copperhead detractors who were gaining traction in the Republican state after several Confederate military victories. Riots had broken out as southerners and their sympathizers moved north. Recruiters for the Union Army had recently been murdered (Washington 294). Truth was a particular target during her very public travels to speaking engagements throughout Indiana.

In the State of Indiana, black persons suffered under particular vulnerabilities because of the quixotic and uneven enforcement of the state's Black Laws. After overspending in the 1840s led the state to insolvency, a new constitution was drafted and ratified to assuage popular (which is to say white, male, and enfranchised) unrest. Amidst a number of controversial provisions, the new constitution, which was adopted in 1851, placed a ban on the immigration of black persons into the state. Current black residents were subject to so-called "Negro Registers" maintained by each county; they were charged a $500 bond to guarantee "good behavior" and were prohibited from attending public school or testifying in court cases that involved white persons.[1] These statewide Black Laws can be understood in conversation with, and in a continuum of, regional and federal laws enacted to restrict the movement of black persons as part of an attempt to appease the southern states that would eventually comprise the confederacy. Ohio kept similar codifications since the time of early statehood (Washington 221), for example. A month before Indiana's Constitutional Congress was convened in October of 1850 The Fugitive Slave Act was passed. After the State Constitution was ratified, the outcome of the 1857 Dred Scott case and the outbreak of the U.S. Civil War incentivized state officials to enforce their internal Black Laws with growing zealousness.

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[1] The original draft of the 1851 Indiana Constitution had, interestingly, a provision for universal suffrage regardless of race or gender. However, when the constitution was submitted to a popular vote—which was organized by section, not on the ratification of the whole document—universal suffrage was voted down (Dunn and Harrison 467).

Tensions reached a fever pitch in Angola where Truth's safety and freedom was constantly at issue. During her stay in Indiana, warrants were brought for her arrest under the Black Laws, several of her hosts were taken to court for harboring a black person from out of state, she was jailed twice, and her compatriots even encouraged Truth to hide in the woods to evade capture (Grimaldo Grigsby 30). Truth summarily refused. The night previous to the speech quoted above, Truth had been overcome by a drunken mob during a fiery pro-Union and explicitly anti-slavery speech at the very same courthouse. Truth announced that she was "armed" to fight, making a muscle to the crowd. She proclaimed that had her age permitted, she would have been cooking for and nursing "her Massachusetts boys" in the field, and would have "put in a blow now and then." At that, Truth was pushed, and jeered by a pro-slavery group of Copperheads. Her white abolitionist companion, Josephine Griffing, covering the event for the *Boston Liberator,* wrote that the mob rushed the balcony "and like a pack of hounds" shouted Truth down. Other fervent critics stood behind curtains on the Court House platform stage and yelled taunts and jeers. "Threats of tar and feathers, eggs, rails, shooting, and a general blowing up, were heard at every corner" reported Griffing. To these violent threats, Truth only retorted, "It seems that it takes my black face to bring out *your* black hearts; so it's well I came" (Griffing). A group of allies extricates Truth, and she retreats to the home of a prominent white judge. The mob follows, threatens to invade the house, and do further violence. "They threatened to burn down

the building if she spoke;" writes Truth's biographer, Margaret Washington, "she vowed to speak to the ashes" (295).

The next day, anticipating further menace, Truth's supporters prepared for assault. The Angola Home Guard was called in to escort Truth to her repeat engagement at the Steuben County Courthouse and the women of the abolitionist movement outfitted her for the journey. Truth describes their preparations:

> The ladies thought I should be dressed in uniform as well as the captain of the home guard, whose prisoner I was and who was to go with me to the meeting. So they put upon me a red, white, and blue shawl, a sash and apron to match, a cap on my head with a star in front, and a star on each shoulder. When I was dressed I looked in the glass and was fairly frightened. Said I, "It seems I am going to battle." My friends advised me to take a sword or pistol. I replied, "I carry no weapon; the Lord will reserve me without weapons. I feel safe in the midst of my enemies; for the truth is powerful and will prevail." (*Narrative* 95-96)

This account of assessment, preparation, and aspiration bespeaks a specific orientation to the work of activism and advocacy that Truth is suiting up for. It yokes her understanding of material freedom to a notion of unfettered mobility that can be traced throughout Truth's life and work.

Truth's legal status is disturbingly complicated. She is a freedwoman who escaped slavery in the Hudson River Valley even as New York State was manumitting the abhorrent practice in the early nineteenth century. Though the sixty-four-year-old Truth had been free for decades by 1861, the moment she sets foot in Indiana, her freedom is unauthorized, or, maybe more precisely: de-authorized. "The advent of freedom," writes Sadiya Hartman about the domestic spheres into which freedwomen

were delivered, "placed black women and children into a locus of patriarchal control and protection that signified the gains of freedom" (156). While Hartman's concerns are the legal and material conditions of women and children shrouded under the more visible status of black husbands and fathers, her observations hold true here. The Republican state assumes patriarchal curation of and subsumes the freed status of Truth. In the absence of a black husband or father, the militarized state steps in. Truth is submitted to a kind of repossession, transiting as the "prisoner" of the Home Guard, and revisiting the captive status of her youth.

The act of communal dressing Truth describes can be understood as an effort to restore and protect dignity. The outfitting is transformed from a solitary and banal act to a mutual sourcing—each item of clothing likely contributed by a different member of the group, some surely plucked from Truth's own wardrobe. The provenance of this undertaking itself is a kind of protective opacity; its inspiration and execution is unable to be attributed to any one woman.

"The ladies" thought she "should be dressed in uniform," as impressively clad as the captain. With such an immediate visual signifier of status as clothing, the group recognizes an opportunity to elevate Truth in a literal fashion similar to that of the male, white, military authority. In 1861, a sash worn by members of the Union Army would have denoted the rank of officer (Todd 40), and mimicking this flourish endows Truth with an elevated prestige. The women also bestow stars on Truth, approximating the

recognitions of patriotism, rank, and heroism bestowed on officer's uniforms adorned with military insignia worn on caps, epaulets, and by medals affixed to the chest. This conscious outfitting is, of course, ultimately ineffectual against the threat of physical violence; each item of clothing functions more like a well wish, a talisman, than an actual protection. However touching, the women's suggestion of carrying a weapon undergirds their awareness of the carefully crafted costume's substantive inutility.

Truth's reaction to herself in the looking glass is an important aspect of the passage. Art historian Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby reads the moment of unanticipated fright as Truth's reaction to her own appearance. "Truth herself was 'frightened' by what she saw when she looked in the mirror," Grimaldo Grigsby writes, "after being dressed by the abolitionist supporters who wished to shield her. The excesses of the costume suggest the extent to which the abolitionists felt they had to hide the black body in order to minimize its incendiary power" (30). Later, Grimaldo Grigsby underscores this inflammatory intimidation, with her interpretation of Truth's consciousness of her own menace: "Truth was aware she could arouse fear—her appearance in patriotic masquerade had even 'frightened' her" (33). This reading of Truth's trepidation—a surprised reaction to her own bodily appearance—undermines the craftedness and intentionality of her coalition building, her costuming, and her own comprehension of the political moment in which she was transiting.

Instead, I argue that the reaction Truth narrates in front of the mirror is not a fear of her (black bodily) appearance. Instead, it is a fear of a dangerous journey materialized by her outfitted and equipped reflection in the quicksilver. Consider the futurity of her exclamation: "It seems I am going to battle." This notion of "going to" is the voiced aspiration of an arrival at both a physical location and a political end—termination points that require actual and rhetorical mobilization. It is the journey, then, moving from embarkation to destination over a treacherous terrain, that conjures Truth's fear. The journey is, indeed, anxiety inducing for Truth. The pomp and circumstance her preparations provoked proved intimidating. Although she rode in a large, ornate carriage back to the Steuben County Courthouse, flanked by armed officers, with soldiers parading ahead of and behind her, she becomes unnerved when she sees the large crowd gathering outside. "I felt as if I was going against the Philistines" she quips, and prays for deliverance (Truth 96).

In spite of her trepidation, the speaking engagement was a success. "[W]hen the rebels saw such a mighty army coming, they fled, and by the time we arrived," Truth includes in the *Book of Life*, "they were scattered over the fields, looking like a flock of frightened crows and not a one was left but a small boy, who sat upon the fence crying 'Nigger, nigger!'" (Truth 96). It was not the lone black body figured by Grimaldo Grigsby that caused intimidation, but instead this body's embeddedness within a larger social and political coalition. Truth renders the racist detractors feckless: the multitude

harmless as crows; their vehement articulation reduced to the lone voice of a pre-adolescent child. Truth's triumph was wholesale. Inside the courthouse she spoke, and even sang the *Star-Spangled Banner*, accompanied by the Union band, "with all [her] might" (#). It is this confrontational scene in wartime Angola—where ambivalent pro-union policy clashed with pro-slavery sympathies—that produced the first extant photograph of the famous abolitionist and feminist, Sojourner Truth.

Figure 22. Carte de visited of Sojourner Truth, ca. 1861. Chicago History Museum.

A portrait was commissioned to commemorate Truth's appearance in Steuben County.[2] It was this event, after all, that marked a turning point in Truth's Indiana campaign. After word of her perseverance spread, Truth drew a larger, more zealous following, causing Griffing to quip, "I have never labored a month in the cause of human freedom with so much acknowledged results" (1861).

In the carte de visite dated from the same period, Truth occupies a standing pose unusual for studio portraiture of the era. An ornate, wooden backed chair is pushed out of Truth's way and into the edge of the frame. A blank wall is bordered by a white baseboard molding and patterned rug. The visual busyness at the bottom of the frame suggests that the photograph is either taken outside of a professional photography studio, or at least, in a scale and manner not usually deployed in standard studio sittings—so named because of the assumed position of the photographic subject. Truth's body is angled to the right of the frame; her head is turned to face the camera's lens squarely. Truth wears metal framed glasses that sit tightly over her eyes. Her expression is closed-lipped and sober. Truth is bundled in clothing. She wears a polka dot apron over a light colored dress. Draped over her shoulders and around her arms, Truth is covered in a voluminous, striped shawl that is fringed along its edges. There is a white scarf worn round her head, knotted beneath her chin and overexposed where it hangs

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[2] This print was first discovered by historian, Margaret Washington, and published in her 2009 biography, *Sojourner Truth's America.* The reverse of the carte-de-visite bears Truth's signature.

down her chest. Over the scarf, Truth wears a quilted bonnet of dark, shiny material on the exterior, and a lighter colored fabric on its underside. She carries a Nantucket basket over her left arm, partially covered by the folds of her shawl. Her right hand perches upon a cane. Although difficult to see in this photograph's overexposure, this pose reveals the evidences of an earlier injury that had left Truth's right hand severely scarred and disfigured during her enslavement. In the bottom right corner of the frame there is a light ghost indicating that something was moved across the photographic field during the long exposure required to take the daguerreotype—another piece of furniture that cluttered the composition, the fabric cape covering the camera's viewfinder accidentally thrown over the lens, or the hand of the photographer directing Truth to turn this way or that. Truth stands stock still, but the imperative of mobility permeates the photograph.

Truth stands ready for a journey. She has not even to don her cap and valise to walk over the threshold of this drawing room and out into the world. Her preparedness is elaborated in the folds of her clothes, in the forward tilt of her cane, and in the grim press of her lips. If Truth felt that her stage appearance in Indiana was the flash of a looking-glass for her audience, it is this reflection she wishes to prolong and this alacrity she wishes to promulgate. The life of Sojourner Truth can be understood as a stalwart commitment to the maintenance of mobility for herself and for the black men and women for whom she wished to speak. Her travels—both real and figurative—are the

philosophical underpinning and the tangible practice of freedom. This photograph, this mirror image, is at once frozen and ambulatory. This chapter explores the literary and visual artifacts of Truth's life to excavate her cognizant styling of movement under duress.

3.1 "Annialated Distance": The Materiality of Mobility

To know that Sojourner Truth considered her mobility and travel as a structuring principle of her life and ministerial vocation, we have only to look as far as her name. In 1843, Truth began the dissolution of the name she had inhabited during her enslaved youth, Isabella Van Wagener. She chose her own name: Sojourner Truth. Sojourner, conjuring the impermanence of a pilgrim or wayfarer, signals a preoccupation with "transitoriness/permanence" Truth's biographer, Nell Irivin Painter tells us (Representing, 462). Literary scholar Sarah Jane Cervenak argues that the power of this transitoriness is not only in its movement, but also in the imposed opacity this movement produces. She writes:

> Isabella's new name revealed that the truth was in the unreachable terrain of her sojourn…Sojourner Truth, truth's sojourn, sometimes tripped people up, and contained private bends and turns that prevented others from following it. At the place before and ahead of articulation, what [David] Walker might have called a 'nothingness,' Truth theorized justice" (254).

The evasiveness of her real and metaphorical wanderings, Cervenak demonstrates through a careful consideration of Truth's text and oratory, eke out an escape, to which Truth cannot be followed. Her name is a foreground, the first obstacle to pursuit.

Many scholars have focused on Truth's mobility as a spiritual construct—"a divinely shaped movement across the plot," as Cervenak has described it (239). This chapter upholds the importance of Truth's Methodist spiritual practice to her social and political meanderings. Her understanding of a divine vocation is essential to her mobilization. However, the following posits a focus on the literal and infrastructural ways in which Truth conceptualizes transit and circulation. Her spiritual beliefs were intimately wed to the technological changes she was witnessing all around her. As Elisa Seaman Leggett wrote to her good friend and former neighbor Walt Whitman in 1881: "[Truth] thinks there ought to be Scriptures written of what God has done ever since the times of the early creation and Moses—Scriptures telling of railors, and telephones and the Atlantic cable. She sees God in a steam engine and electricity" (Donaldson 244). Rather than reducing her movements to mere metaphor, then, it is imperative that we consider the material conditions of Truth's physical, textual, and visual motility.

Born in Ulster County, New York, in 1797, Truth was witness to the many, jolting technological changes that erupted out of the Hudson River Valley during her childhood and adolescence. New York State, as historian Richard L. Gasson has pointed out, was the cradle of the tourist industry in the United States. Destinations like the Catskill Mountain House, the Spa at Saratoga Springs, and Niagara Falls structured robust coach services, steamship and packet lines. These tourist routes also laid the groundwork for large-scale infrastructural projects that would determine the young nation's travel and

commerce for a century to come. As a young woman in 1825, Truth saw the construction and commission of the Erie Canal which was heralded as an act of American ingenuity, a wonder, and an instant success. Much has been made of its economic import and the canal's impact on facilitating westward expansion.[3] In record numbers, a trend-setting leisure class flocked to fashionable resorts throughout the state. The Marquis de Lafayette reported that 2,000 boats transited the canal during his tour in 1824 and 1825; by 1826, this number had reached 7,000 (qtd. in Wyld 39). Short railroad trunk lines—the Mohawk and the Hudson, and the Saratoga and the Mohawk, for instance—were laid in the late 1820s and fully operational by 1831 (184n47). The excitement, energy, and expense that accompanied each of these transportation innovations was constant in Truth's home. Her son, Peter, even worked on the canal system. Truth "procured a place for Peter, as a tender of locks, at a place called Wahkendall, near Greenkills" (51).[4]

James Fenimore Cooper remarked on the quickly evolving ease afforded to upstate New York, a region he calls "the bosom of the country," by burgeoning transportation technologies. In his 1826 novel, *The Last of the Mohicans,* he writes,

> The tourist, the valetudinarian, or the amateur of beauties of nature who, in the train of his four-in-hand, now rolls through the scenes we have attempted to describe, in quest of information, health, or pleasure, or floats steadily towards his object on those artificial waters which have sprung up under the administration of a statesman [DeWitt Clinton] who has dared to stake his political character on the hazardous issue, is not to suppose that his ancestors

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[3] For more on this, see Peter L. Bernstein, *The Wedding of the Waters* (2005) and Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River (2007).*

[4] Wahkendall, or Wagondale, is thought to be located in present-day Creek Locks, New York.

> traversed those hills, or struggled with the same currents with equal facility. The transportation of a single heavy gun was often considered equal to a victory gained; if, happily, the difficulties of the passage had not so far separated it from its necessary concomitant, the ammunition, as to render it no more than an useless tube of unwieldy iron. (147)

The evolution of transit within a generation, as Cooper underscores, was considered unparalleled. Although these accounts of the leisure class elide the many men and women who would have traveled these same routes as members of an enslaved population, or black, white, and Native servant classes, the implications of these changes would not have escaped a young Truth. She was born less than ten miles from the banks of the Hudson River, along the route from New York City to Albany.

The name that Sojourner Truth chose for herself is an important clue to the scholarship of her life and work, as well as to a U.S.-based understanding of transit in the nineteenth century. To restage the questions Donna Haraway has posited in her writing about Truth:

> What is it about this figure, whose hard name signifies someone who could never be at home, for whom truth was displacement from home, that compels retelling and rehearing her story? What kind of history might Sojourner Truth inhabit? (92).

Embedded in Haraway's questions is a relationship: it is the name Sojourner that sutures Truth to a moving history. Truth viewed the "displacements from home" not only as individualized experiences, but as systematized and historical.

Truth consciously considered her place in the world, in history, in relation to technological mobility, and modes of conveyance. "'There were no railroads, or

steamboats, or telegraphs when I was born," she told the *Chicago Daily Inter-Ocean* in 1879, "There were only horses, wagons, oxen, and sloops" (qtd. in Washington 13). In the *Narrative* she notes, "steamboats and railroads had not then annihilated distance to the extent that they now have" (45). Her work for black emancipation and enfranchisement and on behalf of women's suffrage can be seen in these terms as well. Her struggles with the integration of streetcars in Washington, D.C., in the 1860s is well documented, for instance (Painter, *Sojourner* 210-211). And, in her now near-mythic speech at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, she argued by means of movement: "That man over there says women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere," she is reported to have said. "Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And arn't I a woman?" (Stanton 116).[5] The pronouncement of and argument for Truth's intersectional identity—at once black and woman—is made by means of her relationship to transit.

3.2 "Trusts Her Scribe": Contextualizing Narrative

Perhaps there is no better distillation of Truth's relationship to mobility than her biography, *The Narrative of Sojourner Truth.* This section proposes a re-reading of Truth's *Narrative* that interrogates the book as a form of travel writing to enunciate, as Truth

[5] Much debate over the content and transcription of this speech, popularly referred to as "Ar'n't I A Woman" exists. For a reprisal of these debates, see Painter, *Sojourner,* pp. 164-178.

does, her own movements as well as the movements of her family members and friends. The emphasis on passage from one place to another mirrors Truth's early movement from enslaved to free woman, as well as New York State's wavering manumission from slavery to abolition. Truth's inequitable accesses to transport comes to define her understanding of the difference between herself and her white contemporaries. Impediments to Truth's movements delineate the parameters of her limited freedoms and shape her racial formation as a black woman of the nineteenth-century.

The *Narrative* is referred to in literary and black studies as an emblematic touchstone much more often than a text rife for critical study. "The *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* is rarely mentioned as a text that requires informed interpretation," writes John Ernest, causing him to quip that the book is "both everywhere and nowhere in American literary scholarship" (459). Scholarship pertaining to Truth's life and work has been described as "scant on substance," often detailing familiar and undocumented sources. The advent of more highly regarded biographies on Truth from historians Nell Irvin Painter and Margaret Washington has helped to alleviate the biographical void, but scholarship on the *Narrative* remains surprisingly light (Connor 294). Painter speculates that the relegation of the text to a conversion narrative makes it particularly challenging for scholars to contend with, accounting for its marginal status "outside the canon of ex-slave narratives." In addition to the scenes of her enslavement, and early emancipation, The *Narrative*—which often veers sentimental—details Truth's religious awakening, her

vocational call as an itinerant minister, and stints with perfectionism, a Christian cult, and other religious encounters. The "emphasis on the evolution of Truth's faith and her religious experiences," Painter writes, "…has made the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* difficult for readers to fit into the more familiar southern drama of slavery, with its contest between virtuous slave and cruel master" (*Sojourner*, 109). Truth's autobiography, then, is difficult to render as a type of writing, eluding to or making use of several composite forms.

This difficulty of categorization has been undergirded because Truth is seen as an atypical phenomenon. As the most famous example of an African American woman evangelist transiting alone on the legally and socially circumscribed roads of the antebellum and postbellum U.S., Sojourner Truth's has become iconically synonymous with American self-reliance and singularity. She is heralded as "the first black feminist," "the lone voice speaking for the rights of black women" (Truth, *backmatter),* "singular" (Stowe 473), and as Painter writes, the "[only] woman who had been through the ordeal of slavery [and] managed to survive with sufficient strength, poise, and self-confidence to become a public presence" (*Sojourner Truth,* 4). This narrow vision of Truth as an atypical heroine occludes the efforts she and her contemporaries made to carve out identity and community in the era of and immediately following American slavery. Indeed, there were several formerly enslaved women, or daughters of the formerly enslaved who, like Truth, felt contemporaneously called to the work of evangelization

and became distinguished writers, orators, and public figures both before and after Truth's rise to public notoriety. The work of black ministers Rebecca Cox Jackson, Maria Stewart, the former slave known as Old Elizabeth, Amanda Berry Smith, Virginia Broughton, Jarena Lee, Zilpha Elaw, and Julia Foote, shows us that far from being a lone voice, Truth was a member of a constitutive community united by religious zeal, abolitionist fervor, feminist sentiment, and a sense of vocation tied to travel.[6] This kind of intentional mobility among black women in the United States was far from commonplace, but neither was it isolated. I wish to suggest a reading of these journeys as the kind of mobility that Farah Griffin and Cheryl Fish recognize as being related to personhood, a mobility that was able to limn broader and more radical forms of sociality and instantiate a network of black activism within the nineteenth century Atlantic world. The insistence of these women on their own travel undergirds their understanding of the circumscription of their racial identity.

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[6] In chronological order: Rebecca Cox Jackson. *Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress.* (Written between 1830-63, Published in 1981); Jarena Lee. *The Life and Religious Experience of Jarerna Lee* (1836, expanded version 1849); Maria Stewart. *Meditations from the pen of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart: presented to the First African Baptist Church and Society* (1839), *Productions of Mrs. Maria W. Stewart presented to the First African Baptist Church and Society of the City of Boston* (1879); Zilpha Elaw. *Memoirs of the Life, Religious Experience, Ministerial Travels and Labours of Mrs. Zilpha Elaw* (1846); Sojourner Truth. *The Narrative of the Life of Sojourner Truth* (1850); Old Elizabeth. *The Memoir of Old Elizabeth, A Coloured Woman* (1863); Julia Foote. *A Brand Plucked from the Fire* (1879); Amanda Berry Smith. *An Autobiography* (1893); Virginia Broughton. *Twenty Year's Experience of a Missionary (1907).*

Early black American travel narratives have been consistently described as a "sub-genre." "Specifically, early African American travelers often embarked upon unauthorized liberatory initiatives for the purposes of emancipation, re-identification, regeneration, or self-reliance," writes Virginia Whatley Smith. These journeys, according to Smith,

> frequently conflicted with the principles of Euro-American colonization, slavery, and imperialism. Moreover, these African American travelers inaugurated an eclectic genre of domestic and transnational travel writing which was often socio-politically motivated on behalf of the collective for racial uplift rather than for mere individualized, European-type leisure class entertainment. (197)

Reading the spiritual autobiographies and life writings of Truth and the lesser known itinerant ministers mentioned above as travel writing helps us to see them not merely as "eclectic," but rather occupying significant terrain within the genre. Their contributions to travel writing, read in concert, help to invert the on-going imperialist projects of travel within the period. The following close reading of Truth's biography within this rubric should be understood as emblematic, but not alone.

Narrative of Sojourner Truth seized on a moment of tremendous demand for ex-slave narratives to further the abolitionist cause and bump in Truth's own celebrity. Truth began dictating her autobiography the year after Frederick Douglass's *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) sold some 4,500 copies in six months (Painter, *Sojourner*, 103). At this time, Truth had also become somewhat of a regional celebrity through her association with the scandalously regarded religious group, the Kingdom of

Mathias. Rumors of sexual impropriety and accusations of murder had erupted around the group in the 1830s, and Truth's involvement was noted in the newspapers. The story ballooned into what Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz have called "one of the first penny-press sensations in American history" (10-11).[7] The timing of her 1850 autobiography was prime.

The publication history of *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*—not unlike the communal outfitting in Angola—defies clear constitution and authorial provenance. The first edition of the text was composed between 1846 and its publication. Truth narrated her life story to a white friend of a Northampton, Massachusetts, neighbor, Olive Gilbert. Truth is understood to be non-literate and required the assistance of an amanuensis. Truth's *Narrative* was self-published in Boston on credit at the printing house of George Brown Yerrington—the same printer who had furnished Douglass's autobiography five years prior (Washington 187). Truth was put in contact with Yerrington by her friend, the Boston Brahmin and famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Garrison wrote the preface to Truth's life story, as he had done for Douglass. Twenty-five years later, in 1875, another friend, the white abolitionist and freedmen advocate, Frances Titus published an updated edition of *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* which included sections from Truth's scrapbooks and autograph collections. In this version, Truth enunciates her

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[7] For a full account of the Kingdom of Matthias, see Johnson and Wilentz. See also, Painter's Sojurner Truth, Chapter 7: In the Kingdom of Matthias," pp. 48-61.

confidence in her co-author. "She trusts her scribe," the edition posits, to make decisions in her interest (256). Titus published one more edition after Truth's death in 1884 that included an elegiac "Memorial Chapter" replete with obituaries and eulogies. "[*Narrative's*] mish-mash of first- and third- person accounts continues to raise questions about authorship, authenticity, and appropriation," explains literary scholar Naomi Greyser. "Tracing the receding horizon of reliable accounts of Truth's life and her intentions underscores the artfulness, beauty, and power with which she used language to manage privilege and negotiate hostile conditions while living, and narrating, her life" (279-80). The inability to attribute, to distinguish voice or interpretation in *Narrative of Sojourner Truth*, mirrors the opacity that Truth enacted in her travels and philosophical wanderings.

The book itself circulated just as robustly as Truth did at the height of her ministerial and activist travels. She sold the narrative for the unusually low price of twenty-five cents, hawking it at camp meetings, on her lecture tours, and by mail order through the robust abolitionist press. Despite the book's trappings of cottage industry, it was reprinted five times between 1850 and 1885 (Zackodnik 118).

3.3 "And He Did Not Dislike the Journey: Reading The Narrative of Sojourner Truth

From the earliest age, according to *Narrative,* Truth understood her life, and the lives of her family members under enslavement, to be organized by mobility and access to vehicles of conveyance. Her natal home in the Hudson River Valley was conscripted

in Truth's captivity. She inhabited the same landscapes as the heralded authors Cooper and Washington Irving. The terrain of the Catskill mountains and Hudson Highlands, which was nearly impossible to transit during the harsh winter months without the necessary means of transport—in this case, a sleigh. "Isabella's birthplace was unmatched in haunting geophysical beauty," writes Washington,

> The distant, towering Catskill and Shawangunk mountains and the imposing Hudson River created magnificent landscapes...It was this region's natural beauty that inspired the Hudson Valley school of painters and deeply impressed Washington Irving, man of letters and author of *Rip Van Winkle* and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, who called Ulster an unforgettable land of "wonder and romance." (13)

Washington fails, however, to remark upon the natural boundaries these severe landscapes collate. This regional landscape comes to be heralded as much for its efficacy as for its natural beauty. The severe terrestrial land formations that deterred French and Native forces in the Seven Years' War, and aided colonists fighting against the British in the American Revolution, certainly must have signaled a parochial entrapment for enslaved persons. The natural barricades that fortified the inhabitants of the Hudson Valley against attack served as well to hold captive its indentured and enslaved populations. The "haunting" beauty that Washington describes is at once aesthetically pleasing and foreboding.

Isabella, as Truth was then known, "heard much" as a child from her parents "recalling and recounting" the traumatic circumstances under which each of their children had been sold away from the family (Truth 11). Even before Truth experienced

kidnapping and familial removal herself, she inherited it as a narrative legacy. The removal of the brother and sister who immediately preceded Isabella in the family line was perhaps the most impressionable, and the account is recorded in the *Narrative*. Truth, it is worth noting was an infant at the time of this incident, and the story's transmission is through the many retellings of her parents. Prior to the brutal action of this ostensible kidnapping scene, the season and its obstacles to travel are foregrounded. "There was snow on the ground, at the time of which we are speaking;" Gilbert contextualizes in the *Narrative*, "and a large old-fashioned sleigh was seen to drive up to the door…" The scene continues as Truth's brother is, "put into the sleigh, and [sees] his little sister actually shut and locked into the sleigh box" to be "separated for ever" from their parents and family. The *Narrative* never names a perpetrator of this separation nor describes a human agent of the action. Instead, the scene is rendered in passive voice: the brother "was taken and put into the sleigh" (11). Even when the drama heightens as the little boy fearfully escapes from the vehicle (while his sister remains locked and trapped in its interior compartment), runs back into the house, and hides under a bed in the family home, the *Narrative* states that he "was re-conveyed to the sleigh" (11). By whom he was re-conveyed remains a mystery. Whether Truth occludes this information because she doesn't know or because she prefers not to say, the narrative product is the same: the vehicle, the hulking sled with its coffin-like enclosure in which Truth's sister is

confined, becomes the subject of the action. The menace of this familial violation is one that comes to be embodied in the sleek runners of the sleigh.

Even if legal and social constraints had not prohibited Truth's parents from reclaiming their children, the material conditions of removal and inability to pursue would have—space and time in the Northeastern United States are organized by modes of transit both for the enslaved and free, creating a regional specificity for what Nicholas Mirzoeff has identified in the Caribbean as the "plantation complex" (10). Although there is less existent scholarship parsing the organization of slavery in the Northeast, this and other studies support the 1799 claim made by the French traveler La Rouchefoucaut-Liancourld that slavery was "as strictly maintained in the state of New York as in that of Virginia" (qtd. in Washington, 24). For the enslaved men and women of Ulster County, the landscape served as an impediment and the harsh winters an absolute prohibition to travel without means or assistance. In other words, the very landscape of New York State was complicit with the oppressive force of American slavery.

Truth's account makes clear that the young were not the only persons vulnerable to the difficulties of travel, however. After the unexpected death of her mother, Truth's aging father, James, or Bomefree as he was called, had no one to care for him. "I am *so old*, and *so helpless*. What *is* to become of me?" Truth reports her bereaved father crying at her mother's funeral. "I can't do anything any more–my children are all gone, and

here I am left helpless and alone" (15). Indeed, James was blind and infirm at the end of his life. He had been freed, it seems, only so he would not become a ward to the Ardinburghs, the family who had last owned him. His children had been sold away and were not at leisure to attend him, nor were provisions made by his owners for end of life care. For a time, he was set to a life of itinerancy. "…when all had left [Bomefree]," writes Gilbert, "the Ardinburghs, having some feeling left for their faithful and favorite slave, 'took turns about' in keeping him--permitting him to stay a few weeks at one house, and then a while at another, and so around" (13). Truth's emphases in this account are twofold. First, she is clear to mark her father as an exception. Although the reader will come to interpret the passing around and neglect of an elderly man as reprehensible behavior, the *Narrative* identifies this treatment as extraordinary because James is considered to be exemplary, an "ever kind and faithful slave" as his previous owners will later remark (18). Second, Truth makes scrupulous notes about her father's movements during this stage of his life. "If, when he made a removal," the *Narrative* records, "the place where he was going was not far off, he took up his line of march, staff in hand, and asked for no assistance. If it was twelve or twenty miles, they gave him a ride" (13). This type of specific detail seems almost extraneous to the text, except when considered in the context of Truth's larger rubric of assessment. Ease of travel and transit mark for her a material condition of freedom and enfranchisement. Washington tells us that Truth was "a horsewoman, drove a buggy, and guided skiffs, and thereby

learned local waterways and roadways" (40). Elsewhere Washington notes the dueling modes of personal (if limited) liberties and menace that came with her understanding of travel, "[Truth] knew the roads to Esopus, Kingston, New Paltz, and Marbletown and to the Quakers in Poppletown. She also visited her aged father. While her field labors and mobility gave her freedom of movement, they also placed her in a man's world of sexual license" (45). Truth's regional knowledge of more and less cumbersome modes of travel impacted her understanding of her father's discomfort and dis-ease at the end of his life. Eventually, with the Ardinburghs "tired of him" (15), James is moved to a shanty ("a rude cabin in a lone wood" [14]) where he dies alone and unaided. From reports made verbally to her by an elderly black woman named Soan who was likely the last person to see him alive, Truth understands that James dies in distress, frozen to death in an out of the way cabin, unable to care for himself—his stagnancy marking a final suffering (Gilbert, 14-15).[8] Her father's frequent itinerancy certainly marked a hardship, but it is in

[8] The *Narrative's* account is as follows, "Soan was herself an emancipated slave, old and weak, with no one to care for her; and she lacked the courage to undertake a job of such seeming magnitude, fearing she might herself get sick, and perish there without assistance; and with great reluctance, and a heart swelling with pity, as she afterwards declared, she felt obliged to leave him in his wretchedness and filth. And shortly after her visit, this faithful slave, this deserted wreck of humanity, was found on his miserable pallet, frozen and stiff in death. The kind angel had come at last, and relieved him of the many miseries that his fellow-man had heaped upon him. Yes, he had died, chilled and starved, with none to speak a kindly word, or do a kindly deed for him, in that last dread of hour of need!" (17).

his stillness, Truth recognizes, that he meets his demise. Consider Truth's final memory of her father, which is transcribed in the *Narrative:*

> The last time she did see him, she found him seated on a rock, by the road side, alone, and far from any house. He was then migrating from the house of one Ardinburgh to that of another, several miles distant. His hair was white like wool–he was almost blind–and his gait was more a creep than a walk–but the weather was warm and pleasant, and he did not dislike the journey (14).

The image that Truth preserves of her father for the contemporary public and posterity is one of him as a wayfarer—making a journey, with fettered movement and astonishing aplomb. Truth displaces the trauma that comes with a full understanding of the circumstances of James's death with a "pleasant" snapshot of the transitoriness of black life.

Truth herself experiences this transitoriness over and over again. Her premeditated self emancipation marks one of several notable moments like this. "Acting alone," her biographer Nell Irvin Painter writes, drawing attention to the processes of her careful ambulation, "Isabella took her first step toward emancipation…" (*Sojourner,* 21). After her owner, John Dumont, reneges on a promise of early emancipation in the piecemeal enterprise of New York State's Gradual Emancipation Law of 1799, Truth takes a calculated gamble to stage her own (local) escape. The description from the *Narrative* is nearly speculative: "…a little before daybreak, she might have been seen stepping stealthily away from the rear of Master Dumont's house," writers Gilbert, "her infant on one arm and her wardrobe on the

other; the bulk and weight of which, probably, she never found so convenient as on the present occasion, a cotton handkerchief containing both her clothes and her provisions" (28). The emphasis on unknowability, "the might have" and the "probably," seem surprising. With Truth acting as author and source for Gilbert, any uncertainty about fact or feeling might have been easily cleared up and set down accurately and without question in the *Narrative.* This superfluous guesswork, I would argue, conveys Truth's own contemporaneous anxieties about her travel and departure—her own uncertainties and vulnerabilities about escape displaced by the vantage of the hypothetical third party observer. Whether this is a conscientious authorial tactic or a byproduct of the emotional freight embedded in the act of storytelling, the element of conjecture is clear and it shifts the narrative timbre to one of ambiguity. This ambiguity pervades the transit. There is an archetypal moment standard to travel writing of the era in which the protagonist, gaining high ground, pauses to survey the landscape, to make observations or declarative statements about the significance of their own journey. The writer who wanted accuracy of the kind that was associated with Victorian science and observation, Timothy Mitchell reminds us, had to "separate oneself from the world and thus constitute it as a panorama. This required what was now called a 'point of view,' a position set apart and outside" (68). Even when Truth gains an elevated gaze, "set apart and outside," an access to that paradigmatic moment, her thoughts are still suffused with this pervading ambiguity:

> As she gained the summit of a high hill, a considerable distance from her master's, the sun offended her by coming forth in all his pristine splendor. She thought it never was so light before; indeed, she thought it much too light. She stopped to look about her, and ascertain if her pursuers were yet in sight. No one appeared, and, for the first time, the question came up for settlement, 'Where, and to whom, shall I go?' In all her thoughts of getting away, she had not once asked herself whither she should direct her steps (28).

With an emphasis on departure, rather than arrival, Truth disrupts what has been considered as the traditional travel narrative arc. Instead of mastery over the landscape, she exhibits an uncertainty that is inspired by the vantage she has gained in her travels. Anxious about pursuit and her own fugitivity, Truth underscores the power differential that is operative in even the most sublime conditions of light and landscape. The "countless varieties of light and shade" so admired by Truth's contemporary, the white British author Frances Trollope as she traveled through the Hudson Highlands are the same "pristine splendor" that Truth receives as an offense (306). The perceptions of these two observers and writers are mediated by their material conditions of liberty and enslavement.

This episode also produces a glimpse into how considered and precise Truth is becoming in regard to her movements. When John Dumont, her owner at the time, does track down Truth he is recorded in the *Narrative* as saying, "Well, Bell, so you've run away from me." Truth replies with specificity and confidence, "No, I did not *run away*; I walked away by day-light, and all because you had promised me a year of my time."

Truth's sense of justice here, if not before, becomes intimately tied to unfettered and self-directed ambulation.

The link between these journeyings and justice may have been a very literal one for Truth. Truth gained notoriety in the annals of American history for her successful litigation of several court cases in the antebellum and postbellum United States. The first case was tried in 1827. As New York State transitioned gradually out of slavery and into emancipation, the children of the enslaved, including Truth's children, remained indentured to their former masters. Part of the state's Emancipation Act placed a prohibition on the sale of New York State's enslaved youth out-of-state where they could be reincorporated into the domestic slave trade. When Truth's young son, Peter, was sold out-of-state unlawfully, Truth brought suit against his former master. She won the case and was reunited with her son. The *Narrative* records not only the court proceedings, but also all of the journeying Truth undertook in the service of acquiring support, information, and the necessary juridical documents. "When Isabel heard that her son had been sold South," the *Narrative* intones, "she immediately started on foot and alone, to find the man who had thus dared…to sell her child out of the state; and if possible, to bring him to account for the deed" (39). When directed to a nearby Quaker community as a site of resource and knowledge, Truth "wended her way" to visit them (43). When, after receiving the necessary information, she departs, the text includes, as an example of the family's benevolence, "the Quaker saw that she was taken and set

down near Kingston…" (44). On a separate errand for the court, she carries out advice to come by an injunction, "walking, or rather trotting, in her haste, some eight or nine miles" to New Paltz. (44). Descriptions like this abound. "She…trotted off at her peculiar gait in the direction of [the lawyer's] house, as fast as possible," the chapter continues. To underscore this journey as a hardship, the *Narrative* includes details of Truth's equipage: "She was not encumbered with stockings, shoes, or any other heavy article of dress" (46). Elsewhere, there is a note that "[Truth] performed the journey to Poppletown, a distance of some ten miles…" (47). What would seem inconsequential to a story about successful litigation, is made extremely consequential—the travails inside the bureaucratic courtroom biased against recognition of Truth and her family as subjects under the law, in some ways, much less difficult than her transit to and from these proceedings.

Her itinerant ministry is the obvious site to note her movements, and, indeed, Truth is sure to include some information about her travels ("the Spirit calls me there, and I must go'' [68]). More importantly, the *Narrative* embeds a crucial account of what infrastructure, if any, was available to a black women traveling alone before and after the advent of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850. ''Wherever night overtook her, there she sought for lodgings—free, if she might—if not, she paid; at a tavern, if she chanced to be at one—if not, at a private dwelling; with the rich, if they would receive her—if not, with the poor'' (69). Her experience also lends her some practical and conventional wisdom,

which it seems that Truth is intent upon distributing to her readers. Truth, the *Narrative* states,

> soon discovered that the largest houses were nearly always full; if not quite full, company was soon expected; and that it was much easier to find an unoccupied corner in a small house than in a large one; and if a person possessed but a miserable roof over his head, you might be sure of a welcome to part of it (69).

This beatitudinal rendering of hospitality Truth encounters on her journeys throughout the Northeastern and Midwestern states has two purposes. First, it serves as a moral injunction against those who withhold resources from wayfarers, whatever their circumstances or appearance. Second, it disseminates a kind of conventional wisdom to other travelers who might find themselves transiting those same roads—a kind of clandestine guide. As Painter says, "To the woman who became Sojourner Truth, knowing and being known were always of both material and epistemological significance" (*Sojourner* 461). In her *Narrative,* then, she functions both as the traveler and the guide.

3.4 "I Never Make Use of the Word Honey": The Libyan Sibyl

It was the *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* that would bring Truth into contact with another popular American author and, subsequently, the world of Neoclassical American art. These experiences would bolster her notoriety and push Truth further into the photographic studio for her self-representation. The section that follows offers an analysis of William Wetmore Story's American Ideal sculpture, *The Libyan Sibyl* (1860), and Harriet Beecher Stowe's written account of her meeting with Truth

published under the same title (1863); Stowe claimed that it was her recollections of Truth that inspired Story's work, the sculpture that he called "an anti-slavery sermon set in stone" (Mabee 111). The idyll of the Libyan Sibyl offered both a Classical-era analogue to the pervasive racist depictions of African Americans that plagued the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries and a reinscription of ancient stereotype to produce a stagnant understanding of race. Despite all the pains Truth took to fashion herself a true itinerant, her contemporary, white interlocutors were intent upon setting her in stone and fixing her racial identification in place. The transit of Story's sculpture, the circulation of Stowe's anecdotal encounter, and Truth's own efforts to undermine these monolithic narratives, demonstrate precisely how tenuous reductions of racial stereotype were.

The Libyan Sibyl arrived on the European and U.S. art scene via its display at the 1862 London World Exhibition (Powers 54). This large-scale exhibit was intended to showcase the evolution of art and technology during the Industrial Revolution with a particular focus on the decade that had elapsed since London last hosted a World's Fair in 1851.[9] Two of William Wetmore Story's recently completed sculptures—*Cleopatra* and *The Libyan Sibyl*—were displayed over the course of the six-month exhibition. The sculptures were seen by an estimated 6.1 million visitors (EXPO2000).

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[9] It is interesting to note that *The Greek Slave* discussed in the last chapter was a centerpiece of this earlier World's Fair where it gained its initial and far-reaching notoriety. The celebrity that Story garnered at this World's Fair is considered a similar ascension by art critics (Gerdts 19).

Figure 23. William Wetmore Story, *The Libyan Sibyl,* 1861.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The sculpture is cast in white marble and considered to be another example of the American Ideal. The sibyl is seated on a rock, her bare torso and chest hunched over her legs. In one hand, she supports her head beneath the chin. In the other hand, she holds a prophetic scroll. The woman wears a sheet draped over her crossed legs (the *London Athenaeum* quipped, "A secret-keeping looking dame she is" [qtd. in Stowe "Sojourner"], an ammonite shell atop her head, hooped earrings, and a beaded necklace with the sign of Solomon hanging at its center to denote her mystic powers. *The Libyan*

Sibyl is large compared to Story's other works, measuring 53 x 27 3/4 x 45 1/2 inches. Her limbs appear shapely and elongated. The sibyl's face is angled slightly to the right of her body, and her blank eyes are cast off into the distance. The whole sculpture sits on an oval-shaped pedestal though some later copies have a rectangular shaped stand into which the words "THE LIBYAN SIBYL" are carved.

The materiality of the sculpture is pointed. As with *The White Captive,* the white marble used in this sculpture possesses a regulatory function. For a figure that would be recognized as a black woman by viewers for reasons discussed below, however, the conditions of regulation differ. "The exclusivity of marble indexed the desire to reclaim the ancient aesthetic forms and materials of the Greeks and it also located the deliberate appropriation of ancient knowledge and culture which were mapped onto modern nations seeking to manifest political and cultural cohesion," writes art historian, Charmaine A. Nelson, gesturing to the symbolic capacities for the divisions of the United States during the Civil War. "The symbolic imperative of marble was also sexual and racial. White marble guarded against the threat of flesh, and flesh must be recognized not only as sexual, or sexualized, but as the locus of colour/complexion and a fundamental means of racial identifications" (89). Whereas the white marble of *The White Captive* consolidated the whiteness rendered in that statue, the white marble of the *The Libyan Sibyl* made the scrutable blackness of its subject gratuitous.

The Libyan Sibyl's reverberations with the simultaneously exhibited *Cleopatra* adds context to its further interpretation. *Cleopatra and the Libyan Sibyl* are considered pendants to one another and contributed to the burgeoning iconography that came to be associated with the abolitionist cause of the mid-nineteenth century. Both were representative of distinct "African types" and meant to elicit admiration and sympathies for black men and women living in the U.S. "The image of *Cleopatra,*" writes art historian Melissa Dabakis, "represented a complicated melding of Egyptian (North African) otherness and Western (European) whiteness" (150). The *Libyan Sibyl* was more overtly African in Story's estimations. The scale of the statue is slightly larger, the physical attributes considered to be uniquely African more manifest, and its corporeality signals the black woman as both "laborer and breeder" (Dabakis 155). In 1861, Story wrote to his friend Charles Elliot Norton, the first art historian at Harvard and a noted abolitionist, that the *Sibyl* "was his "best work—it is so considered by all I believe."[10] Story enumerates the transformations he has made to the neoclassical figure in service of his vision of an African subject:

> I have taken the pure Coptic head and figure, the great massive sphinx-like face, full lipped, long eyed, low browed, and lowering, and the large developed limbs of the African…It is a very massive figure, big-shouldered, large bosomed, with nothing of Venus in it, but as far as I could make it, luxurious and heroic. She is

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[10] *Cleopatra* would eclipse *The Libyan Sibyl* in popularity and notoriety, in large part because Nathaniel Hawthorne conscripted the work to be the apex of creative production by his sculptor protagonist, Kenyon, in the 1860 novel, *The Marble Faun.* "The face was a miraculous success," Hawthorne writes of the statue and underscores the Africanized understanding of the work, "The sculptor had not shunned to give the full Nubian lips and other characteristics of the Egyptian physiognomy" (161).

> looking out of her large Black eyes into futurity and seeks the fate of her race…I made her head as melancholy and severe as possible, not at all the shrinking African type. On the contrary, it is thoroughly African—Libyan African, not Congo (qtd. in Seidler 504).

Blending the American ideal with aspects of a North African/Mediterranean identity (Libyan, not the central African Congo associated with the slave trade), Story situates these embellishments within the geographic sphere of Classical influence. Incorporating visual individuated elements of blackness with the tempered artistic conventions of Western sculpture, he sought to make his subject—the black woman—palatable to the normative gaze of white viewers.

Figure 24. Michelangelo. Libyan Sibyl detail from the Sistine Chapel, ca. 1512.

Despite Story's insistence that the sculpture is "thoroughly African," *The Libyan Sibyl* is a perceptively Transatlantic object. A Boston Brahmin, Story was considered an American artist, though he had been long installed in Rome's bustling mid-century art scene where his friends encompassed both Italian and Anglo-American socialites, including the Brownings. In the *Libyan Sibyl* we can see the influence of dual homelands in Story's work. In the midst of the U.S. Civil War, not unlike Erastus Dow Palmer of the last chapter, Story lands on prevalent themes of captivity and enslavement for the subject of his sculpture. "This is the theme of the figure -- Slavery on the horizon," he wrote in an 1861 letter to Henry James (qtd. in Tolliver 117), as if he, himself, was looking out over the Atlantic upon his natal nation. Instead of turning to archetypes indigenous to the Americas, however, Story mobilizes a figure from Antiquity—The Libyan Sibyl. This is the eldest of the prophetic priestesses made famous for their guardianship of written oracles in Greek and Roman mythology. Whether Story had encountered this mythical figure before his arrival in Italy, she would have become exceptionally more significant upon his first glimpse of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City. Here, the most famous artistic rendering of the Libyan Sibyl completed by Michelangelo in the second potana sometime between January 1511 and October 1512, adorns the northeast end of the chapel's ceiling. Based on sketches that "were clearly done from a young male assistant posing in the artist's studio," Michelangelo modeled this fair-skinned seer in the contrapposto position that displays a twisted frame lifting

her oracle from the shelf (Bambach). This highly stylized fresco serves as an important anchor to Story's sculpture, and underscores the influence of his European sojourn onto the art work. The conscription of content that was interpretable both to U.S. and European audiences offered *The Libyan Sibyl* tremendous traction and support. So much support, in fact, that the two sculptures were sponsored to the World Exhibition by the Papal patronage of Pope Pius IX (Gerdts 19).[11] The animus for this sculpture is derived from violent, contemporary conflict in the United States, its interlocutors codified during the High Renaissance staged in Rome, and its display at the epicenter of Britain's Victorian industrialization with the material and symbolic blessing of the Roman Catholic Church. The circulation of *The Libyan Sibyl*, both physically and by reputation, highlights the transit of various secular and ecclesiastical empires through visual objects.

By the spring of 1863, the extremely popular white abolitionist author of the famed *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), had published two identical articles claiming that Sojourner Truth had been the inspiration for Story's sculpture.[12] In these articles,

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[11] The Roman Catholic Church took an arguably ambivalent view on slavery during the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, issuing a papal bull in 1839 that denounced the slave trade, but left equivocal language open to broad interpretation. During the U.S. Civil War, the Vatican never recognized the Confederacy, but did admit their delegate bishop to the Holy See in an ecclesiastical capacity. The papal patronage of Story's anti-slavery sculptures may be understood as a tacit admonishment of the institution of American slavery, but one that would not overtly offend the large Catholic populations living in the southern states.

[12] This was not the first time Stowe mobilized the figure of Sojourner Truth for her own purposes. As Washington shows, Stowe used Truth as a character in her novel, *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp* (1856), and again, in an 1860 article that concocted a combative scene at Faneuil Hall in which Truth disagreed publicly with the militancy of abolitionist, Frederick Douglass. "To anyone condemning agitation and making 'a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, Old Africa rises, and raising her poor maimed, scarred hand to heaven, asks us—IS GOD DEAD?" (301).

published in *The Anti-Slavery Standard* and the *Atlantic Monthly* for the sum of two hundred dollars, Stowe styled herself as the willing and generous conduit for the transmission of this inspiration (Grimaldo Grigsby 38). It was she, Stowe told readers, who had recounted an anecdote of meeting Truth a decade earlier in Massachusetts to the sculptor in Rome, and from her anecdote the statue sprung. The triangulation of this stylized reminiscence of Truth, who indeed visited Stowe at her home in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1853 to obtain a blurb for the second printing of *Narrative,* proves another fascinating and manufactured trajectory (Painter *Sojourner* 151-63).

Stowe constructs what Grimaldo Grigsby has called a "fabulist geography" from Truth's biography (39). Stowe writes that while visiting Italy from her home in New England, she met with Story at a breakfast. "Already had his mind begun to turn to Egypt in search of a type of art which should represent a larger and more vigorous development of nature than the cold elegance of Greek lines," wrote Stowe (480). She eagerly supplied him with the history of Sojourner Truth for this rustic rendering. Stowe recreates this history in the article for her readers with particular emphasis on a false African origin. "Well, now, I'll jest have to go back, an' tell ye all about it," Stowe quotes Truth as saying during her visit in a dialect that scholars have identified as an inaccurate and racist conflation with slaves from the southern plantation system

(Washington, p.301-303; Painter *Sojourner* 155-56).[13] "Ye see, we was all brought over from Africa, father an' mother an' I, an' a lot more of us; an' we was sold up an' down, an' hither an' yon"(474). Truth was, at least, the second generation of her family to be born in the U.S. after their forced migration in the Transatlantic slave trade. Yet, Stowe continues to underscore Truth's attachment to the African continent. "She was evidently a full-blooded African," Stowe writes,

> and though now aged and worn with many hardships, still gave the impression of a physical development which in early youth must have been as fine a specimen of the torrid zone as Cumberworth's celebrated statuette of the Negro Woman at the Fountain. Indeed, she so strongly reminded me of that figure, that, when I recall the events of her life, as she narrated them to me, I imagine her as a living, breathing impersonation of that work of art. (473)

Stowe's emphasis on unmixed blood, her declaration of Truth as "a specimen," and her provision of a natal location for Truth as the abstract and amorphous Tropics, demonstrate the pains she is taking to demarcate Truth's origins as both African and racialized according to prevailing modes of classificatory science. Her conflation of Truth with Cumberworth's statue, better known as *Marie at the Fountain,* or, Porteuse d'eau nubienne [Nubian Water-Bearer mine] (1846), demonstrates just how closely racialized visual typologies divined from these colonial sciences were associated with fine art and public perception.[14]

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[13] Washington has theoretically framed this narrative performance as "Sojourner Truth in blackface"(301).
[14] The French sculptor Charles Cumberworth was active from roughly 1829 through the 1880's. His oeuvre consisted predominantly of small-scale figurines or statuettes cast in bronze, terracotta, or marble. His most famous works are those studies, similar to *The Nubian Water-Bearer*, that exemplify an exotic (non-white)

Stowe underscores her falsification of African nativity often in the article. Recounting and transcribing a hymn that Truth sang in her presence, Stowe writes, for instance, "She sang with the strong barbaric accent of the native African, and with those indescribable upward turns and those deep gutturals which give such a wild, peculiar power to the negro singing." Of the same moment, Stowe extemporizes, "Sojourner, singing this hymn, seemed to impersonate the fervor of Ethiopia, wild, savage, hunted of all nations, but burning after God in her tropic heart, and stretching her scarred hands towards the glory to be revealed"(477). Furnishing Ethiopia as a geographic referent and Truth's heart and maimed hand as bodily ones, Stowe showcases the vulnerability of the black woman's body and makes it synonymous with an indeterminate African continent. Both are tendered as maps of racial logic. In a foil to the valorization of the perfect ideal proffered by Story, Stowe's equivocal valorization of Truth is derived from her subjection. In yet another example, Stowe comments on the innateness of religious zeal on "The African":

> The African seems to seize on the tropical fervor and luxuriance of Scripture imagery as something native; he appears to feel himself to be of the same blood

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female form. The women represented in these works cull a range of non-specific geographic and cultural origins. See such works as: *Une jeune esclave* [*A Young Slave*]; *The Indian Fruit Girl; Nubian female water carrier kneeling beside a water hole formed by carved slate, cradling a water jug in one arm and holding a bowl in the other hand; Mujeres Egipicas* [*Egyptian Women*]; *Native American Woman and Her Child* and*; La chasseresse Indienne* [*The Indian Huntress*], for example. Cumberworth was widely known in the Anglophone world and his art displayed at Exhibition of Industrial Art in Manchester in 1846, the Birmingham Exhibition of 1849 and at the Great Exhibition in 1851 ("Charles Cumberworth," *Mapping).*

> with those old burning, simple souls, the patriarchs, prophets, and seers, whose impassioned words seem only grafted as foreign plants on the cooler stock of the Occidental mind. (480)

Switching here from the specificity of Truth's presence to the general and widely interpretable "African" denoted by the masculine pronoun, stereotype is collapsed. Over and over again, Stowe attempts to pin Truth to a shorthanded, genderless African subject and the designatum of the African continent.

Yet, for as self-consciously as Stowe tries to fix Truth to a far-away African landscape in an effort to capitalize on the vogue of *Cleopatra* and *The Libyan Sibyl,* a tension emerges from her article that makes it clear Stowe cannot but help but recognize Truth's vast mobility. There is a narrative astriction between movement and stillness. Stowe describes Truth as on a "mission," as "travelling on a sort of self-appointed agency through the country" Truth would have contested that she was divinely appointed (473). Constant references emerge to Truth's wayfaring ways. In describing Truth's physical appearance, Stowe writes, "She was dressed in some stout, grayish stuff, neat and clean, though dusty from travel" (473). During her short stay, Truth, according to Stowe, would, "come up into the parlor, and sit among pictures and ornaments, in her simple stuff gown, with her heavy travelling-shoes, the central object of attention both to parents and children" (479). The modifier is displaced here so that the reader is hard pressed to understand whether it is Truth herself or the weighty footwear of the road that command so much attention. At another moment in the essay,

in a simile that also bolsters Stowe's representation of the tropics, she writes: "[Truth] stood among them, calm and erect, as one of her own native palm-trees waving alone in the desert" (474). Even in her rootedness, Truth cannot be stilled.

In desperation, we can read Stowe trying to reduce Truth's travel and work tidily. "At length, Sojourner, true to her name, departed," Stowe writes of their parting (479). Later, though Truth lived and labored for two more decades until her death in 1883, Stowe claimed in her essay that "Sojourner Truth has passed away from among us as a wave of the sea." Though the Civil War was still raging when this article was published, Stowe diminishes Truth and her way of life to a bygone past. Her elegy is set in stone, according to Stowe, "Her memory still lives in one of the loftiest and most original works of modern art, the Libyan Sibyl, by Mr. Story. The seep of that memory, Stowe describes like this:

> The history of Sojourner Truth worked in [Story's] mind and led him into the deeper recesses of the African nature, -- those unexplored depths of being and feeling, mighty and dark as the gigantic depths of tropical forests, mysterious as the hidden rivers and mines of that burning continent whose life-history is yet to be. A few days after, he told me that he had conceived the idea of a statue which he should call the Libyan Sibyl. (480)

Again, Truth's present tense is rendered past, still, and synonymous with an unseen African territory. Stowe in text and Story in stone still and distill the movements of Sojourner Truth.

Truth would not yield to this imposed stillness. By July of 1863, she had issued a letter to the editor of the *Commonwealth:*

The history which Mrs. Stowe wrote about me, is not quite correct. There is one place where she speaks of me as coming from Africa. My grandmother and my husband's mother came from Africa, but I did not; she must have misunderstood me, but you will find my book a correct history. I related a story to her and she has put it on me, for I never make use of the word honey. I have sold my books for twenty-five cents apiece. I will send you six copies today, and I am much obliged to you. You will find them correct, they are Sojourner herself.

Isaac Post's wife from Rochester, has sent for two dozen of my photographs, and now that I cannot do anything I am living on my shadow. I used to travel and sell my books, but now I am not able to do that, I send whatever is requested of me. If you can dispose of any for me I would be very much obliged to you. I will put no price on them, let them give whatever they choose to.

Truth's manner is at once polite, dissembling, and firm. Consider the "not quite correct," and "must have misunderstood me" alongside, "*I never make use of the word honey*" (emphasis mine). Truth takes pains to clarify her American nativity in the midst of an African heritage. Though she is homebound at present, her circulations in text and photographic form extend her mobility. She sends, she disposes, she gives away herself. "They are the Sojourner herself," she emphasizes.

3.5 "I Sell the Shadow": Carpetbagging Portraiture

The letter quoted above was not the only response Truth gave to Stowe's publicity assault. She also sought to wrest control of her reputation and imagery via the photographic form. In Truth's careful management of her portraits, we can infer that her conceptions of liberty extended beyond her physical person and into the movement of narrative and imagistic frames. The years from 1863 to 1865 mark Truth's most robust interlocution with the photography studio. She sat for at least four separate studio

sessions. Each sitting produced a range of cartes de visite with Truth in multiple poses, employing different props, or staged in front of varying backgrounds. During this time, Truth also sought a copyright for her images as early as 1864 to ensure that others could not reproduce or distribute her likeness for their own benefit. Truth was a pioneer in this manner, as the reproducible technology of photography did not begin to be protected in the United States until at least 1865. A close reading of several of the photographs that date from this period substantiates Truth's conception of the new technology as an extension of her personhood, and a powerful weapon to index the formation of the black subject at the end of the U.S. Civil War. The manner in which these photos circulated was as essential to Truth as their content.

Figure 25. Uncaption carte de visite of Sojourner Truth, 1863.

The first series of photographs taken during this period can be understood as a deliberate and direct response to Stowe's 1863 article. This set of photographs rehabilitated both Truth and her grandson from Stowe's bigoted and reduced characterizations. The photos were intended to resuscitate (literally: to bring back from Stowe's narrative death) her own reputation, as well as that of her grandson whom Stowe also portrayed in the "Sojourner Truth, The Libyan Sibyl" article. At the time of the meeting between Truth and Stowe, Truth's grandson, James Caldwell, had been a child of ten accompanying his grandmother on her travels. Stowe's article described him as "our little African puck" and "the fattest, jolliest woolly-headed little specimen of Africa that one can imagine. He was grinning and showing his glistening white teeth in a state of perpetual merriment" (474). Caldwell, in Stowe's hands, is reduced to racist cartoon.

By the 1860s, Caldwell was a soldier in the Union Army, and Truth meant to preserve him that way. In one photo typical of this series, Truth sits in the photographic studio, a hand jauntily placed on her hip. Her lips are pursed, her stare serious and indignant. Her demeanor can only be described as defiant. She is dressed in respectable garb—a dress, a shawl, an apron, and a white Quaker cap. In her lap sits a daguerreotype portrait of her now adult grandson dressed in formal civilian clothes, encased in a gilt thermoplast case for safe keeping. At the time these photographs were taken, his fate was uncertain. He had been taken prisoner at Fort Wagner with the Fifty-

Fourth regiment. "I had much rather," Truth is quoted as saying in *The National Anti-Slavery Standard,* "he had been killed, than to have him in the hands of the rebels" (qtd. in Grimaldo Grigsby 54). Although it isn't only out of reach of the hands of Confederate soldiers that Truth is interested in keeping her grandson, and other men like him. This photograph is intended as an act of preservation.

The direct rhetorical address to the public via this set of photographs, again sold by mail and the abolitionist press, looses a mode of self-making and self-representation. Truth recognizes an opportunity to, again, unmoor her identity from the fixed position to which white Americans, even abolitionists, would bind her. By her next studio sitting, Truth began framing her cards with a now famous slogan, "I Sell the Shadow to Support the Substance" (Grimaldo Grigsby 139). Her newly minted copyright began appearing on both face and verso sides of her cartes de visite. Grimaldo Grigsby points to the singularity of this practice. She states:

> For her cartes de visite, Truth consistently demanded the printing of her name on both the front and the back. This is highly unusual: very few cartes de visite are imprinted with the sitter's name or captions, and as far as I know, *none* have copyrights in the sitter's name. This bears repeating: *I have found no other card from the period that features a copyright in the name of the sitter.* (139)

Truth takes measures to ensure that both the form and content of her photographs are beyond misinterpretation and misuse.

Figure 26. Carte de visite of Sojourner Truth, February 1864. New York Public Libary.

To that end, Truth returns to her elected identity as a sojourner in subsequent studio sessions. In the above carte de visite, dated to February 1864, she enacts her journeyings once more. In this photo, Truth stands against a vacant background that gives no clue as to geographic or cultural location. Her environment is blank and amorphous, though the wall bubbles in the photograph's lower quarter, betraying a contrived fabric drop. Truth wears a striped skirt and jacket, a white blouse is visible at the collar. She has a light-colored shawl wrapped, but not closed, around her shoulders, and a dark apron is tied around her waist. Her hair is wrapped plainly in light fabric and she wears spectacles. Truth's left arm is raised to the waist and rests on her

abdomen to reveal that she is carrying a carpetbag on her forearm. Her right arm leans on the rounded handle of a simple dark cane. Her presentation as a traveler, a mobile entity, is an unusual one for nineteenth-century portraiture. While photographers of the nineteenth-century were often itinerant, their subjects were not.

Unlike the image of the "respectable, middle-class matron" that Truth puts forth in other photos set in parlor-like backgrounds (Painter 187), this likeness positions her as she is in much of the *Narrative*—a wayfarer, exceptionally concerned with her movements. She carries the trappings of travel, notable foils to the domestic signifiers of floral arrangements or knitting and needlepoint. There is the sturdy carpet bag, a symbol of the road in the nineteenth-century. "The old-fashioned carpet bag," says the is the *Scientific American* in 1886, "is still unsurpassed by any, where rough wear is the principal thing to be studied" (Humphrey 8960). This was the traveling case not for luxury travel, but rather for the everyday ambulations and conveyance of domestic transit. Truth wields her walking stick, an indicator of age and experience, but also a tool of mobility and defense for a woman traveling alone. For a woman whose studio sittings were meant to represent many aspects of her life, this photo portends her itinerancy.

This precise pose is one Truth returned to at least one more time. Although the photo reproduced in Figure 29 is dated from the same time period and looks very similar, there are some clues to indicate separate sittings. First, Truth appears to be carrying a different carpetbag—the patterning is most certainly different from the bag

featured above. She may also be wearing a different skirt. There is no apron visible in this portrait, and the skirt appears solid colored. Finally, Truth's head wrap is shaped differently. In the above example, it seems to be rounded and worn tight against her head and temples. Below, the wrap comes to a point above the crown of her head.

Figure 27. Carte de visite of Sojourner Truth, Feburary 1864, Detriot. Library of Congress.

This photo is unusual in the context of Truth's other existent images. In most, she looks squarely at the photographer, but here Truth averts her gaze slightly from the camera's lens and looks off into the distance. Her gaze is cast outward, considering the travel that lies ahead of her and outside the frame. Beyond that faraway look, the photo

is also notable because it allows the viewer to observe Truth's right hand, as the knuckle and fingers grasp the cane. Truth was self-conscious of the look of her injury and typically tried to disguised it in photos by holding her knitting or folding her hands into the lap of her voluminous skirt. In the other standing poses featured in this chapter, the hand is visible but overexposed or blurred to obscure the precise shape of the injury. Whether this occurs because of the photographer's obfuscation of the hand during the chemical development process, or because Truth's embarrassment manifested as a fidget that thwarted photographic capture, this is the only existent photo where we can see the bare knuckle and the absence of her finger clearly. The exposure of Truth's hand in this photograph mimics her exposure and vulnerability on the road.

Shawn Michelle Smith has posited in *American Archives* that the arrival of the reproducible photographic portrait inaugurated new modes of visible self-perception and self-production (3-10). So too, was the photographic portrait able to render the production and perception of self more opaque. In the relay of Truth's intersectional self-fashioning from person to image, from public persona to text, Truth alternately reveals and withholds essential aspects of self. Her exposures—both bodily and photographic—invite and thwart visibility. Her racial and gender identities were expanded and collapsed in the arc of her movements, refined in the fidget of her hand.

These photographs were simultaneously conscripted and capacious because of the transit of American empire under the wartime violence of the U.S. Civil War. The

second portrait is likely the photo the white women's rights activist, Susan B. Anthony, popularized during her pro-abolition lectures of the era. She would point to Truth's portrait alongside the iconic photo of the former slave known as Gordon, whose grisly medical intake photo from a Union hospital was circulated to bolster anti-slavery sentiment. Gordon's withering portrait depicts him undressed from the waist down to reveal a grouping of gruesome keloid scars on his back, the result of whippings also sustained under enslavement. "Imagine, Anthony urged her audience," while passing these images around the room, "that Truth and Gordon were their parents" (Painter *Sojourner* 187-188). Again, the physical manifestation of slavery's psychic trauma is proffered in a sentimental appeal. Despite all of Truth's efforts to remain in motion—staff in hand, bag packed—much of her audience chose to focus not on what was in the frame, but what on was absent from it.

3.6 From Indiana to Jupiter: Truth's Meandering Ethnic Performance

To close, I would like to return to the photograph with which this chapter opened—the commemorative photo from Truth's time in Indiana, the first in a legacy of her visual self- fashioning. To understand the fullness of Truth's unfixedness, the above photo requires a more dedicated analysis and contextualization. Namely, one that brings into relief Truth's performance of indigeneity to subvert the immobility imposed by Indiana's Black Laws and her white audiences on both sides of the slavery debate. I argue that Truth and her colleagues proffered an account of her heritage as both black

and native with three objectives. First, they sought to exploit the budding understanding in Indiana of Native Americans as ennobled, embodied in such folk heroes as Shawnee warrior Tecumseh and his brother, Tenskwatawa. Second, Truth and her companions wanted to draw attention to the impossibility of racial surveillance on which the Black Laws relied. These phenotypic recognitions were subjective and based on faulty models of racist physiognomy. Finally, the visual echoes of Truth's photograph with the popularly circulated carte de visites of Native Americans of the same era, point to an invocation of competing sovereignties in the restrictive colonial landscape of the consolidating United Sates. The performance of racialized multiplicity by Truth brings into full relief the portability of self she had created in the service of her marshalled freedom/s.

Accounts of Truth's travel in Indiana foreground her mixed race identity. The Griffing article, "Treason in Disguise," featured in the *Boston Liberator* and quoted above, heralded Truth's perseverance and triumphant speaking engagement. Truth may have had input or even direct control of her traveling companion's account. This tale of success (recall that its author had never labored for the cause of freedom with such results) began with a revelation of Truth's indigeneity. "A few days since," writes Griffing after the dateline placing her dispatch in Angola,

> a colored woman, by the name of Sojourner Truth, a cross between the Indian and African race, born in the state of New York, and for many years a citizen of Massachusetts, came over the line of Michigan, to pay a visit to some

> acquaintances of hers, among whom were some of the most influential and wealthy white families in the country. (98)

By way of introduction, Griffing foregrounds Truth's crossings. There is the crossing of elite white thresholds by a black woman, border crossing from Michigan to Indiana, her status ascension from slave in New York to citizen in Massachusetts, and, foregrounding all others, the ethnic mixing of her ancestral lines—Indian and African. This declaration of Native ancestry provides another important clue to understanding Truth's first photograph.

The first known reference to any American Indian ancestry in Truth's family line came in 1851. E. A. Lukens, writing for the *Anti-Slavery Bugle* in Ohio, describes a weeklong visit by Truth. Her visit, Lukens insists, simulated the sensation of taking a trip. Truth's presence had "given my mind as much…as the most exciting events of a journey could have done," Lukens writes. Then, the author announces Truth's family origins via a hypothetical scenario. The author propositions his or her readers: what would an inhabitant of Jupiter think if he happened upon Sojourner Truth's telling her life's "strange story"?

> What would he say do you suppose, if told she was a child of our own soil with a natural membership in our free and *glorious* Republic; That her ancestors on the mother's side, were along the first owners of that soil—or at least, the first *known to history;* and that atho' her paternal great-grandfather came from Africa whose fiery sands long ago, repelled the footsteps of civilization, his descendants, though of spotless integrity, and undisputed American birth, have been ever since, nameless Ishmaels in our land.

Lukens intends the knowledge of Truth's Native heritage to make a rhetorical appeal to the *Bugle's* readership, to provoke indignation at her disenfranchisement from sovereign memberships and territories that should have been Truth's birthright. The invocation of the alien, the man from Jupiter, is a mark of the language amplifying around the circulation of freedmen and women, and escaped slaves alongside heightened state border enforcements. Lukens ends with another overture about Truth's mobility. "Her progress has been delayed, by the early November storms," Lukens writes, "but she is eager to be abroad." Truth's longing to be on the road may provide an important clue about her presentation in this anecdotal account.

Mobility for black men and women traveling in Ohio was in flux. Just two years before this article appeared, the state of Ohio repealed its Black Codes. These laws, similar to Indiana's Black Laws, made the settlement of black residents in Ohio extremely cumbersome, if not impossible. Furthermore, these codes administered strict penalties and severe fines for those white residents who were found employing a black person without required documentation, or, were helping or harboring fugitive enslaved men and women. Any black person within state lines could be called upon to produce official documentation of their freedom issued by a U.S. Court at any time. In 1849, with pressure from the Free Soil Party, these laws which had been instituted in 1807, were repealed. The very next year, the Fugitive Slave Law was enacted, reestablishing broadly interpretable

mandates to cooperate with the return of all escaped slaves. In short: the movements of black men and women were again under siege in Ohio.

The Bugle ran stories about this vacillating legal landscape constantly throughout the 1840s and 1850s. This included the article that occupied the column next to Luken's letter. In it, the editors quote the Boston-based abolitionist periodical *Commonweal* at length. The article contends with strong sentiment that the Fugitive Slave Act is "enacting the meanest and most cruel of all the crimes that ever disgraced human history, as a blasphemous attempt to legislate God out of the universe on the imprudent plea that George Washington and his associates did so." The adjacency of these two articles marks their coeval and concomitant relationship. The marshaling of imperceptible kinship groups on Truth's behalf is an assault on the juridical interdiction of her movements.

Although Luken's identifies potential tribal heritage on Truth's mother's side, Washington tells us that it is reportedly Truth's father who was half Mohawk Indian (10), a suggestion that would persist throughout the rest of Truth's life.[15] This ancestral suggestion is not mentioned in *Narrative.* Nor is it reported as an aspect of Truth's oft-autobiographical sermons and lectures. "I am African," Truth told one of her audience's on the lecture circuit, "you can see that plain enough" (Washington 9). Unlike Stowe's

[15] In the Leggett letter quoted above, Elisa Seaman wrote to Whitman that Truth's "father's mother was a squaw" (#).

pronouncement of Truth's African origin, Truth was articulating her blackness. This identification, she notes, is wed to visual perception. Her native ancestry, if any, would have been invisible

Whether or not Truth's ancestry was tied to Mohawk bloodlines is irrelevant; what remains imperative is the deployment of this biracial performance as a response to an impediment to Truth's movements. With the lens of indigeneity, Truth's 1861 carte de visite changes shape.

Figure 28. ***Sioux Dandy,*** **Whitney's Gallery, ca. 1863. Massachusetts Historical Society.**

Figure 29. Chief Henry Hill, Winnebago, Whitney's Gallery, ca. 1862.

The visual symmetry between Truth's 1861 carte de visite and similar portraits made of Native Americans of the era is undeniable. Her effect of the standing pose with a single arm perched from hip to waist creates a gestural symmetry. Truth's large shawl simulates the robes or trade blankets often worn by Native American men and women from a variety of regional and tribal contexts. Truth's bonnet resembles a headdress, so much so that Grimaldo Grigsby even uses this term in her reading of the portrait inadvertently and not in the service of registering its ethnic performance (29). What's more, Truth carries a Nantucket basket, which itself is a freighted symbol of the arc and occlusion of Native American cultural production. These baskets with a solid wooden

base, an odd number of staves, and an embellished top and flange, were originally the product of the Wampanoag Nation, but later adopted by white whalers based on the island who infused the baskets with rattan they returned with from their travels to Southeast Asia. Used predominantly by locals from the colonial period, the basket quickly gained a following as the tourist industry flourished in Cape Cod and the Islands in the 1860s and beyond (McGuire; Lawrence).[16]

Truth's locus in Angola lends itself to this reading. Indiana, literally "land of the Indians," was home to members of the Miami, Chippewa, Delaware, Erie, Shawnee, Iroquois, Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, Mahican, Nanticoke, Huron, and Mohegan. These populations had begun to disperse after the dissolution of the Native Confederacy at the Battle of Tippiecanoe, fought near Prophetstown, Indiana, in 1811. This was only a single generation after tribal lands had begun to be settled by white homesteaders to the Midwestern frontier. By 1840, autochthonous lands had been ceded to the state, and native populations had all but disappeared, cleared from their lands by systematic removals and exterminations. Figures like the Shawnee warrior Tecumseh who had masterminded and maintained the Native Confederacy, and his brother Tenskwatawa, who had led the battle at Tippiecanoe, had begun to be celebrated as bygone folk heroes in the midst of the Civil War's own violent battles staged for the preservation of the

[16] The Nantucket basket is interestingly compared to the Houdensaunce Wabanaki bags (Biron).

Union and individual sovereignty.[17] Truth's proximity to this regional and state-specific context undergird the portrait's additional narrative layer.

Much more research is necessary to parse the possible implications of kinship, sovereignty, interracial solidarity, and border crossing that this suggested reading implies. However, its initial illumination underscores much of this chapter's central argument. Sojourner Truth's movement can be broadly understood as real and emblematic meanderings meant to restore just understandings of personhood and belonging. To promote this understanding, Truth and her associates, employed all means of available technology.

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[17] William Henry Harrison, then Governor of the Indiana Territory and soon to be President of the United State, said of Tecumseh even as he was squaring off with him in 1809, "If it were not for the vicinity of the United States, he would perhaps be the founder of an empire that would rival in glory Mexico or Peru. No difficulties deter him. For four years he has been in constant motion. You see him today on the Wabash, and in a short time hear of him on the shores of Lake Erie or Michigan, or on the banks of the Mississippi, and wherever he goes he makes an impression favorable to his purpose" (qtd. in Mahon 21).

Coda

Where only chips and stumps are left to show
The solid proof of former domicile.
-Jean Toomer

The histories of the Lima intriguante, Olive Oatman, and Sojourner Truth illustrate the banalization of the visual and textual world. The naturalized artifacts of epistemic knowledge productions that were deeply implicated in histories of conquest and colonialism have been naturalized in the narrative frame. These elaborations and ossifications of racial identity in the nineteenth-century ushered in the political, social, and commercial terms of literary and visual culture in the twentieth. Taken together, the transit of these women point to an originary violence that is the consequence of both belonging and exclusion. The trace of this violence that is untethered from its geographical and temporalized specificity carries with it a parasitic vulnerability. This vulnerability—the potential for an expansion of this racialized violence—is precisely where this project began.

The American journalist and anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells strategically circulated photos of the ruthless lynchings of black men alongside domestic portraits of the families of lynching victims, and, often, alongside portraits of herself. In doing so, she demonstrated the banality and domestic routinization of lynching during the Jim Crow era that ushered in the twentieth-century. "Our country's national crime is

lynching," Wells wrote in 1900. "It is not the creature of an hour, the sudden outburst of uncontrolled fury, or the unspeakable brutality of an insane mob" (*Lynch Law).* What made, and continues to make, racially-motivated violence conventional and predictable is not only the national scope that Wells indicates. It is also violence's global transit.

Figure 30. Ida B. Wells and the Moss Family, ca. 1892.

Wells's work, her art, her mode of critique, was to destroy the interpretive practices for which the camera lens and the photograph viewer had been trained—to undermine the image and, therefore, to undermine the conquest of the black body as a foregone conclusion. As Leigh Raiford notes, "This use of photography works to critique nineteenth-century racial and gender logics, signaling African Americans as worthy of honorific depiction, whether as the subject of studio portraits or as the objects of

reclaimed lynching photographs" (300). One such photo was commissioned in 1892 and may have even served as a publicity image for the first trip Wells made to England to raise awareness of the plight of black Americans in the U.S. (Raiford 315). In the photo, Wells poses with the family of her close friend, Tom Moss, who was murdered earlier in the year at the now infamous Lynching at the Curve in Memphis, Tennessee. Moss's pregnant widow, Betty Moss, sits in a large chair with her son, Thomas Jr., on her lap and her eldest child, Maurine, standing behind her. Wells stands next to the chair in a pose that Raiford has interpreted as standing in for the absent patriarch of the family in a pose meant to summon the abortive family lineage (315-316). The two women are dressed in dark, formal mourning clothes; the children wear white baptismal gowns. What emerges from the frame is the subjects' intimacy. The foursome are interwoven. Wells has placed an arm around Maurine; Betty Moss's shoulder and arm are tucked behind her young son. In turn, the children lean their heads and upper bodies back toward the corresponding adults. Thomas Jr. presses his cheek against his mother's forehead, and Wells leans her temple against the crown of Maurine's head. The closeness, the support, the propped press of flesh in this photograph offers a portrait of intimacy and longing. The haptic register of the subjects' touch offers a stand-in for what cannot be grasped: the family's patriarch and the justice they are due.

By conjuring the domestic boundaries of home and nation beside and within the photographic frames of lynching images, Wells not only demonstrates the threat of

lynching's barbarism to country and kin. She also exposes the ways in which these arbitrary scales and boundaries were exceeded by aesthetic representations of lynching. In other words, by drawing her audience's attention to the implication of the private, domestic drawing rooms populated by the raced and gendered bodies of black women and children who were elided from lynching's narrative frame, Wells also opened a portal to public, capitalist, and international influences. Even the suggestion that this positioned familial portrait might have been intended for Transatlantic dispatch, points to the rhetorical efficacy of the intimate across scales.

Paralleling Wells's activism in reverse scale—moving globally as well as parochially—this coda sketches briefly the infrastructures that made possible the prosaic quality of lynching photography. By searching out the aesthetic forms that informed and enabled the production and circulation of lynching photography, this project works to reveal what is present and absent, visible and invisible, in the afterlives of lynching's pictorial legacy. It shades the light flare that prevents looking in the image with which this project began.

The abhorrent vernacular of lynching photography executed in the U.S. during the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries moves beyond an atavistic Southern regionalism. The photographic epistemology, the acculturated habits of looking, indexed by these photos are not precinctive to the families, the homes, the communities, the regions, or the nation that Wells sought to portray. Limning the work of scholars like

Shawn Michelle Smith, Dora Apel, and Jacqueline Goldsby, I assert that photographs of lynching/s were informed by and complicit with the travel photography and the emergent tourist market championed by Victorian-era Orientalism. The meticulously organized system of attractions and elevated vantages popularized by the tourist photography of white Americans and Europeans traveling to North Africa and the Middle East functioned as a standardizing mechanism for rendering foreign people and landscapes interpretable. Its transit of colonial empire was manufactured concomitantly with the colonial superimposition of American slavery, and is preserved in the scrutability of its visual tropes. This forcible vantage is also operative in lynching's spectacular violence.

In what follows, I have not included photographs of lynching. This is not because I feel that denying these images visual space subverts their spectacularized violence. Like Fred Moten, I acknowledge "the inevitably of such production even in the denial of it" (4). However, this project is much more interested in what has already been effaced from the frame. My interlocution of these images will be the description of them.

Lynching photographs have usefully been put into conversation with early portraiture, art historical iconography discourses, and subgenres of photography like hunting photos. Yet, "that the traffic in lynching photographs runs parallel to the history of American photography's democratization at the turn of the nineteenth

century," Goldsby wrote in 2006, "is a convergence cultural historians and critics have not stopped to consider." Goldsby and Smith have made strides in the intervening years to read some of the available images in the context of their contemporary U.S.-based archive. I would add that this democratization and dissemination of technology was not endemic to the U.S., but rather linked national pursuits to burgeoning cultural production worldwide with epicenters in Europe and the continental United States. It is here that travel photography, in particular, offers a ready metaphor to envision the mobile network and dense transfer of aesthetic power and practice.

I would also acknowledge, as art historian Dora Apel does in her discussion of lynching photography's tethering to Christological discourse that "recognizing the various forms of premeditation in lynching and Christological imagery, or other images of conquest and submission from the history of art, while helping to explain the haunting quality of the images, does not explain everything." While travel photography productively extends our readings of the aesthetic underpinnings of lynching photographs, and vice versa, there will certainly always be a terrible excess of what is and can be made meaningful in the historical and critical adjacency of these images.

Dependent on the medium of photography since at least the 1840s, the tourism industry congealed around products of power and objects of desire—the emergent infrastructure of travel forming what Dean McCannell calls a "system of attractions."

Photography was introduced into this system, writes historian Peter Osborne, proffering a broad overview of photography's relationship to the growing business of travel,

> as a standardising mechanism fixing sites and viewpoints, guiding tourist behavior, establishing visual lexicons and grammars for particular sites, acting as conventional and objectified memory, and becoming in general the indispensable ritual and token of the trip. Soon tourism was unimaginable without photography. (20)

Tourism was predicated by the image, first pictorial and then photographic. The behavior of the observer, the tourist, is mediated and disciplined by an earlier, seemingly domestic, imagistic training. The beholder of travel photography is instructed via the framed vantage of a particular site—how to interact, literally, how to look at a far off or foreign locale. The circulation of travel books, and other image-based tourist memorabilia that heightened this sense of attraction also documented a foregone conclusion, Osborne continues, "a reprising of the contents of the brochures, or the reproduction of a view that as likely as not came into existence as a consequence of photography. Tourist photography is more a process of confirmation than of discovery" (79). Exploration, as it is scripted in travel photographs, has previously been rendered and meanings already made. This predetermined outcome is similar to the consolidation of power that is embedded in lynching photographs. Visual cues, the lexicon and grammar that Osbrone indexes for us, that, at least initially, evoked white pride, affirmation, and masculinist entitlement (Apel *Imagery* 15), as Smith points out, "documented the consolidation of a white supremacist mob as they also performed it"

(*Lynching* 24). The photographic archive is formed in the simultaneous arc of its own performance—the travel photographer climbs a mountain to produce a scenic vista, establish a lookout point, and a path now previously traveled; the photographer of a lynching frames grim supremacist violence even as the selfsame violence is being carried out.

Travel photography and lynching photography, speaking in extremely broad terms and acknowledging irrefutable exceptions, employ similar orientations toward their photographic subjects—one that produces visual severances and dominance. These photographs' extreme self-enclosure, Osborne observes of travel photography—though he might have easily been speaking about a lynching photograph—demonstrates "a mentality so evidently convinced of the rightfulness of its supremacy" (17). The (often anonymous) photographer orients above or at the level of the scene. To achieve an elevated gaze, the photographer presumably perches on a rooftop or hilltop to look down upon the nested village, the old world ruins, or the makeshift lynching platform. The collapse of these strategies onto one another call to mind Walter Benjamin's construction, "There is no document of civilisation which is not at the same time a document of barbarism"(392). Amy Louise Wood chronicles professional photographer F.A. Gildersleeve's 1916 arrangement with the mayor of Waco, Texas, to gain this kind of particularized vantage by climbing to the top of the municipality's City Hall to photograph the lynching of Jesse Washington, for instance (77). She quotes a

bystander's report at the 1876 lynching of Henry Smith, noting that one photographer climbed "high in a tree…so as to command an elevated view of the scaffold, and thus obtain *the best possible views* of the torture and final cremation" (77, italics mine). If oriented from a lower angle, the photographer occupies the river bank, the valley, or situates himself or herself close to the ground to increase the drama of what looms above. Focuses are broad, panoramic, to encompass a crowd or wide swath of land, or quite narrow to capture a single body and its immediate background in the frame. "Standard photographic conventions, such as taking images either directly level and in front of the object or above, from a bird's-eye vantage point," writes Wood, "only enhanced these assumptions about the photograph's objective realism" (81).

In the landscape of the Middle East excavated by Edward Said and his scholarly successors, British photographer Francis Frith worked throughout the 1850's and 60's to distill visual experience of travel into the palatable amber tones of stereoscopes and photos circulated to European spectators. His work, "distant, panoramic, and literal" (Osborne 22), trades on a repertoire already established by the European cultural producers who accompanied the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in the late eighteenth century, establishing a still, epistemological rendering around specific items, themes, and sites. Among Frith's most frequent and lucrative subjects were the architectural ruins of Egypt. Staged as a time sensitive fervor to create a visual record of Egypt's

receding lost imperium, Frith's project to chronicle the decaying buildings and statuary of the country fit squarely into colonial enterprise.

Wielding the camera as a signifier of the unique and scientific European ability to uncover and decode the ephemeral remains of a lost, but gloried, Egyptian history allowed Frith to stage himself as the initial tourist and his continentally bound audience as ready and willing interpreters. "Spatial realism and theatricality heightens the viewer's sense of moving into, of sharing the same space as the objects" writes Osborne, "…relations between architectural elements are magnified; and the weight of the structures is apprehended so powerfully that Frith's images can still give up authentic scientific insights as well as creating the more touristic sensation of being there" (22). Horizontal sight lines of the architectural subject appear at a slant against the horizon—often the soft edges of scenic landscape or river bed. The most substantial beams running further into the frame at a dramatic angle to draw the viewer's eye. Parsing Said's "strategic locations," Frith brought into relief the rubble and decay, the pockmarks of pillars and bygone solidity, figuring Egypt in a kind of degraded premodernity.

Figure 31. Francis Firth, *The Karnak Temple*, 1858.

In some of his scenes, as in the 1858 view of the Karnak Temple, the human subject, always local, shrouded, and small, appears as a kind of accessory a soon-to-be recognizable and racialized type to these constructions. As Derrida has noted, ruins are nodes of desire, they indicate the existence of truth by standing as the traces of its disappearance. Trafficking in the encoded language of the Romantic and the sublime, and the classificatory Victorian sciences, "travel photography condensed these ruins together: the otherness present in the contemporary space of the colonial 'contact zone' and the otherness of a profound past whose traces littered" the "aesthetically underdeveloped" landscape (Pratt 232-33). These images (at once over and under wrought) would then be redeployed via travel books and guides, stereoscope slides and

magic lantern shows, to serve as an educational tool, a pedagogical enterprise, for the viewer at home.

Echoes of these early photographic techniques can be seen repeated in a handful of lynching photographs. The 1883 lynching of Fred Ingraham and James Green in Hastings, Nebraska, took place after a mob, self-titled the Invincible 33 overpowered guards and removed the criminally accused men from the city's jailhouse. The photographic remains of the spectacularized violence show a stout railroad bridge spanning the horizon at an angle, its lowest points on the left-hand side of the frame, the railroad ties moving closer to the viewer as they climb to the right hand side, buttressed by thick beams of squarely cut lumber beneath. Only the murdered men appear in the photograph, their bodies small in scale to the thick cuts of wood—one man hanging from a noose tied to the looming tracks, the other, fallen or cut down into the piled dirt of the riverbed below. Another photo, an anonymous lynching in an unknown location dated to approximately 1910, follows almost precisely the same schematics. The body of a lynched man hangs precariously and languidly from a reinforced bridge over a narrow swath of opaque river water, submerged pylons staggered all around him, and poking through the photographs opposite corner. Above and behind loom the wooden structure of a wide bridge, again, cast by the photographer at an angle that seeps at a slant in and out of the picture. Lynch mob members, small and perceivably male, stand or hunch over the bridge above, their shadowy figures looking down at the murdered

bodies below. Another: the very notable 1911 lynching of Laura Nelson and her son, L.D., near Okemah, Oklahoma, repeats this aesthetic practice of the above. A suspension bridge carries the small bodies of men, women, and children, most, meeting the camera's gaze from the deck of the bridge above, the bodies of the lynch victims dangling in the shadow of their ad-hoc viewer's platform. The shot is panoramic, meant to encompass wide swaths of the North Canadian River and its wooded banks receding into the timeless distance beneath and behind the bridge. Again, the wooden structure of the bridge, its horizontal treads cutting the frame at a cocked angle, the vertical lines of towers and suspension cords conjuring the pillars and the pylons of Egyptian ruins, the practices of Firth's decades earlier camera work. His ordering, scale, and perspective all haunting the composition of these invidious frames.

Yet, it is not just the visual symmetry that is important here, though it is striking. There is also an embedded desire that is not wholly out of step with Frith's work at an atemporal geographic remove. The recent ruin of the U.S. plantation system fueled by the institution of American slavery, and the southern decay of Civil War-torn landscapes and social relations, offer the historical background of these scenes. As with the circulation of Frith's stereoscopes, they are meant to assert dominance in their oblique command of imminent structures and unobtrusive, controlled bodies—harkening back to an earlier kind of insidious and now ruined social control. Their distance from the victims, their capture of straight-gazed crowds, the profundity of architectural structure

and the menacing shadows these impressive bridges cast upon the natural world and people beneath craft a mood that is nearly elegiac. These photos, too, are meant to be instructive, passed as mementos and postcards across family and class lines. "Postcards function as fantasy sites of desire for distant viewers," Smith tells us. "The grotesque image of a mutilated corpse hangs between [postcard correspondents]," she writes, "providing the object lesson through which their worldview coheres" (*Photography* 122) This image passed between social networks and imagined communities, not unlike Frith's visual conquest of Egyptian attractions, enables whiteness to be consolidated and shared. The system of seeing interacts with modes of oppressive, stagnant colonial visuality, culpable and incriminated, but not overshadowed, by its earlier violences. Its onlookers, estranged through their imagined translocution to the viewing platforms of these locales, and the geographically specific sites that influence these scenes beyond the spatial and temporal frames. As Goldsby has written: "lynching photographs wield assaultive power because they are phantasms of histories we need to know but cannot readily perceive" (250).

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Biography

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