

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

“—LONG AS AGES STEAL!”: MILLENNIAL WHITENESS, (COUNTER)  
OCCASIONAL POETICS, AND ANTINOMIAN ALLEGORY, 1861-1876

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

DECEMBER 2018

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## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to begin by expressing my deepest gratitude to my dissertation committee: Jennifer Scappettone (Chair), Eric Slauter, and Christopher Taylor. Jen's generous mentorship and abiding encouragement has proven invaluable throughout the years since this project first began. The perspicacity of her commentary and her startling attunement to the possibilities residing within the elemental granules and airy wisps of poetic measure is strewn throughout these pages. I am likewise indebted to Eric, in whose classes the first inchoate shadows of this dissertation began to assume shape. His suggestions for primary and secondary readings invariably guided my project in directions I could not have anticipated. I would like to thank Chris for his readiness to come aboard this venture in its final stages. Having Chris as an interlocutor enabled me to more precisely reconstruct and resite where I had been and where I might yet go.

I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues at Chicago, especially Josh Adams, Stephanie Anderson, Joel Calahan, Darrel Chia, Michael Hansen, Kelly Rolfe, Hank Scotch, Suzanne

Taylor, and Chalcey Wilding. I am a better person and a better reader for their friendship and insight.

I would like to thank my mentors and teachers at the University of Alabama, especially Pat Hermann, Alice Parker, Richard Rand, Fred Whiting, and Robert Young. Thank you for helping me find my way.

I also extend my sincerest gratitude to my parents, Joe and Tina Bassett, who have offered love and support on every occasion. I also thank my sister, Mindy. No one knows me better than you. I look forward to your return home.

And finally, April. Thank you for living with me living with *Clarel*. Thank you for teaching me how to live through color.

## Dedication

Relate (a real event) to me (a real event) unreal events.

Would you address what need does your address relate? Would you invite that address to enter into the matter of record as a real event? Tell me what has happened to—what is happening to—what is to become of this relation. From your address you would have that I relate real events? Must I relate to you that that is how you and I, how *we*, have been this time and again begun? I would, that is I wish, to you relate real events. But for some time, you have been gone, and I, a distant relation, have become a relation of distance. When will cease this address that I, a real event, relate real events? Would you have me for you to relate real events, to pass *them* along, to tell *them* just as you have related *them* to me? Or would you have me pass *along* them? Am I to come and go about *them*, these real events, as I wish? Would that be a dream? When is it that this dream is to be? Is this dream to be related to real events? Or, would you have that my relation remains between real events? What remains of me? Are you to be the remainder of me, or I you? Are we to remain between, between the betweens?

*That which I am could not but for you having ever taken me in,  
That which I should will not but for your having ever resided in  
me.*

How was it again that you and I are related?

## Abstract

This dissertation critically interrogates intersections of millennialist nationalism, whiteness, and American poetry between the Civil War's commencement in 1861 and Reconstruction's collapse following the U.S. presidential election in 1876. Invoking Emily Dickinson's spectral trope of the "Ourself behind ourself", I present a revisionist account of the reception history of *Leaves of Grass* wherein I argue the twentieth-century monumentalization of Whitman's free verse as a radical prosodic break has simultaneously disseminated an account of American democracy in which whiteness has been disavowed and rendered immaterial. Lensing recent scholarly rehabilitations of nineteenth-century American poetry through anti-imperialist, decolonizing accounts of whiteness developed within a theologically inflected lineage of critical race studies, I re-cite and re-site formal, disciplinary, and secularist metrics that hypostatically organize the century along an antebellum/postbellum divide. Alongside ongoing scholarly reconstructions of "our" nineteenth century, I argue historical poetics begins by asking not, with positivist élan, what we *now* know of the nineteenth century; rather, what might the nineteenth-century know now of *us*? What ethical, hermeneutic, and historiographic undercurrents surface when "white" poets of the era are labeled *as white*—that is, as inheritors of a racially reifying, theological aesthetic of expropriated land and commodified enslavement dissimulated by whiteness' ascriptive function in demotic usage.

In a era beleaguered by institutional legacies of nineteenth-century white supremacy—the promise and subsequent retrenchment of public education, the structural exploitation of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment’s exception clause in the form of mass incarceration, relentless incursions upon indigenous sovereignty, and public relitigation of birthright citizenship prompted by anti-immigrant demagoguery—the illimitable jurisdictional dispensation of White Election, and typological exegetes of scripture that christened waves upon waves of violence in the nineteenth century with the rhetoric of providence and covenant, poetry seems an improbable (if not anachronistic) site for refiguring, redressing, and reconstructing the mal-distribution of the sensible, which calls for an aesthetics ethically grounded in and beginning from an equitably distributed collectivity rather than the *a priori* enshrinement of propertied individuation. Yet, no period in U.S. history testifies more emphatically to the centrality of verse, much of it ‘minor’ or ‘occasional,’ for negotiating whiteness in the nineteenth century than the Civil War. The extent to which compositions and readings/performances of verse sanctioned and sacralized the contours and coloration of civic belonging by (re)mediating everyday social exchanges remains unprecedented. This dissertation, then, takes the measure(s) of Whitman, Dickinson, and Melville and emplots them alongside the entrained temporality of millennialist eschatology coursing through the versified journalism of battle hymns, minstrel songs, and abolitionist anthems anthologized in the newspaper poets of Frank Moore’s *Rebellion Record* and Emily V. Mason’s Lost Cause collection *Southern Poems of*

*the War*. Thus reintroduced to the popular, ambient airs from which their variant trajectories of canonization have sequestered them, new narratives of the continuities and ruptures between “their” era and “ours” unfold. By sublimating material legacies of racial and ethnic eradication, territorial expropriation, acculturation, assimilation, and coercive conversion, the historicity of whiteness’ own ethnic massifications—renewed and redeemed for posterity by Whitman studies as the autochthonous voice of American democracy—has abjured temporal flux for a timeless theodicy implicitly and explicitly predicated upon an expansive exteriority of dominion-in-perpetuity and an immutable interiority of redemptive martyrdom. Out of step with this massifying telos, my reading (with Susan Howe as interlocutor) of Dickinson’s antinomian hymns and Melville’s perennially untimely *Clarel*, a Counter-Centennial opus of 17,863 lines of rebarbative iambic tetrameter, recuperates previously inaudible voices of radical, ‘un-American’ dissensus from their ostensibly staid, antiquated prosodic forms. Whereas Dickinson’s most concentrated poetic dehiscence has historically been read apart from the war with which it curiously coincided, Melville’s astonishing and restless metrical experiments have yet to reverberate beyond the curiously resilient refrains of lament by his few readers that one hears often enough of Melville while hearing little of poetry. Both poets, I argue, unearth melancholic emplotments of time engendered by allegorical readings of afterness as generative, recursive restagings of inexpiable obligation toward emergent formations of transnational, anti-imperial solidarity. In my closing rereading of

*Clarel* through Howe and Dickinson, such formations articulate themselves through an antinomian renunciation of a nineteenth-century feminine whiteness historically impressed into patriarchal, millennialist crusades to jurisprudentially consolidate the massifying consensus commemorated into the matter of record.

Introduction  
Whitman and Americanness: A Problem; or, Against 1855

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**The Real War Will Never Get In the Books.** (Walt Whitman,  
*Specimen Days*)

A

poet

does not relate

real

events

2. For then

she would clash

with the histo- (Susan Howe, “Melville’s Marginalia”)<sup>1</sup>

Only 8 percent of high school seniors surveyed can identify slavery as the central cause of the Civil War. Two-thirds (68 percent) don’t know that it took a constitutional amendment to formally end slavery. Fewer than 1 in 4 students (22 percent) know provisions in the Constitution gave advantages to slaveholders. (Southern Poverty Law Center, *Teaching Hard History: American Slavery*, 2017)

Ever the adventurer, shortly after moving to California she joined a sailing group where she learned all aspects of handling sailing vessels, continuing with this activity for many years. Fond of travel, Dr. Clark loved frequent cruises to exotic destinations as well as an annual trip to Zihuatenejo, Mexico. (“Leadie M. Clark, Ph.D, Educator, October 1, 1925-June 14, 2017.”)<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Howe, *The Non-Conformist’s Memorial* (New York: New Directions Books, 1993), 102.

<sup>2</sup>“Leadie Clark Obituary - Santa Ana, CA | Orange County Register,” accessed October 25, 2018,

Here, in this introduction which, like all beginnings, sounding itself amidst the reverberations of that which, because having come before, now is made to follow and fall in line, here seems to closer draw round me the distension of years between when first this project I ventured to propose and settlement of sentences which now *this* I do compose. What began in Chicago, the most populous city in the Land of Lincoln and some two hundred miles northeast of Springfield, where set Whitman's "powerful western fallen star," draws to a close further south than the South, in the north Caribbean city of New Orleans, most populous city of Louisiana, some eighty miles southeast of state capital Baton Rouge, an onomastic encryption of an indigenous demarcation as surveyed and assessed through the eyes of d'Iberville and his men. New Orleans, "our channel and entrepot for everything, going and returning," Whitman would write, though of everything, all that remained were the auctioneer's voice and "only a woman I casually met there who detain'd me for love of me."<sup>3</sup> One city a destination for some half-million seeking economic and political asylum during the Great Migration, the other a creole port of entry and detention center for a diasporic community dispersed at what, in the era of Whitman's visit, was the largest

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<https://obits.oregister.com/obituaries/orangecounty/obituary.aspx?n=leadie-m-clark&pid=185971862>.

<sup>3</sup> *November Boughs*, in *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 1200. Qtd. in Matt Sandler, "Kindred Darkness: Whitman in New Orleans." in *Whitman Noir: Black America and the Good Grey Poet*, ed. Ivy Wilson (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 54; "Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City" *Leaves of Grass* (New York: W.E. Chapin & Co., Printers, 1867), 115.

antebellum slave market in the United States. Neither amateness nor adhesion much obtains between these two cities and their respective capitals. A ten-minute walk down the road from my shotgun rental stands unobtrusively on a corner lot a marker commemorating the site at which a creole cobbler named Homer Plessy, encouraged by the Comité des Citoyens, bought a train ticket some two months after Whitman's passing.<sup>4</sup>

Numerous Whitman scholars, along with a considerable contingent of Abolition War historians, have found occasion to cite the good gray poet's "real war" prophecy. Two prominent mid-twentieth-century assessments of Abolition War literature, Edmund Wilson's *Patriotic Gore* (1962) and Daniel Aaron's *The Unwritten War* (1973), invoked it when dismissing the artifice of a nineteenth-century verse culture whose captivity to what Whitman had derided in a March 1863 letter as "the petty bonds of art" must perforce be burst by "the living soul's,

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<sup>4</sup> In my first chapter, I will have occasion to touch upon the jurisprudential history of whiteness as property, for which I am indebted to the work of Cheryl I. Harris. In a 1993 essay for the *Harvard Law Review*, Harris emphasizes that Plessy's case was not argued exclusively as a violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause. As Harris explains, Plessy asserted that the "refusal to seat him on the white passenger car deprived him of property—'this reputation [of being white] which has an actual pecuniary value'—without the due process of law." In "the brief filed on Plessy's behalf," his lawyers first argued that "'the reputation of belonging to the dominant race . . . is property, in the same sense that a right of action or inheritance is property[.]'" "Because of white supremacy," Harris continues, "whiteness was not merely a descriptive or ascriptive characteristic—it was property of overwhelming significance and value." Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness As Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106.8 (1993): 1747–48.

the body's tragedies.”<sup>5</sup> In a late 1864 journal entry, Whitman would invidiously contrast such aesthetic bondage to the “skelet[al]” diary of his brother, Captain George Washington Whitman:

It does not need calling in play the imagination to see what in such a record as this lies folded a perfect poem of the war [...] The way to bring the severest wipe to the bevy of American ‘poets’ is to draw a strong picture of the splendor, variety, amplitude, etc. of America [...] fill up the picture with her great distances, the unparalleled and unprecedented points (locale), and then scornfully add (or make precede), as if the stuff – the silly little tinkling and tepid, sentimental, war water that is called the works of the American poets – *has any reference here or any foothold in the future.*<sup>6</sup>

Though Haviland describes Whitman’s experiences in Washington, D.C. as “humbling,” the latter’s intimate proximity to death and disease in the course of his hospital ministrations clearly augmented and confirmed an already considerable faith in his powers of imaginative projection, a faith that crucially *antedated* and shaped his writings on the war, however much he might seek to retrospectively derive a singular authenticity from that experience. Nearly a decade before “a new world [opened] somehow to me, giving closer insights, new things, exploring deeper mines than any yet, showing our humanity, (I sometimes put myself in fancy in the cot, with typhoid, or under the knife,.)” Whitman had

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<sup>5</sup> Walt Whitman and Edwin Haviland Miller, *Selected Letters of Walt Whitman*, 1st ed. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990), 37.

<sup>6</sup> Walt Whitman, *Walt Whitman’s Civil War.*, [1st ed.] (New York: Knopf, 1960), 10. For reasons that will become clear, I think it important to emphasize that Aaron enlists both the above excerpts in order to unpack the meaning of the *Specimen Days* prophesy.

already proclaimed an empathetic power that leaves his poetics fundamentally haunted by a rhetoric of dispossession and displacement.<sup>7</sup>

Agonies are one of my changes of garments;  
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels . . . . I myself  
become the wounded person  
My hurt turns livid upon me as I lean on a cane.

The years 1861-1865 came to assume, by Whitman's own account, the place of a fulcrum upon which *Leaves of Grass* rested:

Without those three or four years, the Civil War and my experiences in them, my "Leaves of Grass"—(I don't mean its pictures and pieces in "Drum-Taps" only, and parts of its text, but the whole spirit and body as they stand)—would not now be existing. I am fain sometimes to think of the book as a whirling wheel, with the War of 1861-5 as the hub on which it all concentrates and revolves.<sup>8</sup>

By foregrounding continuity, I begin to broach the concerns that animate each of the following chapters; that is, this project does not seek to apprehend the Abolition War as an epochal, cataclysmic parturition of such disruptive force as to have birthed two discrete eras, the antebellum and the postbellum. Rather, this dissertation engages with recent calls to recalibrate nineteenth-century periodization by considering, at but one register among others, to what degree the genealogy of these terms in the discipline of literary studies commemorates an otherwise disavowed complicity with a nationalist historiography that would lay

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<sup>7</sup> *Selected Letters*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> Walt Whitman, "How 'Leaves of Grass' Was Made," *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*, 1892, 732.

claim to temporality as a modality of the state.<sup>9</sup> Such work has taken its cue, in part, from the work of historian Cheryl Wells's whose work on the "antebellum American temporalities [that] reemerged to organize life in the postbellum era" animates my own project.<sup>10</sup> According to Wells, "battle time" disrupted, subordinated, and secularized God's time."<sup>11</sup> Yet, what this dissertation encounters in the conventions and rhetoric of Emily V. Mason's anthology *Southern Poems of the War* and the newspaper poetry of Frank Moore's *Rebellion Record*, Whitman's *Drum-Taps and Sequel to Drum-Taps*, and Melville's *Battle-Pieces* is the invocation of an implacable, millennial whiteness, an eschatological chronotope deeply antithetical to any configuration of temporality that might have the temerity to posit an afterness or beforeness with respect to "America." In conceptualizing millennialism as the hegemonic chronotope by which "America" becomes intelligible as ongoing political enterprise, pursued *in time* through eradication, enthrallment, assimilation, acculturation, and conversion. Such is the arc of millennialism and the coercive logic of its annihilationist identifications: "You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold you." Moreover, by emphasizing the historicity of the work performed *in time* by this *militantly* ahistorical entrainment of temporality *as such*, I seek to avoid a metaphysical

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<sup>9</sup> Cody Marrs, *Nineteenth-Century American Literature and the Long Civil War*, vol. 174, Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture ; (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Cheryl A. Wells, *Civil War Time: Temporality & Identity in America, 1861-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 65

account of *millennial* whiteness which, disciplined and domesticated as a field of study, risks “that whiteness itself will be,” as Sarah Ahmed has strenuously warned, “transformed into an object [...] ‘something that we can track or follow across time and space [...] a fetish, cut off from histories of production and circulation.’”<sup>12</sup> With this in mind, this dissertation embeds the historicity of whiteness along a number of trajectories, the first of those being the work of ethnic massification. The periodization of my project seeks a new articulation of the poetics of the Abolition War and Reconstruction—whose demise, like the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution before it, was an arrangement (the Compromise of 1877) for reconsolidating and renewing the restriction of political agency within an settler-colonialist enclosure that, in that era and its antecedents, went by Anglo-Saxonism. Moreover, one cannot hope to adequately analyze the temporal formation of “whiteness” without attending to the myriad ways in which its gendering has been mobilized and deployed as a deeply misogynous weaponization of a patriarchal femininity in the service of securing for itself the status of a covenantal property relation and reification of “property.”<sup>13</sup> As an eschatological narration of history, finally, millennial whiteness asserts not merely a typological claim (though its exegetical logic of

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<sup>12</sup> Sara Ahmed, “Declarations of Whiteness: The Non-Performativity of Anti-Racism,” *Borderlands E-Journal* 3, no. 3 (November 2, 2004), [http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no2\\_2004/ahmed\\_declarations.htm](http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol3no2_2004/ahmed_declarations.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Property, as indissociable from “whiteness,” denotes the enclosure of a sacred space which, only once having disappeared or defenestrated its racialized others, comes to be a timeless possession.

subjectification and historic occasioning is scripturally typological), but an archetypological dominion with respect to time itself: “I am an acme of things accomplished, and I an encloser of things to be.”<sup>14</sup>

Woven through the very fabric of what Ernest Lee Tuveson termed the “Redeemer Nation,” millennial whiteness exemplifies a theological conviction in the providential destiny of an elect or chosen people that not only antedates and survives the Abolition War, but also antedates and anticipates the national era.<sup>15</sup> Attending to this abiding dimension of American thought then necessitates further recalibration of nineteenth-century America, particularly the coinage of Manifest Destiny within the pages the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, of which Tuveson writes, “When the phrase ‘Manifest Destiny’ actually was invented, in 1845, it was so far from being a novelty that the only wonder is that it had not appeared somewhere decades earlier.”<sup>16</sup> This periodic revision can also be found in the work of Richard T. Hughes who writes that, “because westward expansion seemed so inevitable, the doctrine of manifest destiny was written on the hearts of most white Americans long before [John] O’Sullivan put the doctrine

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<sup>14</sup> Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, New York, 1855), 50.

<sup>15</sup> *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America’s Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). For reasons that I will later return to, this introduction eschews the commonplace of Civil War for Frederick Douglass’ Abolition War. It should also be noted that the particular strain of millennial thought with which this dissertation concerns itself is postmillennial in orientation, and not premillennial.

<sup>16</sup> *Redeemer Nation*, 125.

into words.”<sup>17</sup> As a chronotope of militant ahistoricity, the millennial whiteness that subtends the providential timelessness of American identity resonates with and redoubles spatialized, evangelic rhetorics of annexation, expansion, and dispossession through a typological logic that christened Americans as “the peculiar, chosen people—the Israel of our time.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, though, *our* time—as an invocation of belonging that is also, and always, the constitutive formation of exclusions retrospectively enshrined and sacralized, signaling the annunciation of an American elect as the prophesied emergence of a New Israel—simultaneously transcends temporality and functions as its very expression:

...it is leading us as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. It beckons to us from the dim and shadowy distance, and bids us, All Hail! . . . Who can define it? As well define infinity, space, eternity; *yet who so heartless as not to feel it.* (emphasis added)<sup>19</sup>

Howsoever absorbing and dissolving “in [its] imaginations the particularities of time and place that had molded all cultures and civilizations except [itself],” millennial whiteness would, with divinely licensed imprimatur, lay up for itself

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<sup>17</sup> *Myths America Lives By* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003)

<sup>18</sup> Herman Melville, *White-Jacket or The World in a Man-of-War* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 150.

<sup>19</sup> “Imaginary Commonwealths,” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*. 19 (1846): 184. In my third chapter on Herman Melville’s counter-centennial poem *Clarel*, I discuss at length how the apocryphal figure of the “Wandering Jew,” as heartless and unfeeling, provides a theological and typological authorization for religious violence.

treasures upon earth by restricting political agency within settler-colonialist enclosures coextensive and coterminous with Protestant Anglo-Saxons.<sup>20</sup>

In as much as millennial whiteness preceded the Abolition War, so too did its hail call forth the barbaric yawp first bellowed by Whitman in 1855. Before Emerson had sought out an American genius of “tyrannous eye,” the poet Park Benjamin would likewise make his case for the necessity and inevitability of such of a figure:

It, would, perhaps, not be too extravagant to say that the poetical resources of our country are boundless. . . . Nothing is narrow, nothing is confined. All is height, all is expansion. . . . Shall there not be one great poet—that man whose eye can roam over the borders of our land, and see those things of which we have spoken? Needs not the spirit of prophecy answer, ‘Yes?’<sup>21</sup>

With the sweeping strides of an expansive lineation, its illimitable catalogue of types which shuns, as Wai Chee Dimock notes, subordination for “syntactic equivalents, in parallel construction.” Whitman’s free verse entrains, rather, a lawless gait that traverses the world as pure, untrammelled space, oblivious to and obliterating any sense of history in which America does not signal the fruition of a

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<sup>20</sup> Hughes, 46. See also, Tuveson, chapter 5 “Chosen Race . . . Chosen People”, and Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981). “By 1850 American expansion was viewed in the United States less as a victory for the principles of free democratic republicanism than as evidence of the innate superiority of the American Anglo-Saxon branch of the Caucasian race” (1).

<sup>21</sup> Qtd. in Timothy Morris, *Becoming Canonical in American Poetry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 28.

latent providential dispensation.<sup>22</sup> Previous events, if recognized at all, “are strangely foreshortened, so devoid of any weight of time, that they have the effect of being contemporaneous with all events subsequent to them.”<sup>23</sup> For Dimock, then, the “perpetual openness” of Whitman’s poetics results from the “constitution of memory as a field of spatial latitude rather than temporal extension.”<sup>24</sup> Yet, what Dimock reads optimistically as experiential inclusiveness occludes precisely the manner by which millennial whiteness defenestrates from the enclosure of time itself everything that cannot be assimilated or absorbed into its itemized catalogue of separate but equals.

In 1986, David Simpson wrote that for “any examination of the relation between formal expression and political content, between narrative, and nationality, Whitman must be a central case.”<sup>25</sup> Even now, four decades later, Whitman’s centrality as the poet of American democracy remains, fittingly for a

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<sup>22</sup> Wai Chee Dimock, “Whitman, Syntax, and Political Theory,” in *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies*, ed. Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 72. See also, David Simpson, “Destiny Made Manifest: The Styles of Whitman’s Poetry,” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990). “For now, it is worth stressing again that the accumulative style, with its denial of grammatical subordination and hence of the political struggles and debates that such subordination would inevitably dramatize, is Whitman’s image of an undivided society” (182). I have appropriated the phrase “lawless gait” from Whitman’s *Specimen Days* entry “The Real War Will Never Get in the Books”, which I discuss in chapter two.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Simpson, 178.

poet of consensus, a critical commonplace.<sup>26</sup> If, as Dana Phillips has argued, the “judgment of Whitman’s racial politics may be taken as representative of the consensus of Whitman scholars” then we are obliged to consider what is to be gained by unsettling that consensus.<sup>27</sup> This consensus, gathered by Ali Behdad, bears repeating.<sup>28</sup> The “poet sings of an America where people of all colors come together, mixing indiscriminately in a great democracy yet respecting each other’s rich cultural heritage and diversity.”<sup>29</sup> ; “Whitman’s poetry celebrated a muscular America *large enough* to include multitudes at the same time it insisted that each constituency lovingly catalogued was a seamless part of the larger, often *mystically imagined* Union. . . . Even more important, Whitman’s poetry provides a case study in multiculturalism at its best, for his poetic antennae could detect value from a wide variety of sources. When added up, the result was an America worth singing about.”<sup>30</sup> ; “a profoundly democratic vision in which all barriers — sectional, racial, religious, spatial, and sexual — were challenged in

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<sup>26</sup> Kerry C. Larson, *Whitman’s Drama of Consensus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988)

<sup>27</sup> Dana Phillips, “Nineteenth-Century Racial Thought and Whitman’s ‘Democratic Ethnology of the Future,’” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 49, no. 3 (1994): 290.

<sup>28</sup> Ali Behdad, *A Forgetful Nation: On Immigration and Cultural Identity in the United States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 79.

<sup>29</sup> Ronald Takaki, *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 181.

<sup>30</sup> SANFORD PINSKER, “Walt Whitman and Our Multicultural America,” *The Virginia Quarterly Review* 75, no. 4 (1999): 717.

unprecedented ways.”<sup>31</sup> Even amidst the critical reclamation of nineteenth-century American poetics over the past two decades, the premise of Whitman’s centrality remains so ubiquitous as to need no defense or scrutiny. One encounters this casual observation in Shira Wolosky’s 2003 programmatic statement, “The Claims of Rhetoric: Toward a Historical Poetics (1820-1900)” which appeared within the pages of *American Literary History*. Setting the scene for a culture of verse vigorously engaged in “the pressing issues facing the new nation,” Wolosky writes, “Walt Whitman of course figures as the outstanding example of such a vision of poetry as participating in American public and cultural life.”<sup>32</sup> Seven years later, Wolosky would add, “Whitman’s poetic subject is, then, the diversity of America; plural cultures as the foundation of a common society that each individual would be committed to building.”<sup>33</sup> Somewhat defensively, Whitman’s representative “myself” is declared to be a “rhetoric of gargantuan personification, not as engulfing, imperial ego or as propagandist voice for an imperial America, but as the multiple and hence exemplary representative of American diversity and energy.”<sup>34</sup> It is rather difficult to know how to evaluate such claims, particularly in light of Wolosky’s earlier reading of Longfellow. Given that the sales figures for all editions of *Leaves of Grass* in Whitman’s

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<sup>31</sup> David S. Reynolds, *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>32</sup> Shira Wolosky. “The Claims of Rhetoric: Toward a Historical Poetics (1820-1900),” *American Literary History* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 14.

<sup>33</sup> Shira Wolosky, *Poetry and Public Discourse in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 176.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.

lifetime numbered less than 20,000, we might well wonder why it is that another 1855 poem, Longfellow's "The Song of Hiawatha," with sales of 50,000 copies by 1860, does not merit consideration as the exemplum of poetry participating in (nineteenth-century) American life, particularly when Wolosky takes pains to note that "the self and society as it currently exists are not what [Whitman] is celebrating."<sup>35</sup> Part of the problem derives from the indeterminate oscillation of *currently* in the previous sentence. It is difficult to determine whether Whitman's currency or our own is being referenced here, without consigning ourselves to a jubilant evasion of history altogether.

I was looking a long while for Intentions,  
For a clew to the history of the past for myself, and for  
these chants—and now I have found it,  
It is not in those paged fables in the libraries (them I  
neither accept or reject,)

It is no more in the legends than in all else,  
It is in the present—it is this earth today  
It is in Democracy—(the purport and aim of all the past,)  
It is in the life of one man or one woman to-day—the  
average man of to-day  
[...]  
All for the modern—all for the average man of today.<sup>36</sup>

Of this average man of American democracy, what can be said? In answering, let us return to the issue of Wolosky and Longfellow's legend. Why is it that Whitman, rather than Longfellow, appears on the cover of Wolosky's

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>36</sup> "I Was Looking a Long While." *Leaves of Grass* (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860–61), 192. Untitled until the 1867 edition, this poem originally appeared as number 19 in the section "Chants Democratic."

volume? Why is it that Whitman participates so fully as to embody coextensively and coterminously American futurity—a “to-day” without dawn or dusk? To the degree that we cannot recognize the theological dimensions of Whitmanian whiteness, the more “participation” portends mystification. As Willie James Jennings has argued,

whiteness must be analyzed not simply as substantiation of European hegemonic gestures but more precisely in its identity-facilitating characteristics, its judgment constituting features, and its global deployments of embodied visions of the true, the good, and the beautiful. To analyze whiteness requires nothing less than a theological consideration.<sup>37</sup>

For the following reasons, Wolosky argues, Longfellow’s “dream of a great American epic,” fails to summon an “authentic” American voice: his “use of American materials—landscape, climate, customs— [to] define an American literature” proves problematic insofar as “America does not have a history embedded in landscape.”<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the history Longfellow summons “is *neither his nor his ethnic compatriots but that of the Native Americans the English were in the process of displacing. Claiming it as their own involves an appropriative sleight of hand, indeed a form of theft*” (emphasis mine).<sup>39</sup> The point, obviously, is not to rehabilitate the settler-colonialist politics of Longfellow’s poem, far from it. Yet, if we can admit that “Indian language [in

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<sup>37</sup> Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2010), 290.

<sup>38</sup> *Poetry and Public Discourse*, 48.

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

Hiawatha] is not a living testament to Indian culture, but an elegy to it,” then

*Leaves of Grass* may be said to have crashed the funeral in search of a wife.<sup>40</sup>

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the far-west . . . .  
the  
    bride was a red girl,  
Her father and his friends sat near by crosslegged and dumbly  
smoking . . . . they had moccasins to their feet and large thick  
blankets hanging from their shoulders;

On a bank lounged the trapper . . . . he was dressed mostly in skins .  
. . . his luxuriant beard and curls protected his neck,  
One hand rested on his rifle . . . . the other hand held firmly the  
wrist of the red girl,  
She had long eyelashes . . . . her head was bare . . . . her coarse  
straight locks descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reached to  
her feet.<sup>41</sup>

Clasp't not by the hand, but securely apprehend at the wrist, the “bride” blurs into Whitman’s lascivious vision as it lands—lighting not upon her eyes but her long eyelashes—upon her “coarse straight locks” descending upon her manhandled contours: the blazon as scalping. Moreover, the geography Whitman calls into presence—the “land” giving way to “America” in “Long, Too Long, [O Land] America,” as a standing-reserve brought into millennial dominion throughout *Leaves of Grass*—belies Whitman’s own monumental sublimation of indigenous genocide into onomastic elegies chanting out an inevitable and providential absence constitutively decreed by millennial whiteness. First, “Read this Song of Hiawatha!” and then hear again the mournful deliquescence of an indigenous

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, NY, 1855), 18-19.

autochthony displaced and dispossessed, the redoubled displacement of violence and dissensus for “indissoluble compacts” and “eternal progress”, the stricken receding from time in the “striking up for a New World” that is “Starting from Paumanok.”

And for the Past pronounce what the air holds of  
the red aborigines.

The Red aborigines!  
Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds,  
calls as of birds and animals in the woods,  
syllabled to us for names,  
Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez,  
Chattahoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco.  
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-  
Walla  
*Leaving such to The States, they melt, they depart,  
charging the water and the land with names.*

*O expanding and swift! O henceforth,  
Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick, and  
audacious,  
A world primal again—Vistas of glory, incessant  
and branching,  
A new race, dominating previous ones, and grander  
far,  
New politics—New literatures and religions—New  
inventions and arts. (emphasis mine)<sup>42</sup>*

Read this Song of Hiawatha and then hear the whisper of “Yonnondio” amidst  
*November Boughs*.

A song, a poem of itself—the word itself a dirge,  
Amid the wilds, the rocks, the storm and wintry nights,  
To me such misty, strange tableaux the syllables calling up;  
Yonnondio—I see, far in the west or north, a limitless ravine,

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<sup>42</sup> “Staring from Paumanok.” *Leaves of Grass* (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860–61), 20.

with plains and mountains dark,  
I see swarms of stalwart chieftains, medicine-men, and warriors,  
*As flitting by like clouds of ghosts, they pass and are gone in the  
twilight,*  
*(Race of the woods, the landscapes free, and the falls!*  
*No picture, poem, statement, passing them to the future:)*  
*Yonnonidio! Yonnonidio! —unlimn'd they disappear;*  
*To-day gives place, and fades—the cities, farms, factories fade;*  
*A muffled sonorous sound, a wailing word is borne through the  
air for a moment,*  
*Then blank and gone and still, and utterly lost.*<sup>43</sup>

Banished to a time out of time, encrypted within an anteriority which serves no purpose but to disperse, to cease and desist, this is what it means to not ask the wounded person how he feels, for to do so would require that listening precede the barbaric yawp of speech. However much the prophetic voice may be said to “contain multitudes,” may be said to proffer “perpetual openness,” these apologetics for the new race cannot be misread, as they routinely have been, for consciousness as hospitality—that is, a consciousness grounded in and beginning from the open-ended lodgment and emplotment of the other within “our” selves. What Whitman extols, according to Wolosky, is the futurity of a self and nation yet to be. What remains uncelebrated, unimagined and unimaginable, what remains expunged from the matter of record that Whitman is said to authenticate are those whose differential sense of self resists and renounces incorporation, assimilation, and absorption into the millennial futurity of a new race. As Leadie Mae Clark “duly recorded” in the centennial year of *Leaves of Grass*: “Thus, the

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<sup>43</sup> *Leaves of Grass* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1891–92), 396.

Indian is a man with a past but no present or future.”<sup>44</sup> This is the entrainment of a temporality monumentally commemorated in Whitman’s perpetual to-day. By monumental commemoration, I denote the occasional invocation of millennial whiteness as historiographic frame, which, operating by a typological logic, grounds what Ali Behdad has identified as necessary to any understanding of Whitman’s historiography, the “transcendental notion of an eternity in which all historical periods, geographical locations, and social processes are bonded together into a massive unity through similitude.”<sup>45</sup> For the counter-occasional, counter-monumental observer of Whitman’s millennial “to-day,” that observer who would not, who cannot, afford even for a day to divert their eyes, as Whitman would have us do, from the violent flux which ever renews and redeems a relentless will to identity that, each day in the life of this nation-state, fashions the horizon of the ordinary and the everyday as the scene of irreparable harm. From the depths of *Darkwater*, W.E.B. Du Bois sounded, with lacerating and lacerated irony, a Whitmanian catalogue of the millennial theology of whiteness:

“But what on earth is whiteness that one should so desire it?” Then always, somehow, some way, silently but clearly, I am given to understand that whiteness is the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen! Now what is the effect on a man or nation when it comes passionately to believe such an extraordinary dictum as this? That nations are coming to believe it is manifest daily. Wave on wave, each with increasing virulence, is dashing this new religion of whiteness on the shores of our time. Its first effects are funny: the strut of the Southerner, the arrogance of the Englishman

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<sup>44</sup> Leadie Mae Clark, “Walt Whitman’s Concept of the American Common Man” (Philosophical Library, 1955), vii; 54.

<sup>45</sup> Behdad, 83.

amuck, the whoop of the hoodlum who vicariously leads your  
mob.<sup>46</sup>

What then is *today*? To what periodization does *today* subscribe? Just as the perpetual openness of Whitman's presencing present could find neither space nor time for indigenous autochthony, neither could his common man envision any accommodation for African Americans after emancipation. Only within the terms afforded by millennial whiteness—sentimental pathos or terror of unholy insurrection—could indigenous peoples or black lives be apprehended.

Now I tell what my mother told me today as we sat at dinner  
together,  
Of when she was a nearly grown girl living home with her parents  
on  
    *the old homestead.*

A red squaw came one breakfasttime to the *old homestead*,  
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rushbottoming  
chairs;  
Her hair straight shiny coarse black and profuse half-enveloped her  
    face,  
Her *step was free and elastic . . . .* her voice sounded exquisitely as  
she  
    spoke.  
My mother looked in delight and amazement *at the stranger*,  
[...]  
She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace . . . . she  
    cooked food for her,  
*She had no work to give her remembrance and fondness.*  
[...]  
*She remembered her many a winter and many a summer*  
*But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.*

Now Lucifer was not dead . . . . *or if he was I am his sorrowful*  
*terrible*  
    *heir;*

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<sup>46</sup> *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil* (New York: Verso, 2016), 18.

I have been wronged . . . . I am oppressed . . . . I hate him that  
oppresses me,  
*I will either destroy him, or he shall release me.* (emphasis mine)<sup>47</sup>

Whatever relations might obtain between these scenes, between these two tales of inheritance and voice? What, exactly, was sounded by the exquisite voice? A plea for work? How came that exquisite voice to plea? As yet another “sequence without sedimentation,” to use Dimock’s phrase, each episode arrives separate but equal; they pass through *so that they may depart*. After 1871, Whitman would release Lucifer from *Leaves of Grass*, as he had no further work for him.<sup>48</sup> In light of Whitman’s Free Soil politics, as voiced in his many expressions of concern for the livelihood of white laborers which, he thought, the institution of chattel slavery threatened, the obliteration of any entanglements effected by this free-roaming simultaneity compels a reconsideration of Lucifer’s critically monumentalized subjectivity. That is, whereas “The Sleepers” is content to “know not how I came of you” and “know not where I go with you” for “I know I came well, and shall go well,” critics have been content to view these stanzaic enclosures in isolation from one another. Thus Ed Folsom, ignoring the expulsion of the “red squaw” which precedes Lucifer’s appearance, lauds Whitman in this

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<sup>47</sup> *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, NY, 1855), 74.

<sup>48</sup> “Did Whitman’s Lucifer go on, after emancipation, to become a citizen, to vote? The question seems faintly ridiculous, because Lucifer fails to evolve in Whitman’s work; the poet creates no black characters, not a hint of representation that offers a place or role for the freed slaves in reconstructed America” (52). Ed Folsom, “Lucifer and Ethiopia: Whitman, Race, and Poetics before the Civil War,” in *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman*, ed. David S. Reynolds (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

passage for “one of the earliest expressions of black subjectivity in a work by a white poet” without attending to the millennial whiteness that enframes them both.<sup>49</sup> In so far as Whitman’s readers are content to stride across the interstitial space between the homestead and the terrible inheritance bequeathed by Lucifer, the slave-as-Lucifer then but redoubles Whitman’s view that chattel slaves must needs be cast out, and indeed this momentary occupation of subjectivity by the slave works only to the degree that the homesteaded subjectivity *bear no relation* as an inheritor who, rather than being wrong’d and oppress’d, is very much alive and continues to wrong and oppress with impunity. Precisely because the homogenized immensity of Whitman’s “I” *is* that very inheritance, it can and will simultaneously laugh, inform against, and pilot the steamboat down the bend. Lest that Lucifer destroy him (the systemically racialized individuation of a proprietary and propertied birthright), he must be released, excommunicated, exiled or repatriated, for while the “I” of millennial whiteness permits self-contradiction, its monumentalized, millennial destiny harbors no port of entry for the other who would speak differently, who would speak as other than a slave, who would speak un-American. Now, what is the effect upon a nation when it comes passionately to claim the barbaric yawp—barbarically echoing *lingua incognita*—of speech as birthright while simultaneously disavowing any sense of obligation incumbent upon that inheritance, any sense of the pastness whose specters haunt every darkened cell and sun-kissed acre. The renewal and redemption without end of

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

Whitman's imperial American—not so much a spatialized simultaneity expressed through contradiction as an exorcism or interdiction of temporality itself—bequeaths a murderous and vertiginously monumentalized self of the kind Emily Dickinson (with echoes of Lincoln, or perhaps he echoes her) imprudently confronted:

One need not be a Chamber—to be Haunted—  
One need not be a House—  
The Brain has corridors—surpassing  
Material Place—

Far safer, of a midnight meeting  
External Ghost  
Than its Interior Confronting—  
That cooler Host—

Far safer, through an Abbey gallop,  
The Stones a'chase  
Than unarmed, one's a'self encounter—  
In lonesome place—

Ourself behind ourself, concealed—  
Should startle most—  
Assassin hid in our Apartment—  
Be Horror's least—

The Body—borrows a Revolver—  
He bolts the Door—  
O'erlooking a superior spectre—  
Or More—<sup>50</sup>

In August 2016, with the presidential election but two months away, a rather peculiar and widely debated volume appeared, *A Clear and Present Danger: Narcissism in the Era of Donald Trump* (reissued in a 2017 edition with title

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<sup>50</sup> Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. R. W. Franklin, Reading ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), 188.

amended to read ... *in the era of President Trump*).<sup>51</sup> Edited by two psychiatrists, Leonard Cruz and Steven Buser, the volume gained national attention, primarily for flaunting Section 7 (popularly known as “The Goldwater Rule”) of the APA’s Principles of Medical Ethics, reading in part:

On occasion psychiatrists are asked for an opinion about an individual who is in the light of public attention or who has disclosed information about himself/herself through public media. In such circumstances, a psychiatrist may share with the public his or her expertise about psychiatric issues in general. However, it is unethical for a psychiatrist to offer a professional opinion unless he or she has conducted an examination and has been granted proper authorization for such statement.<sup>52</sup>

In perhaps the most unusual essay in this volume, “Healthy Presidential Narcissism: Is that Possible?”, psychiatrist and Jungian analyst Thomas Singer ends his contribution with a coda entitled “A Perverted Echo of Walt Whitman “Do I Contradict Myself?,” itself divided into various subsections—“Song of Myself,” “I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,” and “I Sound my Barbaric Yawp Over the Roofs of the World.” At the end of this utterly

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<sup>51</sup> Leonard Cruz and Steven Buser, eds., *A Clear and Present Danger: Narcissism in the Era of Donald Trump* (Asheville, North Carolina: Chiron Publications, 2016). The volume’s utterly baffling dedication is worth reprinting: “This book is dedicated to the memory of two great first presidents. President George Washington of the United States of America declined to serve more than the two terms and risk establishing a new monarchy. President Nelson Mandela of post-Apartheid South Africa served only one term before departing to private life. Their selfless examples continue to shine like a beacon for all who consider aspiring to high office” (N.p.).

<sup>52</sup> American Psychiatric Association. *The Principles of Medical Ethics, With Annotations Especially Applicable to Psychiatry* (Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013), 9.

mystifying and dissociative excursus on “Walt Whitman, the ultimate bard of the American soul,” Singer writes,

Comparing Trump to Whitman may seem sacrilegious to the memory of the great American poet. But there is a logic to such a comparison as Trump is the shadow or dark mirror to the best things in America, sung so eloquently by Whitman. Trump’s “song of myself” is truly a “song of myself.” Whitman sings what is best in us and Trump’s horrific bluster displays what is worst in us. What is sacred in Whitman’s ‘barbaric yawp’ becomes profane in Trump’s perverted echo of that yawp. . . . What is the difference between Whitman’s ‘I celebrate myself, I sing myself’ and Trump’s version of that same song in ‘Make America Great Again’? It is worth grappling with this question as a way of differentiating that kind of narcissism in which the ego gets inflated and identifies with Self and its archetypal defense versus that kind of rare but blessed, overflowing exuberance, integrity, and love in which the ego is connected to but not identified with the Self. What is real about Trump’s selfie is the unexpurgated expression of America’s grandiose, narcissistic, misogynistic, racist, materialistic, shadowy abuse of power. What is authentic about Whitman’s barbaric yawp as a Self-portrait of America is its life affirming, primitive vitality, which is not to be confused with Trump’s cheesy Bronx cheer as an American selfie.<sup>53</sup>

It is worth grappling with this United States, “essentially the greatest poem,” as a poem of perpetual, interminable Holy War. How is that Whitman comes to be the archetype of millennial whiteness? How is that Whitman *as archetype* comes to be the “Ourself behind ourself”? O Reader, the word enmassifying, what has possessed *you*? Would that *you* would but speak for me?<sup>54</sup> O Reader, by what concealments confirm’d, with what calendars confess’d,

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<sup>53</sup> Singer, Thomas, “Healthy Presidential Narcissism: Is That Possible?”, in *A Clear and Present Danger: Narcissism in the Era of Donald Trump* (Asheville, North Carolina: Chiron Publications, 2016), N.p.

would your enlistments entrain'd but come to my defense? Have *you* mistaken me? Do *you* hear that mocking and laughter? I keep no account with lamentation; What I have to do with lamentation? Do *you* hear the ironical echoes? A few light kisses . . . . a few embraces. . . . a reaching around of arms. O Reader, I was born for this, and *you*, O *Dispensatress*, in my image made for me. O Reader, would *you* but stand *your* ground for, having the courage of present times and all times, I am *behind you*. O Reader, course ever Westward in circumambit, roughshod Reader strong-armed, through sacred lands upheaval run, The Stones a' chase. O Reader, do *you* contradict *me*? Very well, I stop somewhere *waiting for you*.

Animated as this project is by the constitutive exclusions millennial whiteness has impressed upon the matter of record, I take up an otherwise ignoble and rather minor category of public textuality, the work of (counter-) occasion, whose features I intend not to analyze in generic terms, but instead approach as a mode of responsive reading that seeks to avoid reifying the forms of belonging monumentally commemorated therein. One year after *Brown v. Board of Education*, in the centennial year of *Leaves of Grass*, Leadie M. Clark published *Walt Whitman's Concept of the American Common Man*, a counter-centennial voice of dissensus that has not been reprinted in the ensuing six decades. Aside from an incidental footnote here and there, the thorough and "duly recorded findings" of this startling and imprudent volume have more or less sunk beneath the waves upon waves of critical renewal and redemption that delimit Whitman as the illimitable horizon of democratic possibility. The few hearings given Clark's

work upon its initial publication manifested, unsurprisingly, a set of curt and condescending responses, along with a dismissive annoyance—as if, by assiduously documenting an evidentiary record that ranges from the deplorable to the equivocal, she had somehow managed to get Whitman wrong or, rather, she had produced the wrong Whitman, certainly not Whitman *the Poet*. Sculley Bradley, writing in *American Literature*, finds a crucial defect in Clark’s decision to build her archive around Whitman’s voluminous prose oeuvre, much of which was but “the flotsam of daily journalism, in which Whitman as editor responded to the spur of an immediate social or political question or some newsworthy local problem.” Without specifying the nature of those questions—the Oregon constitution, the Fugitive Slave Act, the Wilmot Proviso, chattel slavery’s threat to free white labor, indigenous genocide, immigration—Bradley then claimed that it would be “unrealistic to expect that such materials, when consolidated [in a manner, he notes, “*not intended by Whitman*”], would faithfully reflect the philosophical attitudes expressed in Whitman’s poems involving similar themes.”<sup>55</sup>

Setting aside, for a moment, the matter of extricating a monumentalized poet from a prolific composer of occasional “flotsam” (Clark’s archive also included *Democratic Vistas*, *Specimen Days*, and *November Boughs*), we might very well wonder what liberties are taken in the reduction of profoundly exigent

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<sup>55</sup> Sculley Bradley, review of *Review of Walt Whitman’s Concept of the American Common Man*, by Leadie M. Clark, *American Literature* 28, no. 2 (1956): 241.

issues of race and citizenship to “local problems” and the subordination of “social and political questions” to the more lofty and timeless “philosophical attitudes” of the poetry. Such sentiments merely reinscribe the telos of millennial whiteness upon which the Redeemer Nation, as the transcendent eschaton of history, stakes its claim. So engrained is Whitman’s lyric I—buoyantly suspended above the rancor and fray of history—that Bradley, with deafening irony, inadvertently reiterates Clark’s central thesis in his opening sentence: “This painstaking and comprehensive study [of] almost every published statement by Walt Whitman concerning the “common man,” attempts, in the process, to establish the poet’s attitude toward that *mythical hero, toward his fellows of humble origin, and even toward such social classes as Indians, Negroes, women, and various immigrant groups*” (emphasis mine).<sup>56</sup> The renowned critic of poetic modernism Hugh Kenner, no disciple of Whitman, dispatches Clark within the space of a hyphenated aside:

That Whitman’s notions of political process were rudimentary—the Civil War merely “the foulest crime in history known in any land or age” —is irrelevant, in this view, to his status as political prophet; so is the evasiveness concerning particular conditions of men—documented with *naïve thoroughness* in the Leadie M. Clark book—that lurks inside his windy championship of the common man. (emphasis mine)<sup>57</sup>

This tendency to minimize and marginalize, if not disfigure outright, Clark and her work continued apace. Without once addressing the millennial whiteness that

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>57</sup> Hugh Kenner, “Whitman’s Multitudes,” ed. William Carlos Williams et al., *Poetry* 87, no. 3 (1955): 187.

courses through the veins of Whitman's Anglo-Saxon, Jacksonian democracy, Thomas F. Andrews would, in 1966, equivocate on Clark's thesis by continually refusing to address Whitman's primary objection to the institution of slavery, that it unfairly encroached upon and degraded the labor of working-class whites, the common men. Whatever value may be assigned to Andrews' contention that Clark mischaracterizes her sources, despite their being situated within the context of the era's agonistic partisanship as he insists upon, can be deduced from two points. Commenting upon a paragraph in which Whitman expresses his conviction that "the people" will after "some years in the weighing of slavery: come to a 'righteous decision'" and that therefore "we consider the doom of slavery as sealed," Andrews writes,

The fact remains that when taken together, Whitman's comments on the Abolitionists represent the type of expression desperately needed in that decade of *sectional* controversy. If Southern Democrats had been willing to discuss the faults of slavery *in the same light that Whitman discussed the possible benefits of that institution* [...] then there would have been little cause to settle these issues by civil war, *for there would have been no extreme positions to defend.* (emphasis mine)<sup>58</sup>

In one and the same sentence, Andrews acknowledges Whitman's white supremacist dedication to a Union of Manifest Destiny, while disavowing that such a view could and did rest easily alongside the condemnation of slavery.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Thomas F. Andrews, "Whitman and Slavery: A Reconsideration of One Aspect of his Concept of the American Common Man," *CLA Journal* 9, no. 3 (1966): 233.

<sup>59</sup> As if to seal this point, Whitman would reflect thusly upon the Oregon Constitution's prohibition of persons of color, free or slave, from entering the

Finally, and this is a point worth emphasizing given that his essay developed out of a dissertation designed to refute Clark's thesis, Andrews repeatedly refers to Clark as "he." Lest Andrews' misgendering of Clark be taken as an egregious outlier, we would do well to remember that, verily, in these long-forgotten skirmishes the real war *just to get into the books* manifests the ever-compounding interest of an investment in defacing black subjectivity that begins with Whitman's own bemusement. In "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors," (an outlier of constricted lineation, iambic tercets, rhyming musicality, caesuric reservation, and an alienated, anastrophic dialect) Whitman belatedly confronts the ineradicable, doubly diasporized (whether across the Atlantic or down the Mississippi) remainder of the forcibly seized labors that produced immense accumulations of generational wealth, only to ask:

What is it fateful woman, so blear, hardly human?  
Why wag your head with turban bound, yellow, red, and green?

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state: "Who believes that the Whites and Blacks can ever amalgamate in America? Nature has set an impassable seal against it. Besides, is not America for the Whites? And is it not better so? As long as the Blacks remain here how can they become anything like an independent and heroic race? There is no chance for it. Yet we believe there is enough material in the colored race if they were in some secure and ample part of the earth, where they would have a chance to develop themselves, to gradually form a race, a nation that would take no mean rank among the peoples of the world. They would have the good will of all the civilized powers, and they would be compelled to look upon themselves as freemen, capable, self-reliant—mighty. Of course, all this, or anything toward it can never be attained by the Blacks here in America." *Brooklyn Daily Times* (May 6, 1858).

Are the things so strange and marvelous you see or have seen?<sup>60</sup>

Setting aside Whitman's widely shared ignorance or metonymic indifference to the geographical and cultural particulars of the West African slave trade, the poem's speaker, a Union soldier, can only marvel at the strange inscrutability of the "hardly human" face he has seen before continuing upon Sherman's March to the Sea. Whatever 'things' Whitman might have seen in this figure will reappear as the metaphorical appropriation of spectral absence in the service of critiquing a perceived post-war culture of excessive materialism. It is in this context that Betsy Erkkila, just having read "Ethiopia," excerpts a few lines from section four of "A Carol of Harvest, 1967" (the compositional date of "Ethiopia").<sup>61</sup>

*Fecund America—to-day,  
Thou art overall set in births and joys!  
Thou groan'st with riches, thy wealth clothes thee as a swathing-  
garment  
Thou laughest loud with the ache of great possessions,  
[...  
Thou lucky Mistress of the tranquil barns!  
Thou Prairie Dame that sittest in the middle, and lookest out  
upon thy world, and lookest East, and lookest West!  
Dispensatress, that by a word givest a thousand miles—that  
giv'st a million farms, and missest nothing! (emphasis mine)]<sup>62</sup>*

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<sup>60</sup> Composed in 1867, "Ethiopia" first appeared in the 1871 edition of *Leaves of Grass* with the subtitle "A Reminiscence of 1864." In 1881, Whitman would deposit the poem in the *Drum-Taps* cluster.

<sup>61</sup> Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Erkkila writes, "The conditions of material abundance by which America first defined itself became in the postwar period a vehicle of potential destruction. . . . Equating the Union as mother with a boundlessly fertile land, he celebrates the return to a peacetime order of fecund abundance" (243-44).

<sup>62</sup> This poem first appeared in the September 1867 New York *Galaxy*. Qtd. in Erkkila, 244.

Yet, for Erkkila, as for Whitman, there is no connection between “the [moral] politics of racial violation” and the political economy of conspicuous wealth and territorial expansion financed by and built upon a racialized immiseration spanning generations. Thus, we encounter a critique of materialism paradoxically built upon the very erasure of aching generations of decimated fecundity and the material conditions of chattel slavery by which that immense (poetic) wealth came to be possessed. Silently recorded in the homophonic auralty of grown/groan, Whitman’s dispensatress misses nothing by forgetting everything. Little wonder then that the critical consensus of Whitman Studies, which betokens an exclusionary legacy of cultural capital accrued over decades, would, like the poet himself, testify to nothing so much as the necessity “to keep[] the black woman safely at a distance.”<sup>63</sup>

At this stage, Whitman’s white supremacist views have been routinely pored over, dissected, and rationalized in order to quarantine them from his poetic oeuvre.<sup>64</sup> My purpose here is not to present those views anew as revelatory.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>64</sup> Contrary to Bradley’s critique, Clark ends her volume by concluding “Whitman the man and Whitman the poet must be treated as separate individuals” (157). More recently, in response to Northwestern University music student Timothy McNair’s refusal to perform Whitman’s “Song of America” (as set to music by Howard Hanson, a Jim Crow era composer of the mid-twentieth century), David S. Reynolds stated, “For *his* era, in his poetry, Whitman’s progressive. After the Civil War and late in life, *mostly privately*, you encounter a *certain amount* of racism. . . . I can understand the student’s perspective. . . . At the same time *I think the student should be aware* that among white poets of *his era*, Whitman’s the one who comes closest to

Rather, what concerns me is the erasure of Leadie Mae Clark, the African-American counter-centennial reader of Whitman who systematically compiled these statements in order to historicize the millennial whiteness that Whitman's poetics idealizes. Neither Luke Mancuso's work on Whitman and Reconstruction nor Martin Klammer study on Whitman, the 1855 edition of *Leaves*, and slavery so much as mention Clark's counter-monumental, counter-centennial reading.<sup>65</sup> Her absence may no doubt be attributed to their mentor at Iowa, Ed Folsom (also referring to Clark as "he") who responded to Clark's assertion that the only work Whitman could find for indigenous peoples was "the bequeathal of his past to the conquerors of his land," by first conceding "some truth to [her] portrayal" before dismissing it as a "simplistic analysis of a highly complex mesh of attitudes."<sup>66</sup> To Clark's provocative, if compelling, suggestion that "Whitman might be construed as advocating genocide," Folsom weakly notes that "Whitman did not exclude the Indian from the catalog of his writing," as if mere inclusion in a dehistoricizing

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affirming human equality" (emphasis mine). Deanna Isaacs, "Was Walt Whitman Racist?," Chicago Reader, accessed August 12, 2018, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/northwestern-student-timothy-mcnair-whitman-racist/Content?oid=11206999>. Not only does Reynolds rely upon the unspoken presumption that "the era" *belongs* to Whitman, but that "our" Whitman isn't the formation of generations of scholarship that could afford to view race as incidental or extrinsic to Whitman's poetics.

<sup>65</sup> Luke Mancuso, *The Strange Sad War Revolving: Walt Whitman, Reconstruction, and the Emergence of Black Citizenship, 1865-1876*, Studies in English and American Literature, Linguistics, and Culture (Columbia, SC, USA: Camden House, 1997); Martin Klammer, *Whitman, Slavery, and the Emergence of Leaves of Grass* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

<sup>66</sup> Ed Folsom, *Walt Whitman's Native Representations* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 67.

tally of separate but equals mitigates a fervent, millennialist evangelical call for an American expansion both providential and inevitable. Even in cases when Whitman is explicitly framed with respect to blackness and black America, Clark's name is swiftly passed over in a footnote or simply erased.<sup>67</sup> In the 2014 collection *Whitman Noir: Black America and the Good Gray poet*, Ed Folsom's essay, ironically titled "Erasing Race: The Lost Black Presence in Whitman's Manuscripts", begins thus: "A spectral black presence haunts and energizes Walt Whitman's work."<sup>68</sup> As if the findings to be evaluated in his essay, and the volume at large, emerge from recent scholarship, Folsom ends his opening paragraph with the following:

*As we unearth more manuscripts, as we keep discovering more reported conversations, as more journalism comes to light, we become increasingly aware of the ghost black [sic] in Whitman's work, because we see more and more places where we can determine that African Americans were on his mind when he wrote, only to fail to be included. Whitman, it seems, systematically erased race from his published writings. (emphasis mine)<sup>69</sup>*

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<sup>67</sup> George B Hutchison's 1989 "Whitman and the Black Poet: Kelly Miller's Speech to the Walt Whitman Fellowship" entombs Clark's scholarship in a lengthy footnote as a study of Whitman's "alleged racism." *American Literature* 61, no. 1 (March, 1989): 53. In an all too rare counterpoint, Ken Peeples, Jr. 1974 "The Paradox of the Good Gray Poet" both acknowledges and engages with Clark's work. Not incidentally, that essay appeared in the pages of *Phylon*, published by the HBOC Clark Atlanta University. *Phylon* (1960-) 35, no. 1 (1974): 22-32.

<sup>68</sup> Ed Folsom, "Erasing Race: The Lost Black Presence in Whitman's Manuscripts," in *Whitman Noir: Black America and the Good Grey Poet*, ed. Ivy Wilson (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 3.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

The representative logic of millennial, which is to say theological, whiteness that structures Whitman's catalogs and their erasure of race and ethnicity as differential formations of exclusion has been endlessly reproduced and reprised, only to reappear in the erasure of Clark's duly (un)recorded findings. By reintroducing her insights of Whitmanian democracy as the idealization and ensoulment of Jacksonian democracy, I hope that we can, at last, unsettle the mythologized origins of 1855 in our critical discourse and our pedagogy. The point is not simply to contest and displace the centrality of Whitman to American literary history (for as Simpson wrote, this we must do), but to consider the degree to which endlessly re-centering and reconstructing Whitman itself reenacts the collapse of Reconstruction.<sup>70</sup> When each of these arrangements (The Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, the "Marshall Trilogy," the Compromise of 1877) is considered in their "identity-facilitating characteristics, [their] judgment constituting features, and [their] global deployments of embodied visions of the true, the good, and the beautiful," what we encounter is the redaction of indigenous peoples, black bodies, and black labor for the sake of

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<sup>70</sup> In the beginning of his essay, Simpson quickly passes over the Clark's "strongly *negative* account of Whitman" (emphasis mine), only to then reproduce her fundamental thesis that "the enormity of what is excluded from Whitman's representation of an exemplary [Anglo-Saxon, in Clark's terms] America is quite staggering" (177, 184). Again, what remains staggering is the degree to which Clark has been redacted from Whitman scholarship, so that our curiously intractable American adherence to Whitman may be reconstructed as if for the first time. In one final example, I would note that Clark also figures as a spectral absence that haunts *Walt Whitman: The Critical Heritage*, ed. Milton Hindus (New York: Routledge, 1997 [1971]).

securing and asserting in union and unison the sanctified dispensation of rights monumentalized and grounded in white property and the propriety of whiteness.<sup>71</sup> If we are to have done with “creat[ing] anew a false god constructed along the lines laid down by Whitman,” then we should speak of Whitman in an un-American idiom; we should cease to be his “sorrowful terrible heirs” and exorcise the Jacksonian soul of his spiritual democracy:

Has that hidden heart, in whose fire constitutions of paper and symbols of power are as chaff, stopped its mighty pulsation? Has that spirit infused into the uprising masses, ceased to pervade, feed, invigorate, and energize the anatomy of government? NO! There is a moral sense—a soul in the state, which longs for something more than tariffs, the bank and the bankrupt bills of a temporizing present; which looks for some celestial beacon to direct the course of popular movement through the eternal future! If it be an infirmity to love to minister to the aspirations of the invisible soul of the state, it has been the infirmity of earth’s noblest minds.<sup>72</sup>

In 1876, Whitman would issue his Centennial edition of *Leaves of Grass*, notable, in one respect, for its redaction of “Lucifer.” In 1876, Herman Melville would publish his Counter-Centennial, occasional poem *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage*, wherein the patient and tenacious reader, of which there were very few, would encounter the following jeremiad:

“As cruel as a Turk: Whence came  
That proverb old as the crusades?  
From Anglo-Saxons. What are they?  
Let the horse answer, and blockades  
of medicine in civil fray!  
The Anglo-Saxons—lacking grace

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<sup>71</sup> *The Christian Imagination*, 290.

<sup>72</sup> Clark, 158.; J. Sullivan Cox, “Imaginary Commonwealths.” *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* (September, 1846), 184.

To win the love of any race;  
Hated by myriads dispossessed  
Of rights—the Indians East and West.  
These pirates of the sphere! grave looters—  
Grave, canting, Mammonite freebooters,  
Who in the name of Christ and Trade  
(Oh, bucklered forehead of the brass!)  
Deflower the world's last sylvan glade!" (4.9.112-125)<sup>73</sup>

Here then, unfolds the trajectory of my project and its counter-monumental (re)periodization. If the monumentalizing millennial myth of 1855's lawless gait (free verse) has symbolically entrained the futurity of American poetry *for* posterity, then the counter-monumental, iambic tetrameter of *Clarel* harbors a renunciation of Whitman's Anglo-Saxon geniality, refusing inheritance and birthright for the eventuality of an antiphonal reading of dissensus. It is a melancholic, (un)American allegory "eminently unadapted for popularity," as Melville, somewhat ruefully, described *Clarel* in a cryptic remark whose meaning, ever since its composition, has been misread as self-evident. Ever since its publication, readers have been alienated and abraded by the considerable labor and time required to negotiate its halting, hypotactic, highly enjambed octosyllabics in cramped and cramping iambic tetrameter. So many of *Clarel's* interlocutors have generically monumentalized the poem as exemplifying the Victorian-era crisis-of-faith literature, wherein doubt's proliferation originates from the racialized implications of Darwinian evolution. Those who have taken to

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<sup>73</sup> Herman Melville, *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, The Northwestern-Newberry ed., vol. 12, *The Writings of Herman Melville* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 413.

recuperating the doubts prompted by such a framing have found in its concluding passages a certain religious syncretism or multicultural pluralism.<sup>74</sup> By continuing to misidentify Melville's heterodox text as a species of orthodox doubt, critics have continued to decenter and displace the poem's most powerful indictments of theological whiteness.<sup>75</sup> For the threat posed to those whose historical vision coincided with the tenets of millennialism was of an entirely different order than the authorization of ethnological genocide that that discourse, in its Social Darwinist extensions, would then systematically rationalize.<sup>76</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>74</sup> See William Potter, *Melville's Clarel and the Intersympathy of Creeds* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2004); Laura López Peña, *Beyond the Walls: Being with Each Other in Herman Melville's Clarel* (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 2015).

<sup>75</sup> In a recent and emblematic example, Jonathan A. Cook and Brian Yother's 2017 collection on Melville and religion begins with a valuable and productive focus: "an often neglected subject in contemporary critical approaches to the writings of Herman Melville, namely, the pervasive influence of religion on his fiction and poetry" (3). Yet, their synoptic reading of *Clarel* as an Arnoldian expression of "melancholy mood at the modern retreat of Christian faith" both reprises the staid and tiresome temporality of millennial Christianity, while also misreading entirely the emancipatory possibilities harbored within that melancholy (9). Jonathan A. Cook and Brian Yothers, *Visionary of the Word: Melville and Religion* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

<sup>76</sup> Whitman was among the innumerable enthusiasts of the ethnological, "scientific" racism that sprung up in Darwin's wake. "Of the black question," Whitman surmised, "After the tender appeals of the sentimentalist, the eloquence of freedom's hottest orators, and the logic of the politico-economist, comes something else to the settlement of this question—comes Ethnological Science, cold, remorseless, not heeding at all the vehement abstractions of equality and fraternity, or any of the formulas thereof—uninfluenced by Acts of Congress, or Constitutional Amendments—by noiselessly rolling on like the globe in its orbit, like the summer's heat or winter's cold, and settling these things by evolution, by natural selection by

Melville's sense of "popularity" has been anachronistically eclipsed by our contemporary usage, one that takes popularity as a measure of admiration or endorsement. We find harbored within popularity's older, now obsolete currency—democracy, or the principle of democratic government—the counter-monumental occasioning of a Counter-Centennial—that is, a critique, which because unsettled and dispossessed by (Jacksonian) democracy, can only appear as anachronism, as a temporality melancholically out of step with the Centennial's commemorative renewal of millennial whiteness in meters more amenable to resounding public declamation. This third chapter, then, formulates a response to a question recently posed by Robert Levine: "what would happen to a discussion of Melville and Americanness if we put his poetry, or the later career, at the center of our analysis?"<sup>77</sup>

Between the mythopoetic annunciation of eternity and the confabulation of an orphic necropolis of buried timelines, one of which has yet to cease, the others yet to begin, I take up three allegorical emplotments of occasional textuality. Both the typologized convocations and tactical conventions of the versified journalism archived in Frank Moore's *Rebellion Record* anthologies and Emily V. Mason's Lost Cause collection *Southern Poems of the War*, which I

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certain races notwithstanding all the frantic pages of the sentimentalists helplessly disappearing by the slow, sure progress of laws, through sufficient periods of time." Qtd. in David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 72.

<sup>77</sup> Robert S. Levine, "Melville and Americanness: A Problem," *Leviathan* 16, no. 3 (December 3, 2014): 16.

explore in my first chapter, and the reconciliation and redemption of millennial whiteness typified in Whitman's *Drum-Taps and Sequel to Drum-Taps*, through which my second chapter works, sing the white body electric. That both Union and Confederate poets would emplot themselves as disputants in a contestation over providential bequeathment belies the internecine animosity of conflicted sectionality. These poems blend and circulate, advance and double back, cross and re-cross enemy lines, echo and report. The typological ascriptions of millennial whiteness that permit such fugitive circulations finds, perhaps, its most enduring expression in the long, too long, American career of "Dixie." Composed by Ohioan Dan Emmet, a white minstrel of Irish descent, "I Wish I was in Dixie Land," ventriloquizes an—refugee? fugitive? free?—uninhabited and uninhabitable blackface speaker whose very being enunciates homesickness from the nowhere of a diasporized past truncated into an American palimpsest. In the circulation of that for which there is no place, "Dixie" would be beloved by Northerners (including Lincoln) and Southerners alike. Perversely, the geniality of the song and its innumerable iterations leverages the same racialized modes of authenticity (white testimony) relied upon by northern readerships in order grant passage and venue to the slave narratives promoted and circulated by abolitionists.

We encounter this rhetorical convocation in Whitman who could never bring himself to change his "triumphant songs," to imagine belonging as hospitality—that is as consciousness grounded in and *beginning from* the open-

ended lodgment and emplotment of the other within the body politic. If idealized, such hospitality could, at the least, re-direct whiteness toward the ethical obligations of guesthood-in-perpetuity. While Whitman could play host to the slave or the “red squaw,” he could never find it *in himself* to let them stay. Whereas John Carlos Rowe argues that what “Whitman risked in *Drum-Taps* was a poetic voice that could not *incorporate war* . . . a voice that despaired of transforming human pain into poetic meaning,” I would, to the contrary, argue that *Drum-Taps* despaired of incorporating black emancipation into poetic transformation. Quite simply, the proposition that millennial futurity—symbolically repositing in the powdered corpse of Lincoln, blackened en route to its final resting place—might be sacrificed for the sake of emancipation’s transformative eventuality was, in the strongest sense of the term, a doctrinal heresy that went by the name Reconstruction:

#### **CALHOUN'S REAL MONUMENT.**

In one of the hospital tents for special cases, as I sat to-day tending a new amputation, I heard a couple of neighboring soldiers talking to each other from their cots. One down with fever, but improving, had come up belated from Charleston not long before. The other was what we now call an “old veteran,” (*i.e.*, he was a Connecticut youth, probably of less than the age of twenty-five years, the four last of which he had spent in active service in the war in all parts of the country.) The two were chatting of one thing and another. The fever soldier spoke of John C. Calhoun's monument, which he had seen, and was describing it. The veteran said: “I have seen Calhoun's monument. That you saw is not the real monument. But I have seen it. It is the desolated, ruined south; nearly the whole generation of young men between seventeen and thirty destroyed or maim'd; all the old families used up—the rich impoverish'd, the plantations cover'd with weeds, the slaves unloos'd and become the masters, and the name of southerner

blacken'd with every shame—all that is Calhoun's real monument."<sup>78</sup>

Here is where we run aground of a dispute over nomenclature. The investment in viewing the years 1861-1865 as the Abolition War, and not the Civil War, requires we not only acknowledge emancipation as *revolutionary* (as did the Connecticut youth, as did the Articles of Secession), but that Juneteenth antiquates our hallowed Fourth of July, that it displaces white martyrdom for the liberatory potential of *freedmen*, which as a term, reintroduces temporality into the metaphysical abstraction of freedom. More precisely, my invocation of the term Abolition War seeks to recuperate and rehabilitate material history of emancipation during the conflict by reappropriating that phrase as explained by Frederick Douglass in “The Mission of the War”, a speech delivered before an audience of the Women’s Loyal League assembled at the Cooper Institute in New York. While acknowledging the widespread calumny and pejoration with which white Northerners and Southerners disparaged the cause, Douglass nonetheless drew a radically different conclusion, cautioning that “it is instructive to observe how this charge is brought and how it is met.”<sup>79</sup>

Why is this war fiercely denounced as an Abolition War? Both warn us of danger. Why is this fiercely denounced as an Abolition War? I answer, because the nation has long bitterly hated Abolition

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<sup>78</sup> *Specimen Days*. in *Complete Prose Works* (Philadelphia: David McKay, 1892), 76. When this passage first appeared in *Memoranda During the War*, it was dated May 12, 1865, eight days after Lincoln’s burial. I will return to this passage in my second chapter.

<sup>79</sup> Frederick Douglass, “The Mission of the War,” *New York Tribune* (January 13, 1864).

and the enemies of the war confidently rely upon this hatred to serve the end. . . .An Abolition War! Well, let us thank democracy for teaching us this word. The charge in a *comprehensive sense is most true, and it is a pity that it is true, but it would be a vast pity if it were not true. Would that it were more true than it is.* . . . Had slavery been abolished in the Border States at the very beginning of the war, as it ought to have been—had it been abolished in Missouri, as it would have been but for Presidential interference there would now be no rebellion in the Southern States, for, instead of having to watch these Border States, as they have done, our armies would have marched in overpowering numbers directly upon the rebels and overwhelmed them. I now hold that a sacred regard for truth, as well as sound policy, makes it our duty to own and avow before heaven and earth that this war is, and of right ought to be, an Abolition War.<sup>80</sup>

In an era when the removal of Confederate monuments occasions much agonized hand-wringing and pearl clutching by public officials, when a retired Marine Corps General and Chief of Staff to the presidency explains the cause of the war as “a failure to compromise,” when less than ten percent of high school seniors “can identify slavery as the central cause of the Civil War,” then perhaps we need tarry no more with the familial white tragedy of brother turned against brother, of a house divided when the house was built by brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, husbands, and wives separated and sold to finance the addition of newer and more spacious additions to that house. When the critical consensus elects Walt Whitman as the preeminent poet of the war, despite *Drum-Taps* erasure of slavery and the enlistment of nearly 200,000 freedmen in the Confederacy’s defeat, then

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

perhaps the time has arrived to re-cite the “Abolition of War” through the truth of Douglass’ antinomian appropriation.<sup>81</sup>

That *Drum-Taps* “does not,” as Leadie Clark has argued, “change the tenor of *Leaves* significantly” can be explained, however, by a crucial difference between the newspaper poetics of *Southern Poems*, the *Rebellion Record* and Melville’s *Battle-Pieces*, which my second chapter places in conversation with Whitman.<sup>82</sup> While *Southern Poems*, the *Rebellion Record* and *Battle-Pieces* make extensive use of paratextual framing, itself a highly conventionalized device, Whitman’s totalitarian poetics abhor the very notion. What these paratextual devices signal, then, is the remediation of temporal disruption or distancing, an attributive function that seeks to secure and defend an authorial point of origin. Yet, paradoxically, Whitman’s evocation of self-presence—the tyrannous

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<sup>81</sup> Because this dissertation reads the poetics of the Abolition War in the context of the United States’ contemporaneous military engagements in the ongoing “Indian Wars” of the nineteenth century, it is important to keep in mind other continuities extending across the Mason-Dixon. For example, there has been much recent discussion of the intimate involvement of the Ku Klux Klan in sculpting the monumental likenesses of Jefferson Davis, Thomas J. Jackson, and Robert E. Lee into the side of Stone Mountain, Georgia, which officially opened on the centennial of Abraham Lincoln’s assassination. Notably absent from those discussions is the fact that Stone Mountain’s first commissioned artist, the Klan member Gutzon Borglum, later designed and directed the creation of Mount Rushmore, itself located on land granted in perpetuity to the Lakota Tribe by the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie. Eight years later, in 1876, the United States would take back possession of the Black Hills after the Sioux War of 1876. See Matthew Glass, “Producing Patriotic Inspiration at Mount Rushmore,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 62, no. 2 (1994): 265–83. Borglum himself would triumphantly envision the monumental defacement by declaring that “American history shall march along that skyline” (267).

<sup>82</sup> Clark, 135.

impressment of a voice to be received and vouchsafed in the reading of the physical text—aspires to nothing less than a transcendent, exegetical fundamentalism whose revelation is *the* reading of readings. Finally, in my coda, I imbricate and entangle myself in Howe’s materialization of allegory, “Melville’s Marginalia.” Whereas the illimitable catalogue and expansive lineation of Whitman’s poetics—the spatialization of temporality which reifies the symbolic—experiences the material surface and dimensions of the page as constraint, producing that effect of “sequence without sedimentation,” Howe’s poetics experiences that surface and dimension as emancipatory, thereby temporalizing and unsettling the propriety of enclosure through the thick overlays, obscurities, and illegibilities of a multiply-emplotted stratigraphy. Confronted with a multiplying multiplicity of axes, Howe’s poetics embed her readers within a sedimentation without sequence. One begins within a reading, only to then retrieve yet another reading, and another, no one of which can be said to come prior to or after any other. Each reconstructs and is reconstructed by her reader to readers, producing in exponential fashion a reading of readings, and yet again a reading of readings of readings. It is in this light that we thus recognize, in ourselves, the error of Dimock’s allegorical temporality as time spatialized, “abstracted, reified, contained.” Contrary to her conditional proposition—“if time is ‘constitutive’ of allegory”—allegory, freed from the totalitarian symbol as a given, permits, requires, *oblige the reconstitution of time within ourselves*. This is the work of occasion. This is the occasioning of poesis. What Agamben has

claimed for enjambment, for the etymologically plumbed verse (*versus*, the turning of the plough) that turns only to return, produces a poetics of georgic cultivation, a poetics of settlement. Howe's materialization of allegory can only begin at the point of no return, only once the postlapsarian has at last been elapsed. Thereby, we move from pilgrimage, piously making the hallowed rounds, to the poem with neither beginning nor end. In this light, Howe's poetics asks only that her readers remake the matter of record.

## Chapter One

“But better are they in a hero grave / Than the serfs of time and breath”: Versified Journalism of the Abolition War<sup>1</sup>

“Fellow Citizens: I am very greatly rejoiced to find that an occasion has occurred so pleasurable that the people cannot restrain themselves. [Cheers.] I suppose that arrangements are being made for some sort of formal demonstration, this, or perhaps, to-morrow night. [Cries of ‘We can’t wait,’ ‘We want it now,’ &c.] If there should be such a demonstration, I, of course, will be called upon to respond, and I shall have nothing to say if you dribble it all out of me before. [Laughter and applause.] I see you have a band of music with you. [Voices, ‘We have two or three.’] I propose closing up this interview by the band performing a particular tune which I will name. Before this is done, however, I wish to mention one or little two circumstances connected with it. I have always thought ‘Dixie’ one of the best tunes I have ever heard. Our adversaries over the way attempted to appropriate it, but I insisted yesterday that we fairly captured it. [Applause.] I presented the question to the Attorney General, and he gave it as his legal opinion that it is our lawful prize. [Laughter and applause.] I now request the band to favor me with its

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Randall’s “The Battle-Cry of the South,” from which these lines are taken begins with a paratextual enlistment of scriptural typology: “[‘Arm yourselves and be valiant men, and see that ye be in readiness against the morning, that ye may fight with these nations that are assembled against us, to destroy us and our sanctuary. For it is better for us to die in battle than to behold the calamities of our people and our sanctuary.’ —Maccabees I.]” in Emily V. Mason, ed., *The Southern Poems of the War*, 2nd Edition (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1868), 85. While I will return to the work of Randall later in this chapter, I would for now make some brief observations. Randall’s exhortation to “Brothers!” “win[ning] a martyr’s goal” against “the vampires of the North” provides incontrovertible evidence to the speculation, archly expressed by one of Homer Plessy’s lawyers, Albion Tourgée, that “Probably most white persons if given a choice, would prefer death to life in the United States *as colored persons*” (emphasis original; qtd. in Harris, 1748).

performance.” (Abraham Lincoln, as reported in the *Washington Daily National Intelligencer*, April 11, 1865)<sup>2</sup>

When the Abolition War commenced with the Confederate shelling of Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861 the pre-war ascension of millennial temporality did not disappear; rather, it emerged as the occasioning of a rancorous and agonistic exegetical dispute over a patrimony both revolutionary and scriptural. Throughout the pages of Unionist and Confederate versified journalism newspaper poets would vigorously assert filiopietal claim to the typologized inheritance of the American Revolution and that war’s millennial portent. Both sides, “read[ing] the same Bible, pray[ing] to the same God” as Lincoln reflected in his second Inaugural address, would mobilize millennialism’s providential futurity in order that the disruptions, upheavals, and fragmentations of battle time might be collated and convocated, remediated and retrenched, sanctified and sacralized. If the sheer scale of increasingly mechanized carnage reported from battlefields and hospital wards may be said to have occasioned a “representational crisis,” as Timothy Sweet has claimed, the following chapter argues that the racialized poetics of an immutable, ever-redemptive millennialism served to contain that crisis of political representation, rendering manifest the conflict’s theological import and the terms of its reconciliation. Thus, *pace* Sweet, the “critical question

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<sup>2</sup> Abraham Lincoln, “Response to Serenade,” *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, v. VIII, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 393.

[is not] whether physical violence could produce a legitimate ideological consensus where language had failed,” but how the language of millennialism’s ideological consensus legitimated physical violence.<sup>3</sup> The point is not merely to claim that millennialist conviction survived the war, but that the war’s resolution witnessed its vindication. While the tremendous and vital renewal of interest in Civil War poetics (and nineteenth-century poetics, in general) over the past two decades productively complicates and enriches the foundational, if dismissive, accounts of Edmund Wilson’s 1962 *Patriotic Gore* and Daniel Aaron’s 1973 *The Unwritten War*, this critical work has been too eager to project a secular, and thus profoundly anachronistic, accounting of what was overwhelmingly experienced and prosecuted as a Holy War.<sup>4</sup> By surreptitiously disavowing the millennial

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<sup>3</sup> Timothy Sweet, *Traces of War: Poetry, Photography, and the Crisis of the Union* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 1. Such a conclusion may be evidenced in the denominational schisms that erupted over the question of slavery during the Second Great Awakening.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson’s fundamental dismissal of Abolition War verse pivots around its inauthenticity: “During the years of the Civil War, this more authentic kind of poetry [E.A. Poe, Stephen Foster] scarcely leaks through at all. It is a striking phenomenon of the period that the *declamatory versification of public events* should completely have rendered inaudible, should have driven into virtual hiding, the more personal kind of self-expression which had nothing to do with politics or battles, which was not concocted for any market and which, was likely to take on an unconventional form.” *Patriotic Gore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 487-88. According to Aaron, the era’s authors “failed to grasp what I took to be the essential character of a war that of all others has most deeply engaged the imagination.” *The Unwritten War: Writers and the Civil War* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1973) xiii. It should be noted that in 1987, some years prior to this resurgent interest, Mark L. Walston authored a brief survey emphasizing the conflict’s religiosity. “Voices of the Holy War: Occasional Verse of the American Civil War,” *Victorians Institute Journal* 15 (1987): 93-104. In contrast to the

theodicy of the era's discourse, and re-inscribing that discourse as "politics," literary critique attenuates, or rather negates, its emancipatory or tyrannical possibilities. Consider the furor aroused when, in June 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions cited from Romans 13 to justify the state-sanctioned incarceration of asylum-seeking migrants and the kidnapping and torture of their children. As many commentators noted, the passages cited conjure an iniquitous exegetical lineage justifying the institution of chattel slavery, perhaps most notoriously during the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. Yet, dishearteningly, the tack taken by Sessions' many interlocutors in editorials across the nation was to insistently frame his citation as a grotesque instance of misprision, of getting it

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comparative silence of literary scholars, historians and theologians have abundantly documented the fundamentally religious nature of the war. The following titles are but a small indication: Ben Wright and Zachary W. Dresser, eds., *Apocalypse and the Millennium in the American Civil War Era, Conflicting Worlds : New Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013); Sean A. Scott, *A Visitation of God: Northern Civilians Interpret the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Harry S. Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the American Civil War* (New York: Viking, 2006); Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898*, Updated edition, Louisiana paperback edition., *Conflicting Worlds : New Dimensions of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2015); Richard Carwardine, *Evangelicals and Politics in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); John R. McKivigan, *The War against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and the Northern Churches, 1830-1865* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984); David B. Cheesbrough, *"God Ordained This War": Sermons on the Sectional Crisis, 1830-1865* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); Robert J. Miller, *Both Prayed to the Same God: Religion and Faith in the American Civil War* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2007); Mark A. Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Steven E. Woodworth, *While God Is Marching on: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001).

wrong. As the title of a *New York Magazine* essay announced, “No, Jeff Sessions, Separating Kids From Their Parents Isn’t ‘Biblical.’” Moreover, not only was Sessions’ exegesis not ‘biblical,’ it was, according to evangelical historian John Fea, “un-American.”

Fea, the American history professor, said that after the Civil War, historians don’t see many references to Romans 13 because the *essence* of the passage — submission to authority — is regarded as un-American. “*America was built and born on rebellion and a sort of radical resistance to authority,*” Fea said. “Whenever Romans 13 was used in the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> century — and Sessions seems to be doing the same thing, *so in this sense there is some continuity* — it’s a way of manipulating the scriptures to justify your own political agenda. (emphasis mine)<sup>5</sup>

To respond with disbelief or outrage that “*in 2018*” the United States again finds itself recapitulating mid-nineteenth-century debates over legal authority, scriptural authority, and racialized citizenship itself obscures the institutional role white Christianity has played and continues to play in perpetuating the conviction that the United States was *built* on “rebellion” and a “sort of radical resistance to authority,” rather than the relentless, genocidal imposition of authority on indigenous tribes, the brutal extraction of black labor, and the suppression of indigenous and black movements of insurrection. Suppression, in this instance, registers both a monumentalizing, civic enterprise of commemorative pedagogy dedicated to the systematic redaction of non-white rebellion from the matter of

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<sup>5</sup> “Jeff Sessions Cites Romans 13, a Bible Passage Used to Defend Slavery, in Defense of Family Separations - The Washington Post,” accessed August 2, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/06/14/jeff-sessions-points-to-the-bible-in-defense-of-separating-immigrant-families/?utm\\_term=.b02d6920eba9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/06/14/jeff-sessions-points-to-the-bible-in-defense-of-separating-immigrant-families/?utm_term=.b02d6920eba9).

record, as well as ongoing deployments of state violence, surveillance, and incarceration targeting communities of color.

In these contested invocations of scriptural authority, perhaps *especially* in such cases as Sessions' Epistle to the Illegals wherein "lawful" authority is lawfully cited, we risk retracing unawares the evangelical borders drawn by millennialist discourses of submission and liberation in the mid-nineteenth-century United States. Though Session's critics righteously condemned his citation of a passage favored by proponents of slavery, the unspoken implication that abolitionists 'got it (the Bible) right' leaves unexamined the degree to which that movement's missionary impulses and millennialist, redeemer rhetoric enthusiastically reconstituted the civilizing lawfulness of religious conversion and acculturation into the conceptual basis for legalistic fictions of citizenship, namely an individuation embedded within and corresponding to relations of private property. Many a prominent abolitionist, including figures such as Lydia Maria Child, John Greenleaf Whittier, and Frederick Douglass, had denounced, to one degree or another, the perfidious impunity with which the United States had violated treaty after treaty in the course of increasingly expansive territorial acquisitions. Nonetheless, by viewing indigenous peoples through an analogical relation to enslaved black "Americans" and arguing that the "Indian question is not any more difficult [or different] than the Slavery question," as did an 1869 editorial in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, abolitionists foreclosed any

possibility of reversing or preventing the very dynamics they railed against.<sup>6</sup> My paraphrase here of Kerber's thesis is inexact, though not insignificantly so, insofar as this "final simplification" not only did not prevent their efforts "from having real practical effect on the fate of the American Indian" but that the practical effects of their analogical relation continue to this day. With his 1886 "On the Big Horn" Whittier would commemorate the occasion of Chief Rain-in-the-Face, a veteran of the titular battle, entering the American Missionary Association's Hampton Institute for freedmen with "[h]is war-paint [. . .] washed away." As if to redeem the coercive desperation that, as recounted in *The Southern Workmen*, brought this Lakota elder to, "*put himself* in the position of a boy and a student [emphasis mine]," Whittier concludes his ballad with a rapturous vision of the future, one which crucially falsifies the order by which land was expropriated and the rights of white men dispensed in the redemptive translation of a blood-soaked, fallen pastoral into a bountiful, pious georgic.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Ute and the Wandering Crow

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<sup>6</sup> Qtd. in Linda K. Kerber, "The Abolitionist Perception of the Indian," *The Journal of American History* 62, no. 2 (1975): 271.

<sup>7</sup> Manu Vimalassery identifies just such an inversion in her reading of Justice Marshall's opinion in *Worcester v. Georgia*. According Vimalassery, the elaboration of 'sovereignty' found in the Marshall Trilogy is more aptly described as an argument of 'counter-sovereignty' articulated against the priority of indigenous claims. Thus, Marshall's "moral claims of dominion" are built upon an inversion of territorial dispossession. "When, in fact," Marshall opines, "they are ceding lands to the United States . . . it may very well be supposed that they might not have understood the term employed as indicating that, instead of granting, they were receiving lands." Qtd. in Manu Vimalassery, "Counter-Sovereignty," *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 145.

Shall know as the white men know,  
And fare as the white man fare;  
The pale and the red shall be brothers,  
One's rights shall be as another's,  
Home, School, and House of Prayer!

O mountains that climb to snow,  
O river winding below,  
Through meadows by war once trod,  
O wild, waste lands that await  
The harvest exceeding great,  
Break forth into praise of God!<sup>8</sup>

Frederick Douglass, however sympathetic to the territorial displacements effected by westward expansion, remained markedly less sanguine than Whittier with respect to the forced conversion campaign that Richard Henry Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, would infamously schematize as "kill the Indian . . . and save the man." More than a decade before the Abolition War, Douglass would evince his providential "acceptance of the popular opinion of [Native American] extinction," an opinion with which he begins an 1849 essay in *The North Star*, "The Destiny of Colored Americans."<sup>9</sup> Yet, as Russ Castronovo

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<sup>8</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier, "On the Bighorn," *The Atlantic*, April 1887, 433–34.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Sundstrom, *The Browning of America and the Evasion of Social Justice* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008), 31. Douglass' speech opens thusly, "It is impossible to settle, by the light of the present, and by the experience of the past, any thing, definitely and absolutely, as to the future condition of the colored people of this country; but, so far as present indications determine, it is clear that this land must continue to be the home of the colored man *so long as it remains the abode of civilization and religion* [emphasis mine]. . . . The persecuted red man of the forest, the original owner of the soil, has, step, by step, retreated from the Atlantic lakes and rivers; escaping, as it were, before the footsteps of the white man, and gradually disappearing from the face of the country. . . . He spurns the civilization – he hates the race which has despoiled him, and unable to measure arms with his superior foe, he

and Dana Nelson have contended, Douglass did not so much passively accept this popular opinion as strategically deploy it for his own purposes. Though their parting claim that “Douglass throughout his career was willing to render up ‘savage Indians’ in contrast to the civility of African Americans” is unaccompanied by citation, such passages are readily in evidence.<sup>10</sup> In a March 1853 letter to Harriet Beecher Stowe Douglass confides, “This black man—*unlike* the Indian [original emphasis]—loves civilization. He does not make very great progress in civilization himself but he likes to be in the midst of it, and prefers to share its most galling evils, to encountering barbarism. . . . The truth is, dear madam, we are *here* [original emphasis], and here are likely to remain. *Individuals emigrate—nations never* [emphasis added].”<sup>11</sup> However far afield these observations may seem from question of versified journalism, they should, at the very least, render legible the degree to which providential millennialism not only structures abolitionist rhetoric of the era, but also continues to inform and shape that rhetoric’s critical reception in our contemporary moment. By withholding recognition of sovereign *nations* in order to extend the dominion of

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dies” (148). Frederick Douglass, *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip Sheldon Foner, 1st ed., Library of Black America (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999). See also, “The United States Cannot Remain Half-Slave and Half-Free [April 16, 1883]” (656).

<sup>10</sup> Russ Castronovo and Dana Nelson, “Fahrenheit 1861: Cross Patriotism in Melville and Douglass,” in *Frederick Douglass & Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*, ed. Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 347. See also, “The Future of the Negro People of the Slave States [February 5, 1862]” (474) and “The War and How to End It [March 25, 1862]” (486) in *Frederick Douglass* (1999).

<sup>11</sup> *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, 217.

U.S. law, the acculturative interpellation of citizenship was offered more at less at the point of a gun. Kerber summarizes the dilemma thusly,

The Indian [according to Lydia Maria Child] should be treated with the respect due to his individuality, his humanity. But not, it should be emphasized, the respect due to his culture. Either the Indian was a member of a caste or he was an individual among citizens. There was no room in the abolitionist' perception for the recognition of tribal identity, no angle from which tribal identity might be seen as a value to be preserved. (288)

These aspects of abolitionism are notably absent, perhaps necessarily so, in Faith Barrett's 2012 *To Fight Aloud is Very Brave*, the first book-length study of Civil War poetics. Along with a number of other wide-ranging volumes that have begun to persuasively unsettle that long-standing disciplinary marginalization of poetics in American Literature pondered by Joseph Harrington in 1996, *To Fight Aloud* compellingly locates verse as "the central literary site for [exploring] the changing relationship between the self and nation" during the war.<sup>12</sup> As the previous footnote indicates, "[p]oetry was everywhere" in the

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<sup>12</sup> *To Fight Aloud is Very Brave: American Poetry and the Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 3; Joseph Harrington, "Why American Poetry Is Not American Literature." *American Literary History* 8, no. 3 (Autumn, 1996): 496-515; Recent revaluations of nineteenth-century American poetics include: Elizabeth Renker, *Realist Poetics in American Culture, 1866-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Paula Bennett, *Poets in the Public Sphere: The Emancipatory Project of American Women's Poetry, 1800-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Eliza Richards, *Gender and the Poetics of Reception in Poe's Circle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Mary Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon: Reading Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) Angela Sorby, *Schoolroom Poets: Childhood, Performance, and the Place of American Poetry, 1865-1917* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005); Joan Shelley Rubin, *Songs of*

nineteenth-century.<sup>13</sup> Yet, so too was millennialist fervor, a temporalization of American civil religion that bound the covenant of a future yet to come to the scriptural precedents of a past that never could have been otherwise.<sup>14</sup> As the temporality of American civil religion, millennialist conviction, much like Whitman's pioneers, claimed dominion everywhere at the price of eradication or conversion. Thus, when Barrett introduces the poetic landscape of the war, we repeatedly read of "politics," "political commitments," but with no sense of the millennial underpinnings of those commitments. Such is the case even in her consideration of the very specimen type of millennialist poetics, Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," which "exemplifies the sense of political purpose that guided many Americans poets as they attempted to define the relationship between the individual and the nation during the Civil War years."<sup>15</sup>

In her analysis of Howe's Battle Hymn (itself a transparent remediation of Wells'

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*Ourselves: The Uses of Poetry in America* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2007). Meredith L. McGill, *The Traffic in Poems: Nineteenth-Century Poetry and Transatlantic Exchange*; Michael C. Cohen, *The Social Lives of Poems in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). To this number, I would also add two crucial forerunners: Shira Wolosky, *Emily Dickinson: A Voice of War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), and Susan Howe, *My Emily Dickinson* (New York: New Direction Press, 2007 [1985])

<sup>13</sup> Mary Louise Kete, "The Reception of Nineteenth-Century American Poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Poetry*, ed. Kerry C. Larson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 17, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL9780521763691.003>. Kete, Mary Louise.

<sup>14</sup> For a pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary War era genealogy of millennialism and civil religion, see Nathan O. Hatch, "The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 31:3 (July 1974): 407-430.

<sup>15</sup> Barrett, 1.

battle time), Barrett places the poem in conversation with the African-American Spiritual “Let My People Go: A Song of the ‘Contrabands,’” “that rallying cry for militant Northern support of emancipation.”<sup>16</sup> While recognizing the spiritual’s shared typology with the “New England Puritan’s reading of the Old Testament, which emphasized God’s covenant with his chosen people,” Barrett’s reading of “Battle Hymn,” “which quickly surpassed those [select abolitionist] circles” of the spiritual’s limited influence, cannot acknowledge the millennial whiteness that authoritatively sanctifies its typological call for state violence. Even as she describes Howe’s enlistment of God to the Union cause, that enlistment is but the “solution to [a] problem” posed by the “[white] mouldering body” of “John Brown’s Body,” the corpse that haunts the Battle-Hymn.<sup>17</sup> Enabled by Howe’s elision of slavery, the promise of martyrdom is thus extended to Union soldiers, a “relatively low number [of whom] saw themselves as fighting to end slavery.”

The “prophetic authoritative voice” and perspective Howe invents in order to

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 25. When unpacking Wells’ “battle time,” we may juxtapose the entrainment, both ideological and kinetic, of Howe’s “Battle Hymn” (composed in November 1861) with a moment from Wells’ account of the Union forces’ tactical disarray at the First Battle of Big Run in July 1861, an engagement that quickly dispelled popular sentiment that the war would be won by year’s end. Wells writes, “In sum, McDowell’s three-pronged offensive was, in the words of William Tecumseh Sherman, ‘one of the best-planned . . . and one of the worst-fought.’ For success, the attack required precise coordination and tight temporal control. Multiple forces had to act as one to ensure success. But the temporal precision and dedication to order required for the success of such an attack were absent, and McDowell’s plan lay in shambles. Heintzelman’s middle prong had been essentially removed and forced to join Hunter’s forces. Hunter, in turn, engaged in a frontal offensive without the aid of a flanking force” (23).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 36.

“transcend the limits of Brown’s” is the deathless voice of white American millennialism, arrayed and armored, an annunciation of heavenly death. What should be abundantly, starkly clear, however, are the reasons why Howe’s millennialist anthem “is woven into the fabric of American culture, [is] still sung in churches and schools and on public occasion *where its rhetorical grandeur is called for*,” while “John Brown’s Body” lies mouldering in the grave (39, emphasis mine). There are, indeed, reasons why “Battle Hymn of the Republic” continues to be performed at state ceremonies by the marching bands and choirs of the United States Military. None of them are called for. At the end of her chapter on “Dixie,” “Let my People Go: A Song of the ‘Contrabands,’” and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” Barrett advances two highly suspect claims: first, that “Many Americans can recite [Howe’s] martial lyrics *from memory*” and second, that “many Americans *would quickly link* the patriotic ardor of the phrase ‘let us die to make men free’ to the nineteenth-century abolitionist movement” (emphasis mine).<sup>18</sup> Such rote, unaccountable memorization, instilled we know not

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 40. Despite Martin Luther King’s invocation of Howe’s lyrics in his final oration “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop”, delivered the evening before his assassination in Memphis, the performance history of Howe’s “Battle Hymn” records an increasingly attenuated connection the already attenuated cause of abolition, as with its detournment by mid-twentieth century, anti-communist fanatics. During the 1964 presidential campaign, for example, the song became a favorite of rightwing reactionary Barry Goldwater. John Stauffer and Benjamin Soskis recount the song’s use by a “A half-hour pro-Goldwater film” planned for broadcast a month before the election: “The film opened with a frenzied jazz tune blaring in the background and scenes of criminals resisting arrest, African Americans clamoring violently at civil rights protest, and debauched revelers (including a shot of a topless female

precisely from where or when, gives license to an ever-forward movement delivering the United States from the reparative obligations its ahistoric monumentalism contravenes: *The Real War Is Getting Into the Books*. That is, the reflexive ahistoricity of commemorative recollection suggested in Barrett's first claim has not merely contributed to the frustration of the second claim, which is unsurprising given that, as Barrett herself allows, Howe "all but elides the abolitionist commitments of the marching song [John Brown's Body]." <sup>19</sup> Whereas Barrett hears in "Battle Hymn" "the capacious flexibility of voice," I argue that Howe's verse, precisely because it echoes "John Brown's Body," *redoubles* the latter's own erasure of black insurrection by committing to memory, knowing by heart (recounted in the white heat of Howe's epiphanic narrative of composition) the martyred corporeality of millennial whiteness while consigning to oblivion the

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dancer, which ultimately led the network to ban the film). Then the 'Battle Hymn' took over, accompanied by images of the Statue of Liberty, the Declaration of Independence, and rolling hills and valleys, while an announcer intoned, 'Now there are two Americas. One is words like 'allegiance' and 'Republic.' . . . The other America—is no longer a dream but a nightmare'" (281). The song would later precede his nomination speech at the Republican nation convention, where Goldwater proclaimed with millennial furor, "Our people have followed false prophets. . . . We must and we shall return to proven ways . . . [and become] freedom's missionaries in a doubting world." Qtd. in John Stauffer and Benjamin Soskis, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic: A Biography of the Song That Marches On* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 282. The tune can also be heard by anyone within earshot or broadcast range of University of Georgia football games, at which the university's marching band plays an abbreviated version on the occasion of a score by the "Bulldogs."

<sup>19</sup> Faith Barrett, "Imitation and Resistance in Civil War Poetry and Song," in *A History of American Civil War Literature*, ed. Hutchinson, Coleman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 99.

black insurrectionists of Harper's Ferry: Shields "Emperor" Green, Lewis Sheridan Leary, Dangerfield Newby, John Anthony Copeland, Jr., and Osborn Anderson.

What knowledge do we seek by entering into evidence the poetic corpus preserved within the pages of Moore's *Rebellion Record* or southern collections like Emily V. Mason's *Southern Poems of the War*? To frame the issue from another perspective, what is it that the works cannot know, or refuse to know? Though Mason includes no texts other than those plucked from the poet's corner of southern newspapers, southern readers perceived, cynically so we might add, the need to anticipate and moderate how her anthology might be (mis)interpreted by Republican officials empowered to set the terms and conditions of reconciliation and reconstruction. In a notice of *Southern Poems* from the *Richmond Dispatch* (later reprinted in the *Alexandria Gazette* on December, 18 1866), an anonymous reviewer begins his appraisal by analogizing the Confederate sentiments gathered by Mason with "the song of Chevy Chase [that] stirred Sir Philip Sidney," "Jacobite relics sung by Scottish hearts," and "the power of Irish lyrics [...] over the hearts of dwellers in the Green Isle."<sup>20</sup> Yet, such an overt attempt at legitimating an ethno-cultural genealogy of extant, colonial rebellion against England carried some risk, particularly in the period of Radical Reconstruction. Despite explicitly linking the lost cause of the

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<sup>20</sup> "Review of Southern Poems of the War," *Alexandria Gazette*, December 18, 1866, 1.

Confederacy with nationalist movements past *and present*, the reviewer then seeks to dilute the virulent potency of white tears with deferential recourse to the inviolable sanctity of white femininity:

To be sure the lament or defiance poured forth in song from the indignant hearts of the defeated is often treated as a crime by the dominant race; and ballads have been, even in our own day, made the subject of indictments in Ireland. So we are not sure that the republication of the Poems of the South may not be regarded at Washington as one of the evidences of the ‘bad spirit’ which is said to prevail in this country [and in the beginning of this review]; and Miss Mason’s compilation may be quoted in Congress as one of the reasons for keeping us longer in the condition of outlaws. Behold! these women of the South strew flowers on the graves of their rebel dead! Flowers, too, *that will not wither*. (emphasis mine)

Would the reader persist to the bitter and embittering end, she would, however, encounter works like Mrs. G. A. Hall’s “Forget? Never!”, whose paratext reads “[In answer to the sentiment which has been expressed of late by many, ‘we should forget the past.’]” Crucially, memory functions in this poem to secure the domestic bonds of familial affection through a series of rhetorical questions: “Can the mother forget the child of her love[?] . . . Can the father forget his first-born son[?] . . . Can the sister forget the brother beloved[?]”<sup>21</sup> Of course, so long as the generational atrocities that denied slaves the birthright of a family remain submerged beneath “oblivion’s waves,” condemned to haunt the “terrible past / [that] Must ever be ours while life shall last,” the “oppression [...] felt in each Southern home” will continue to metaphorically appropriate the material conditions of chattel slavery for the theatrical currency of white tears. Consider

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<sup>21</sup> *Southern Poems of the War*, 473.

the current hysterics and reactionary jeremiads invoking the specters “white genocide,” “reverse racism,” and “immigrant invasions” and then reconsider how empathy is sighted and refracted through the prism of white tears: “I do not ask the wounded person *how* he feels, I myself become the wounded person.”<sup>22</sup>

In another register Moore’s *Rebellion Record* incited anxieties over its evidentiary potential to legitimate a Confederate polity through its own mediated transmissions of southern sentiment. Consider the following exchange in 1898, excerpted from the court transcript of one William Smith, indicted on charges of piracy and brought before “the district court of the United States in and for the eastern district of Pennsylvania, in the third circuit, of August sessions, in the year 1861.”<sup>23</sup>

**Mr. Harrison.** Before calling any witnesses we propose if your honors please to present as evidence in this case, because they are

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<sup>22</sup> The metaphorical appropriation of material histories of black enslavement that inform and solicit white empathy perpetuates, as Saidiya Hartman has argued, the very oppression such movements of empathy were understood by northern abolitionists to counteract. By “exploiting the vulnerability,” Hartman writes, “of the captive body as a vessel for the uses, thoughts, and feelings of others, the humanity extended to the slave inadvertently confirms the expectations and desires definitive of the relations of chattel slavery. . . . Can the witness of the spectacle of suffering affirm the materiality of black sentience only by feeling for himself? Does this not only exacerbate the idea that black sentience is inconceivable and unimaginable but, in the very ease of possessing the abased and enslaved body, ultimately elide an understanding and acknowledgment of the slave’s pain?” Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*, Race and American Culture (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>23</sup> *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.*, vol. 3, 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), 58.

matters of public notoriety and part of the history of the country, the Constitution, proclamations and laws and various proceedings of what is called the Southern Confederacy as contained in these volumes of a book published in the city of New York and entitled “Moore’s Rebellion Record.”

**Mr. Ashton.** For what purpose?

**Mr. Harrison.** To show that there was such a constitution and that there were laws, proclamations and proceedings as they purport to be. I do not present them as evidence of the authority of the southern Confederacy to make or issue such laws, proclamations and Constitution but simply as part of the *res gestae* of this case to go before the jury and before your honors so as to permit us to be heard in regard to them.

[...]

**Mr. Harrison.** I stated to your honors the day before yesterday that I had made every possible effort to obtain that evidence in an authentic shape, but owing to the extreme difficulty—indeed I may say the impossibility—of postal communication with the only source from which that information could be obtained we were compelled to resort to this as the only possible evidence of these matters within our reach.

**Judge Grier.** Do you gentlemen representing the government object?

[...]

**Mr. Ashton.** On two grounds; first, that there is no evidence that this book contains correct copies of these documents; second, that it is not pertinent to the issue because it would not excuse or justify the acts proved to have been done by the defendant.

[...]

**Mr. Kelley.** May it please your honors as I understand the offer now it is to put in a certain book called the Rebellion Record which from my recollection contains a large amount of poetry.

**Judge Cadwalader.** I do not understand the offer in that way, but it is to submit particular parts of the book.

**Mr. Wharton.** We propose to offer specific parts. The poetry we leave to the other side.

**Mr. Kelley.** We would rather go to a purer fountain even for that.

**Judge Grier.** I suppose it is proposed to give historical evidence of historical facts.

**Mr. Wharton.** That is it; and it happens to be found in a particular book. It may be damaged by intercourse with poetry; we do not know. We only offer what purports to be official documents, as official from such a source can be. We do not offer the book in mass but merely as containing a list of those public documents which we can best reach in this form—no better for being in the book perhaps no worse.<sup>24</sup>

In both the trial transcript and the *Richmond Dispatch* review, a palpable, epistemic confusion emerges with regard to the political status of desires harbored within the aestheticized domain of white sentimentality. Likewise, a July 1861 publication notice of the *Rebellion Record* in the *New Englander and Yale Review* attempts just such a disambiguation:

The time has been when it was a practicable thing to preserve a file of newspapers, and so to retain from week to week, and from month to month, a tolerably convenient record of the current events, and of contemporary documents for future reference. But the modern American newspaper is too fugacious, and spreads itself too widely, to be caught and preserved by any man who has much else to do. Nor will a scrapbook, to be filled with slips cut from the daily or weekly newspaper, *meet the want of those who would revise and remember what they read of the history of their own age.* Mr. Frank Moore's *Rebellion Record* is a publication on a new plan—combining to some extent the advantages of a weekly chronicle and of an annual register.... and thus far the execution of his new work is creditable to his judgment as well as his industry. The design is “to give, in a digested and systematic shape, a comprehensive history of this struggle; sifting fact from fiction and reason; and presenting the poetical and picturesque aspects, the notable and characteristic incidents, *separated from the graver and more important documents.*” Accordingly each weekly *number*, or monthly *part*, is given in three separately paged divisions, viz: “I.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 102-103.

A diary of Verified Facts; II. Poetry and Notable Incidents; III. Documents, Speeches, and Extended Narratives. The paging of each separate division is in fact three distinct yet mutually illustrative compilations in one publication. (emphasis mine)<sup>25</sup>

Between 1861 and 1868, Frank Moore, a northern journalist who had previously arranged a similarly designed compilation entitled *Diary of the American Revolution* (and would later publish the post-Reconstruction volume *Songs and Ballads of the Southern People*, 1861-65), edited the *Rebellion Record*'s twelve volumes for the New York publisher G.W. Putnam.<sup>26</sup> According to Alice Fahs, the *Rebellion Record* defused temporal anxieties (*The time has been*) by cultivating a readership contemporaneous with (or nearly so) the ongoing conflict that would desire to possess a valuable collectable of the war in a future time of peace.<sup>27</sup> A dual disposition: Managing Time and Time Managed. Such "Victorian optimism,"<sup>28</sup> however, relied on the fiction that the *Rebellion Record*, itself, floated above the rancorous fray of the representational networks it aspired to contain and reconcile. How, then, should we attempt to apprehend the

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<sup>25</sup> "Publication Notice of the Rebellion Record," *New Englander and Yale Review* 19, no. 75 (July 1861): 778-79.

<sup>26</sup> With the publication of volumes 7-12 (1864-1868), publication was transferred to the New York publishing firm Van Nostrand.

<sup>27</sup> "These beliefs in the importance of the war and its collectability bled into one another within Northern literary culture, as the consumption and display of appropriate "permanent" patriotic objects became a way of expressing deeply felt beliefs about the nation while simultaneously suggesting the central role of commercial print memory in maintaining and preserving that nationhood" (51.) Alice Fahs, *The Imagined Civil War: Popular Literature of the North and South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

reconstituted disruptions of circulation and distribution to which the *Rebellion Record* aspired? From the vantage of literary historiography, the question is fraught with issues of legitimacy (as distinct from authentication), particularly with respect to the fifty-one months elapsed between the first declarations of secession and Lee's surrender at Appomattox. In his 2012 study of Confederate literary nationalism, Coleman Hutchinson rehearses this anxiety when he notes, "If southern literary studies has neglected its Confederate cousin, then nineteenth-century American literary studies has disowned it outright."<sup>29</sup> "To write," Hutchinson later remarks, "about the Confederate nation is to risk being seen as endorsing its right to exist."<sup>30</sup> The expression of such a reservation seems, on its face, well founded and necessary.<sup>31</sup> In this formulation, however, the ways in which the historiographic othering of the Confederacy (and, by extension, the South) actively contributes to the displacement and deferral of questions regarding the "Civil War's" quasi-mystical function in retroactively vindicating the genocidal dispossession upon which Revolutionary hagiography is explicitly built.<sup>32</sup> In this light, Hutchinson's preemptive deflection of misidentification with

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<sup>29</sup> Coleman Hutchison, *Apples and Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America*, *The New Southern Studies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 1-2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>31</sup> As a corollary, one might well wonder, as this dissertation does, at the risks in writing an account of "American" literature which implicitly or explicitly endorses the United States' right to exist.

<sup>32</sup> While Jefferson had removed any mention of slavery from the Declaration of Independence, in order to mollify southern delegates, his final charge against the British crown remained without objection: "He has excited

Confederate sympathizers is instructive. When he ascribes the “deep conservatism” of Confederate literature to “a fiercely nationalistic milieu [that] resounds with racist and racialist rhetoric and makes the case again and again for an antidemocratic republic,” we may earnestly inquire the location of that locution “milieu.” Hutchinson, in effect, recapitulates the reservations expressed in our earlier courtroom exchange when Mr. Harrison, pressed to justify his introduction of the *Rebellion Record* in evidence, clarifies that his intention is not “to present them [these volumes] as evidence of the authority of the southern Confederacy to make or issue such laws, proclamations and Constitution.” We must ask with, then, “For what purpose” should we take up the task of archiving a literary Confederate nationalism *as distinct from those northern productions* found in the *Rebellion Record* when that very nationalism was enabled by the Federal policy

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domestic Insurrection amongst us, and has endeavoured to bring on the Inhabitants of our Frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages whose known Rule of Warfare, is an undistinguished Destruction, of all Ages, Sexes, and Conditions.” As John R. Wunder has argued, this last complaint can only be apprehended with considerable irony: “Accused of ‘insurrection’ against the United States before it existed, violations of the international laws of warfare, and prevention of Europeans from taking Native homelands on the ‘frontiers,’ North American indigenous peoples inhabiting the lands that became part of a new nation, the United States, have had and continue to have a unique relationship with the Declaration of Independence and other American founding documents, such as the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. The creators and users of these most important words are known as the ‘Ecunnaunuxulgee’ to the Creeks of Georgia, meaning those ‘people greedily grasping after the lands of red people.’” John R. Wunder, “Merciless Indian Savages and the Declaration of Independence: Native Americans Translate the Ecunnaunuxulgee Document,” *American Indian Law Review* 25, no. 1 (2001 2000): 66.

of Indian Removal undertaken in the Jacksonian Era. This chapter argues that such a project is, itself, a lost cause.

In light of ongoing, violently reactionary responses *nation-wide* to remove the imprimatur of Confederate monumentalism from the public spaces that those who live, work, and breath in the South encounter as a routinized and quotidian dimension of inhabiting built and “natural” environments (schools, hospitals, courthouses, theaters, parks, roadways, cities, mountains, valleys, tributaries “natural” and man-made, *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseam*), the question merits no cursory response given that, as Hutchinson notes “Confederate literature provides an urgent case study because it represents a literary nationalism that was not only internationally minded but also more durable than its state apparatus” (4). One might be forgiven for responding to this “urgent” question of internationalism and duration by simply recalling that, as citizens of the United States, we habitually exchange portraits of slaveholders for goods and services, those very slaveholders routinely and reverentially referred to by “serious” adults with the cultish mysticism of the “Founding Fathers” trope.<sup>33</sup> One might be forgiven for

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<sup>33</sup> Jill Lepore, *The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Lepore writes, “We cannot go back to the eighteenth century, and the Founding Fathers are not, in fact here with us today. They weren’t even called the Founding Fathers until Warren G. Harding coined that phrase in his keynote address at the Republican National Convention in 1916. Harding also invoked the Founding Fathers during his inauguration in 1921— ‘Standing in this presence, mindful of the solemnity of this occasion, feeling the emotions which no one may know until he senses the great weight of responsibility for himself, I must utter my belief in the divine inspiration of

responding to this “urgent” question of internationalism and duration by recalling the Compromise of 1877 that ended Reconstruction.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, Hutchinson’s study provides a serious rejoinder to the rhetoric of purification and contamination summoned in the *New Englander and Yale Review*’s distinction between the war’s “poetical and picturesque aspects” and “the graver and more important documents [of law].” As a case study, abstracted for the purpose of a critical intervention, the archival convocation of exceedingly repellent works for the purpose of proposing a Confederate literary nationalism affords a certain transgressive, if disavowed, scholarly pleasure.<sup>35</sup> Hutchinson implicitly gestures at this *frisson* in the closing moments of his rather fascinating reconstruction of

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the founding fathers’—in what is quite possibly the worst inaugural address ever written” (16).

<sup>34</sup> While the Compromise of 1877, which arranged for the electoral victory of Republican nominee Rutherford B. Hayes over Democrat Samuel B. Tilden, winner of the popular vote, did not altogether end Reconstruction, the restoration of “Home Rule” in the southern states and the removal of federal troops that had propped up Republican governments accelerated its demise.

<sup>35</sup> Hutchinson’s ‘transgressive’ reading goes so far as to suggest that the literary productions of the Confederacy constitute an oeuvre of “minor literature” discussed by Deleuze and Guattari. “Confederate writers like Timrod were trying desperately to connect their texts ‘to a political immediacy,’ namely the chaos of a war-torn world and the hopes of a new nationality. . . . This brings to mind Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s description of the composition of a ‘minor literature’—‘writing like a dog digging a hole, a rat digging its burrow’” (8). Yet, as Melville noted in the “Supplement” appended to *Battle-Pieces*, “the South herself is not wanting in recent histories and biographies which record the deeds of her chieftains—writings freely published at the North by loyal houses, widely read here, and with a deep though saddened interest. By students of the war such works are hailed as welcome accessories, and tending to the completeness of the record.” Herman Melville, *Published Poems: Battle-Pieces; John Marr; Timoleon*, ed. Robert Charles Ryan and Hershel Parker, vol. 11, *The Writings of Herman Melville*; (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 182.

“Dixie” when he suggests an yet uncharted direction for future research: “To understand this bewildering and bloody conflict as a war between sovereign nation-states—not as one between ‘brothers’—is to travel roads not taken in American literary historiography” (171).<sup>36</sup> In a footnote appended in this call to scholarly arms, Hutchinson suggests that to pursue such a course would also “resist that most persistent of Civil War metaphors, ‘the house divided’” (234). There is too much to unpack in this statement for the purposes of this chapter, particularly with respect to questions of sovereignty, a concept thinly sketched in Hutchinson’s study.<sup>37</sup> Nonetheless, we may remark that assertions of sovereignty found in the verse of Confederate partisans draws righteously and enthusiastically from the deep reserves of typological millennialism encountered in Julia Ward Howe, Whitman, and Unionist verse of the *Rebellion Record*. For the archive assembled in this dissertation, such a metaphor continues to resonate and resound down roads not anticipated by Hutchinson, especially when we consider that the salient aspects of Confederate literary nationalism enumerated by Hutchinson so neatly hew to the *temporal* ambit envisioned by Unionist verse. The *Southern*

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<sup>36</sup> Again, we should note that this road not taken has, in fact, been traveled before; nor have we yet strayed from the course of the death march that officially enters into the matter of record with the “Marshall Trilogy” decisions: *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (1823), *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832).

<sup>37</sup> This underdetermined invocation of ‘sovereignty’ is particularly troubling given that Hutchinson devotes an entire chapter to southern literary nationalism prior to the war without once mentioning the Marshall Trilogy of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, without which Confederate ‘sovereignty’ would have proven a much thornier affair.



logic of this most potent metaphor. Before the house (assembled in this instance by “Stephen [Douglas], Franklin [Pierce], Roger [Taney], and James [Buchanan]”) becomes a home, before it may traffic in and reproduce the sacralized affects associated with the discourses of mid-nineteenth-century sentimental domesticity, the house must first assert and command that deference to dominion secured within the laws of sovereignty and private property as codified by the ‘Marshall Trilogy.’. And indeed, Lincoln’s metaphor pivots, in its explication of the Kansas-Nebraska act and *Dred Scott v. Sanford*, around “squatter sovereignty,” “*mere* right of property,” and “political dynasty.” Of this sequence, one that implicitly locates the *terrestrial* origins of millennial whiteness in the lawless expropriation of land and labor, some brief mention must be made of that last element (political dynasty), which leads us down the road of inheritance and its determinations. Such sequence discloses, in highly compacted form, the possibility of resituating sovereignty within a political economy of whiteness (subtending, for example, a *metaphysics* of Indian-hating) and the dispensation of its dominion through the generational transfer of property, which according to James Madison “embraces every thing to which a man may attach a value and have a right,” and its future acquisition.<sup>39</sup> As Cheryl Wells has so compellingly documented, the historicity of the current disposition of United States property law is unthinkable without first acknowledging whiteness as that

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<sup>39</sup> See Wells, 1726 (note 33).

particular, historically contingent property from whence emerges property *as*

*such*:

Although the Indians were the first occupants and possessors of the land of the New World, their racial and cultural otherness allowed this fact to be reinterpreted and ultimately erased as a basis for asserting rights in land. Because the land had been left in its natural state, untilled and unmarked by human hands, it was 'waste' [see Whittier, above; or "virgin soil upheaving" in Whitman's "Pioneers! O Pioneers" (26)] and, therefore, the appropriate object of settlement and appropriation. Thus, the possession maintained by the Indians was not 'true' possession and could be safely ignored. . . . Only particular forms of possession—those that were characteristic of white settlement—would be recognized and legitimated. Indian forms of possession were perceived to be too ambiguous and unclear.<sup>40</sup>

Likewise, as Vimalassery has argued, the "evisceration of indigenous natural and civil rights is at the heart of collective and individual U.S. property claims" (144). Madison's expansive embrace intimates, furthermore, the insidious singularity of whiteness as *the* property of properties (whose only discernible quality is the negation of its own particularity), encroaching upon and binding unto itself an exteriority that, while not of the I properly speaking, has nonetheless been dispensated for its settlement. Moreover, whiteness, owning no boundaries, colonizes as well the deep recesses of interiority, freezing self-possession for the uncreate at an interminable moment of contact with violation and loss. At those points where racialized or gendered others fall within the dominion of white property, even the most basic phenomenological renderings of self-intelligibility

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<sup>40</sup> Wells, 1722.

melancholically register but the self *possessed*, its temporality punctuated, or barred, by indefinite measures of swindle and seizure:

Mine – by the Right of the White Election!  
Mine – by the Royal Seal!  
Mine – by the sign in the Scarlet prison –  
Bars – cannot conceal!

Mine – here – in Vision – and in Veto!  
Mine – by the Grave’s Repeal –  
Titled – Confirmed –  
Delirious Charter!  
Mine – long as Ages steal!<sup>41</sup>

Despite having been composed (in 1862) during the Abolition War, Dickinson’s most prolific years, scholarship on this poem has scarcely perceived the signs of an engagement with the political and military conflagration of those years. Such readings, paradoxically, work but to reconfirm and extend the dispossession against which the poem sets itself and all but obliterates the ironic reversal, lodged almost parenthetically, in the conditional clause of the final line. Amidst these emphatic reassertions of possession without object, each new recitation of ownership falls back upon supplemental invocations, effectively displacing the power of authentication onto an temporally anterior authority—“Title – Confirmed –“—whose duration has yet to cease. These supplementary attributions so evocative of millennialism’s providential covenant have been acknowledged on occasion as such, and yet, so long as they remain barred from the exegetical battle over the nation’s Delirious Charter, Dickinson’s derangement

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<sup>41</sup> Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. R.W. Franklin (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University), 190.

of a voice initially authenticated by “White Election” goes without witness. Mine – Mine – Mine – Mine – Mine: Dickinson speaks, here, triumphantly so, if we are to echo the entrainment of voicing encountered in the poem’s reception history, a history in which even seeming adversaries clamor over the same terrain:

For biographer Cynthia Griffin Wolff, the poem merges the voices of the child saying “Mine, mine!” and that of the saint, in an ongoing property dispute with an unidentified antagonist. She sees it as a usurpation of “God’s mystical language of the Covenant, the Apocalypse, and Salvation . . . to the aggrandizement” of the self. . . . While this is a minority view—most critics see the tone as ecstatic and triumphant rather than antagonistic and greedy—Wolff’s approach does point to an underlying sense of desperation beneath the speaker’s apparently regal, *absolute* [emphasis mine] assertions. . . . Most readers, however, have perceived the speaker’s appropriation of religious categories as a means of conferring the highest order of sanctity on what she is experiencing.<sup>42</sup>

Wolff’s reading is substantially more provocative and astounding than the gloss Leiter provides. According to Wolff, white “is the color of renunciation in the poetry” and “*this* [original emphasis] implication of ‘white’ asserts not

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<sup>42</sup> Sharon Leiter, *Critical Companion to Emily Dickinson: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work* (New York, NY: Facts on File, 2007), 142. Though I mention other readings above, I have deliberately chosen to engage with this volume first, primarily because, as the reviewer for *The Emily Dickinson Journal* explains, it constitutes an entry in a series intended “chiefly for high school and college students [and] . . . should become a treasured resource for teachers at all levels.” Jane Donahue Eberwein, “Critical Companion to Emily Dickinson: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work (Review),” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 18, no. 1 (April 16, 2009): 110. In light of its intended audience, the scant appearances of the war (some five pages in a nearly five-hundred page work) is disheartening. I will have occasion to return to this poem in my coda.

receptivity, *but mastery and the will for self-determination* [emphasis mine].”<sup>43</sup> Returning later to the poem, Wolff describes the poem’s voice as “a self in the process of creating and sustaining self . . . . [one] vastly more powerful than the more *socialized* voices of renunciation and exclusiveness [emphasis mine].” In “striving for a Voice of power,” Wolf concludes, “for some readers, *this* voice [then] cannot stand as ‘Representative.’ For these Dickinson was obliged to invent other Voices, *which could speak the language of daily life as it really was in mid-nineteenth-century America*” (200, emphasis mine). What Wolff’s reading presumes, a presumption echoed elsewhere, is the presence of but one voice, when the final *conditional clause* marks the moment when an antinomian voice, one that precisely lacks standing, repudiates and renounces the voice of White Election, which is *the* representative and representational voice that *owned* mid-nineteenth-century America. Listening for such a voice, which perforce must emerge in division and doubling, we cannot presume its lyric presence as an hermeneutic originary, but must await or be receptive to its arrival. In a brief, but attentive reading of the poem, Sharon Cameron highlights that tension between the first eight lines and the final line—which we may note departs from or exceeds the visual symmetry of two quatrains. Advocating a “personal criterion [...] in opposition to a theological or social one,” #411, Cameron suggests “In the defiance of the last line absolute claim seems guaranteed by absolute certainty of

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<sup>43</sup> Cynthia Griffin Wolff, *Emily Dickinson*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 2015), 197.

dispossession.” Against that latter certainty, she locates heteroglossic echoes in textual variants (“long as” -“while”) such that “what will ultimately be ‘Veto[ed]’ is not the speaker’s claim, but rather, subversively, the endlessness of her dispossession.”<sup>44</sup> Yet, the differentiation of sense Cameron offers seems rather thin (“while” connoting endurance, “long as” connoting contestation) and, ultimately superfluous, particularly if that reading returns us to a “triumphant [...] dominance of the speaker’s will over the mere temporality she is resisting” (118). Like the previous reading, Cameron’s explication presumes authorial ownership of “Mine” rather than the renunciation and refusal of mastery, subjection, and ownership at the moment of its disavowal, that moment when temporality, suspended heretofore in an authenticating anteriority, re-enters the poem, figured as seizure, as usurpation. Finally, we hear the not so remote sounds of contestation over temporality *as* usurpation, the weaponization of time, “as Ages [steel] –“, which Dickinson’s 1844 Webster’s Dictionary defines as

extreme hardness; as, heads and hearts of steel, [;] figuratively, weapons; particularly, offensive weapons; swords, spears and the like. Brave Macbeth with his brandish’d steel. – Shak. While doubting thus he stood, / Receiv’d the steel bath’d in his brothers’s blood. – Dryden [;] To overlay, point or edge with steel; as, to steel the point of a sword; to steel a razor; to steel an ax. [;] To make hard or extremely hard. God of battles, steel my soldiers’ hearts. – Shak. Lies well steel’d with weighty arguments. – Shak. [;] To make hard; to make insensible or obdurate; as, to steel the heart against pity; to steel the mind or heart against reproof or admonition.

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<sup>44</sup> Sharon Cameron, *Choosing Not Choosing: Dickinson’s Fascicles* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 118–19.

The brothers of the house divided, tempered so, contested the usurpation of the other, invoking the Father's name in the bloody Scarlet prison bars of and bloody songs of freedom and White Election.

Nonetheless, some not insubstantial differences between Confederate and Union verse should be acknowledged. Even in the early months of conflict, the extreme degree to which the war had materially undermined and disrupted the representational networks that circulated a coherent taxonomy capable of disambiguating such categories as "Verified Fact," "Poetry," "Document," "Speech," and "Narrative." Published nearly contemporaneously with the tumultuous events described therein, the *Rebellion Record* offered no transparent process for the verification of "facts," the authentication of "documents," the attribution of "speeches" and "poems." Moreover, by the end of 1861, the discontinuation of federal mail service and the Union blockade of Southern ports decisively disrupted, however provisionally, that fictive sense of simultaneity so crucial to Benedict Anderson's nationalistic imagined community. And yet, the extent and duration of these disruptions is perhaps nowhere more emphatically archived in the observance, or non-observance, of Juneteenth, commemorating the arrival of Union forces at Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865, where, just over two months after Lee's surrender and Lincoln's assassination, Major General Gordon Granger delivered "General Orders, No. 3," informing those assembled of the former president's Emancipation Proclamation, two and half years after the fact:

The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer. The Freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes, and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.<sup>45</sup>

By effectively rewriting the Emancipation Proclamation as a stern admonition for newly emancipated black men and women to mind ‘their’ place and remain subject to the racialized economic hegemony of the pre-war agrarian South, General Orders no. 3 encodes under the aegis of the newly reconciled American nation-state that invidious, Christian paternalism by which Confederate nationalists justified the morality of chattel slavery as an charitable enterprise of civilizing benignity. Whereas a hypocritical North, according to Timrod, subscribed to “creeds that dare to teach / What Christ and Paul refrained to preach,” and built “Fair schemes that leave the neighboring poor / To starve and shiver at the schemer’s door[,]” the Confederacy’s white supremacist theology benevolently provided shelter from the precariousness of wage labor: “And, for the poor and humble, laws which give, / Not the mean right to buy the right to live, / But life, and home, and health!”<sup>46</sup> While Granger’s issuance raises the

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<sup>45</sup> “FROM TEXAS; Important Orders by General Granger. Surrender of Senator Johnson of Arkansas. A Scattering of Rebel Officials.,” *The New York Times*, July 7, 1865, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1865/07/07/archives/from-texas-important-orders-by-general-granger-surrender-of-senator.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Henry Timrod, “Ode, on the Meeting of the First Confederate Congress,” in *Southern Poems of the War*, 23.

specter of black emancipation, which denotes a time of one's own or time to one's self, in order to threaten recriminations against mobility *as* vagrancy (articulated in post-war Black Codes), so enamored were Confederate poets by the staging of black enthrallment that its depiction hopelessly confounded and exceeded the paratextual conventions of ascription and authentication so integral in war-time verse. Consider "Song of the Freedman," a dramatic monologue in minstrel dialect that plummets into incoherency and illegibility by virtue of its very attempt at authentication:

[On Orleans Street, near Adams, yesterday afternoon, there sat upon the curbstone a gray-haired negro man; his face was buried in his hands; tears crept through his toughened fingers, and his groans melted the heart of the passers-by. When questioned, he said he must die; that he had no home, that he was sick; and no one cared for him now. Listen to his story. It is in truthful verse, by A.R. Watson]<sup>47</sup>

This paratextual epigraph both suggests its anticipated audience and effect, as figured in the collective heart of the passers-by, while also indicating, in the back-and-forth between the nameless freedman and Watson the 'truthful' versifier, the arresting and arrested presence of the latter who has 'transcribed' the performance to follow. The first lines of the opening stanza rehearse the journalistic detail ("On Orleans, near Adams, yesterday afternoon") adumbrated in the paratext:

A freedman sat on a pile of bricks,  
As the rain was pattering down;  
His shoes were worn and his coat was torn,  
And his hat was without a crown.  
He viewed the clouds and he viewed himself,

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 117.

And he shook the wet from his head; (117-18)

Yet, in the final line of this first stanza, at the very point marking the transition from Watson's voice to the minstrel dialect of the freedman, Watson suddenly vanishes from the *mise-en-scène*:

And he raised his voice in a dolorous tone,  
That sounded like a gong,  
While the rain came down on his nappy crown,  
*And he sang to himself this song:* (118, emphasis mine)

If the freedman indeed sings *to himself*, then to where, we must ask, has the presence of our "truthful" versifier been spirited away? Moreover, if the freedman *to himself* laments, in refrains of georgic ruination, the suffering incurred ever since emancipation, then to what purposes, we must ask, is this unreconstructed 'document' of reconstruction being entered into record? Before answering such questions, which seemingly need no answer, we may first recall the epigraph with which this chapter began. Contrary to Hutchinson's baffling claim that the "transnationalist" "Dixie," and the myriad conflicts waged through its innumerable variations, constitute "an instance—*perhaps the single instance* [emphasis mine]— in which the cultural dominance of the Union was in any way tested by the Confederacy," its interpellative refrain—"Look away, look away, look away Dixie-Land"—denominates exactly the state of oneiric delirium in which millennial whiteness mirrors its own transcendent anteriority.<sup>48</sup> Consider

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<sup>48</sup> *Apples & Ashes*, 171. According to Hutchinson, "the South's 'claiming' of 'Dixie' was more or less synchronous with the North's 'whistling' of the song," which had arrived on the "southern stage [of] New Orleans" as early as the

what feverish evasions of systemic horror, now extending from the Atlantic to the Pacific, are required in order for the Union to assert claim to the just and sacrosanct patrimony of *their* revolutionary precursors. For a moment, let us look away, look away, look away, from Watson's freedman, and attend to the contestation of patrimonial inheritance. In *Southern Poems*, we encounter "Seventy-Six and Sixty-One," John W. Overall's apostrophic call to Revolutionary ancestors, now "watchers in the sky!"

There's many a grave in all the land,

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spring of 1860. (146-47). Yet, its southern acclaim was far from unequivocal. In an entry from the *Rebellion Record* (volume one), an initialed "P." denounced the song, specifically Confederate Army brigadier general Albert Pike's version, an "immediate favorite" in Hutchinson's telling. In a lengthy diatribe sent to the *Charleston Courier* on June 11, "P" writes, "So common has become the error that this is a Southern song, and relates to Southern institutions, that I must be pardoned if I break the enchantment, and relate the facts about it. . . . Now, I do not wish to spoil a pretty illusion [of a loathsome illusion], but the real truth is, that Dixie is an indigenous Northern negro refrain, as common to the writer hereof as the lamp-posts in New York city, seventy or seventy-five years ago. . . . And no one ever heard of Dixie's land being other than Manhattan Island until recently, when it has been erroneously supposed to refer to the South, from its connection with pathetic negro allegory. . . . When slavery existed in New York, one 'Dixy' owned a large tract of land on Manhattan Island, and large numbers of slaves. The increase of the slaves and the increase of the abolition movement sentiment caused an emigration of the slaves to more thorough and secure slave sections, and the negroes who were thus sent off (many being born there) naturally looked back to their own homes, where they had lived in clover, with feelings of regret, as they could not imagine any place like Dixy's. Hence it became synonymous with an ideal locality combining ease, comfort, and happiness of every description. . . . It originated in New York, and assumed the proportions of a song there. In its travels it has been enlarged, and has 'gathered moss;' [...] but the fact that it is not a Southern song 'cannot be rubbed out;' the fallacy is so popular to the contrary, that I have thus been at pains to state the real origin of it." in *Rebellion Record* vol. 1, sec. 3, 113.

And many a crucifix,  
Which tells how that heroic band  
Stood firm in seventy-six.  
Ye heroes of the deathless past,  
Your glorious race is run,  
But from your dust springs freeman's trust,  
And blows for sixty-one.

We build our altars where you lie,  
On many a verdant sod,  
With sabers pointing to the sky  
And sanctified of God—<sup>49</sup>

Lest any doubt or ambiguity remain as to the identity of those 'watchers in the sky,' the filiopiatal ballad "Rebels," by Mrs. A.P. Tubman, names names:

Rebels! 'Tis a holy name!  
The name our fathers bore,  
When battling in the cause of right  
Against the tyrant in his might,  
In the dark days of yore.

Rebels! 'Tis our family name!  
Our father—Washington—  
Was the arch-rebel in the fight,  
And gave the name to us—a right  
Of father unto son.<sup>50</sup>

Though "Rebel" for Tubman denotes an originary, baptismal consecration— "Rebels! 'Tis our given name!"— the final line of the second stanza leaves behind the trace of gendered dispossession and displacement, such that the ideological reproduction of a racialized identity birthed and bequeathed in

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<sup>49</sup> *Southern Poems*, 46. In, "1776-1861," which appears immediately after Tubman's "Rebels," an anonymous poet exhorts the "Sons of the South" by rewriting Thomas Paine, "By *your* hearth-stones, by *your* dead, / By all the fields where patriots bled, / A freeman's home or gory bed / Let the alternate be" (63, emphasis mine).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

violent rebellion remains a patronymic and patriarchal affair. Reproduced at the fictive nexus of gendered and racialized affinities, the valorized, domestic interiors of white femininity acquire legibility, value, and protection to the degree that their labors are mobilized toward the generational reproduction of the White Election. Unionist versifiers, likewise, *peopled* the righteousness of their millennial cause with such necrotic enlistments. Present even amidst those tropes of the war that now, read from a distance, seem quaint and even charming, the patronymic weaponization of white femininity rears its bloody head. In the Unionist/Confederate trope of Socks and Verse, the figure of the matronly sock darner (a kind of Abolition War Rosie the Riveter) materially embodies the labor of replicating Revolutionary era ideology. We read, for example, a notice in the *Boston Transcript*, entitled “Socks and Verse,” whose Unionist paratext explains, “The following lines were found in a pair of socks sent to the ‘Army of the Potomac:’”

“These socks were knit by an ancient dame,  
Past three-score years and ten;  
Her heart doth glow with loyal flame,  
Her fingers nimble, too, as when  
She knit for *one*, her honored sire,  
Who fought and bled at ‘Bunker’s fire.’

“She sends this pair (an offering small)  
To some good soldier brave,  
Who left his home at country’s call,  
That country for to save;  
Whoe’er he is these socks shall wear,  
God bless and keep him, is her prayer.

## MATRON<sup>51</sup>

Threading together the textile and text, each instance of the Socks and Verse trope plays upon the mystic and millennial chords of white commemoration. Verses penned and published, socks knit and distributed, fabricate an affective community that traverses not only the rent, tattered fabric of nation but also enlists the filiopietal lineage of the American Revolution, stitching, piecing together a frayed historical continuity, thereby lending the imprimatur of antiquity to the young, white, legitimate offspring fighting far afield. In “The Socks That I Knit,” which generically recalls the It-narratives so popular in the eighteenth-century, we learn that the “yarn,” homophonically punning on yarn as tale or narrative, “is from old Massachusetts.”<sup>52</sup> As the imaginative itinerary of the sock unfolds, the dutiful fortitude and industry feminized in this trope normatively performs a bloodthirsty vision of white womanhood affectively entraining civilian and soldier readers:

Let no knitting of mine be surrendered  
On a soldier afraid of the fight,  
Or be dropped by the way, or borne homeward,

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<sup>51</sup> Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record; A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc.*, vol. 4, sec. 3 (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1862), 26. Perhaps the ancient dame found inspiration from an earlier notice in Volume III. An item from the *New Bedford Mercury* lauds the, somewhat more prolific efforts of one “Mrs. Samuel A. Frazer, of Duxbury, Mass., [who] is now (Oct. 10) engaged in knitting stockings for soldiers in our army. She was employed eighty-five years ago in knitting stockings for the soldiers of the Revolution. She is now ninety-two years old.” in *Rebellion Record*, vol. 4, sec. 3, 24.

<sup>52</sup> *Rebellion Record*, vol. 3, sec. 3, 24.

In some needless and panic-struck flight.  
The swift-rolling ball in my basket,  
Like destiny seems to unwind;  
*One vision comes up as I widen,*  
*And one as I narrow behind.* (emphasis mine)<sup>53</sup>

In Confederate representations of white femininity, such weaponization operates in an ambient atmosphere of violence and deformation that routinely subjects embodiment to the disfiguring transformations of *matériel* or to anti-miscegenetic scenes of racialized violation. In large part, this southern variation on the theme reflects and refracts the profound geographic asymmetries of infrastructure and the economies of publication and distribution:

First and foremost was the fact that most major publishing firms and presses were in the North, not in the South. The 1860 census made the disparity dramatically clear: it counted 986 printing offices in New England and the middle states, with only 151 printing establishments in the South. Of these, the 21 presses in Tennessee produced the most work—yet Tennessee, with the only stereotype foundry in the South, fell under Union control early in the war. There were 190 bookbinders in New England and the middle states—but only 17 in the South. No printing presses were manufactured in the South, meaning that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to replace broken presses.... At the same time there were only 15 paper mills in the South in 1861.... There were no facilities in the South for making wood-pulp paper, which in the North became an important substitute for paper made from cotton rags during the war.<sup>54</sup>

Union and Confederacy, alike, would respond to this crisis with strategies of verification that, more often than not, relied upon conventions of affective authenticity, which themselves developed within recursive economies of deferral

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., sec. 3, 4.

<sup>54</sup> Fahs, 21.

and relay—a complex *mise-en-abyme* of mutually grounding aesthetics, politics, and epistemology. Yet, the asymmetries in manufacturing capacity and the technology of publication also inspired Confederate versifiers to reconfigure the resources and resourcefulness of pious white womanhood to thunderously amplify feminine sympathy into a tintinnabulating, percussive cannonade:

Melt the bells, melt the bells,  
Still tinkling on the plains,  
And transmute the evening chimes  
Into war's resounding rhymes,  
That the invaders may be slain  
By the bells.

Melt the bells, melt the bells,  
That for years have called to prayer,  
And, instead, the cannon's roar  
Shall resound the valleys o'er,  
That the foe may catch despair  
From the bells.

[...]  
Melt the bells, melt the bells,  
Into cannon, vast and grim,  
And the foe shall feel the ire  
From the heaving lungs of fire,  
And we'll put our trust in Him  
And the bells.

Melt the bells, melt the bells,  
And when the foes no more attack,  
And the lightning cloud of war  
Shall roll thunderless and far,  
We will melt the cannon back  
Into bells.<sup>55</sup>

In the paratext that precedes F.Y. Rockett's "Melt the Bells" the reader learns that the "following lines were written [on the occasion] of General Beauregard's

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<sup>55</sup> F.Y. Rockett, "Melt the Bells," in *Southern Poems*, 94.

appeal to the people to contribute their bells, that they be melted in cannon.” Playing upon the homophonic pairing of bells/belles and sonic “peal”, Rockett’s verse fashions and refashions the sympathetic deliquescence of “Song of the Freedman.” Repurposing the sacralized, communal time of feminized piety, “Melt the Bells” recruits the idealized “Southern Belle” of sanctified white womanhood in order to compensate for the affective, material, and informational disruptions and scarcities, such that Confederate ‘territory’ became metonymically saturated with the trope of virginal desecration.<sup>56</sup> More perversely, the gendered ideology of martyrdom in Randall’s work belies a queer, if unconscious, mode of auto-abjection—a debased form of penance for imaginatively envisioning and versifying the racialized rape fantasies that, in rousing the bloodlust of white men, seek to displace through projection the absolute ownership of women that is the proprietary investiture of white men and for which the rhetoric of chivalry, honor, and chastity meagerly provides a consolation dour:

Better the charnels of the West,  
And a hecatomb of lives,  
Than the foul invader as guest  
’Mid your sisters and your wives—  
But a spirit lurketh in every maid,  
Though, brothers, ye should quail,  
To sharpen a Judith’s lurid blade,  
And the livid spike of Jael!<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> In my second chapter, I will return to this poem by placing it in conversation with Melville’s oft-misread battle-piece, “The Swamp Angel.”

<sup>57</sup> James R. Randall, “The Battle-Cry of the South,” in *Southern Poems*, 86.

No poem in Mason's collection, however, more furiously and explicitly mobilizes the delirium of racial terror authorized by this melting than Randall's "At Fort Pillow."<sup>58</sup> Located along the Mississippi in Henning, Tennessee, the Union Garrison of Fort Pillow was the site of one of the most notorious massacres of the Abolition War. Under the command of Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest, sometimes remembered as the first grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, Confederate troops slaughtered black Union soldiers who had been stationed at Fort Pillow. According to Forrest,

the "river was dyed [...] with the blood of the slaughtered for two hundred yards. The approximate loss was upward of five hundred killed, but few of the officers escaping. My loss was about twenty killed. It is hoped that these facts will demonstrate to the Northern people that negro soldiers cannot cope with Southerners."<sup>59</sup>

Unfolding through the narration of a nameless Confederate soldier, Randall's ballad attempts to justify the "carnage of the grim report" by prefacing the scene of slaughter with a narrative of ruination and virginal whiteness profaned:

God! when I ponder that *black* day, [emphasis mine]  
It makes my frantic spirit wince,  
[...]  
The tears are hot upon my face,  
When thinking what bleak fate befell  
The only sister of our race—  
A thing to horrible to tell.

They say, that ere her senses fled,

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<sup>58</sup> While Randall is today largely forgotten, his frightful lyricism is resuscitated and revived on those occasions that call for the performance of the state anthem, "Maryland, My Maryland!"

<sup>59</sup> Qtd in Ulysses S. Grant, *The Complete Personal Memoirs of Ulysses S. Grant* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 281.

She, rescue of her brothers cried,  
Then feebly bowed her stricken head,  
Too pure to live thus—so she died.

Two of those brothers heard no plea,  
With their proud hearts forever still—  
[...]  
But I have heard it everywhere  
Vibrating like a passing knell,  
'Tis as perpetual as the air,  
And solemn as a funeral bell.<sup>60</sup>

In Randall's revisionist account, the narrator seeks to downplay the animus of racial fury when he claims, "I sought the white man, *not the black*" (231). Yet, the editorial art of Mason's anthological sequencing belies the italicized erasure that nonetheless commemorates the slaughter of black Union soldiers. Before Mason's reader is bespattered with Randall's "dabbled clots of brain and gore," she would be beset with fear and trembling by the preceding verse, S.V. Wallis' "The Guerillas", a title whose transparently racist dehumanization resounds like a gong. Whatever melted residue of feeling remained in the heart of Watson's passers-by will, in the span of nineteen quatrains, be recast and steeled as affective *matériel* receptively molded for the slaughter to follow.

"Where my home was glad are ashes,  
And horror and shame had been there;  
For I found on the fallen lintel  
This tress of my wife's torn hair!

"They are turning the slave upon us,  
And with more than the fiend's worst art,  
Have uncovered the fires of the savage,  
That slept in his untaught heart!

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<sup>60</sup> *Southern Poems*, 230-231.

“The ties to our hearths that bound him,  
They have rent with curses away,  
And maddened him with their madness,  
To be almost as brutal as they.

“With halter, and torch, and Bible,  
And hymns, to the sound of the drum,  
They preach the gospel of murder,  
And pray for lust’s kingdom to come.”<sup>61</sup>

Yet such anxieties surrounding hyper-sexualized black masculinity can hardly be circumscribed to the ideology of Confederate nationalism, traversing freely as they do the Mason-Dixon line to this day. Any dream that white Americans may have had to ascribe the demonological grimoire of American religion to the antebellum South or the South of Jim Crow has been incontrovertibly dispelled by the ascendancy to power of the forty-fifth President of the United States, who explicitly campaigned on white *ressentiment* and an unbridled, fear-mongering demagoguery that conjured specters of a marauding, hyper-sexualized threat to white femininity posed by men of color and asylum seekers hoping to find refuge and welcome at the southern border. Such nightmarish visions of American Carnage tap deep veins of thought that extend directly back to the “merciless Indian Savages” that skulked and stalked the captivity narratives of hell-bent Puritans and the insurrectionary imaginations of our founding “Ecunnaunuxulgee.”

I want to close this chapter now with a reading of a poem that appeared within the pages of the *Rebellion Record*, a poem which strains the ideologically

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 228

localizing function of the poetic paratext to its very limits. Renewed and re-authored, rewritten and reworked, the nomadic song-poems appearing in newsprint seem fitting accompaniment to a period in which some three million soldiers left home, many for the first time, to do battle in regions strange and unknown. Itinerant works, at once apocryphal and familiar, gesture at the unwritten, ephemerality of oral performances. With notable frequency, paratextual information will precede the verse, ostensibly to provide some authenticating account of its transmission. More often as not, these paratextual devices only render apparent the artifice involved in the entire enterprise. Consider “The Rattlesnake Banner,” (performed to the tune or “air” of “The Star-Spangled Banner”), which though ascribed to “W.M.W” (initials in quotations), carries with it a note, unattributed, that reads, “*Sung by the 7,000 ‘chivalry’ before a small audience of Northern mudsills, at the taking of Sumter.*”<sup>62</sup> The typographic marking of chivalry potentially identifies this text as sympathetic to the Union. But what to make of this “small audience of Northern mudsills,” a highly pejorative epithet of recent coinage defined by the *OED* as “The lowest class of society; a person of this class.” Seeking out some hermeneutic foothold, we observe the opening two stanzas as heavily marked with emphatic typography.

Oh, say, can you see by the dawn’s early light,  
 What so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last  
 gleaming,

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<sup>62</sup> Frank Moore, *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc.* /, vol. 1 (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1862), 135, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433081802930>.

Whose *serpentine coilings* through the perilous fight,  
 O'er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly  
 streaming:  
 And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
 Gave proof to the night that our *snake* was  
 still there;  
 Oh, say, does the *Rattlesnake* Banner yet wave  
 O'er the land of the *Bond*, and the home of the  
*Slave*?

On the *isle* dimly seen through the mists of the deep,  
 Where the foe's *starving* host in *cowardice shudders*,  
 What is that which the breeze o'er the towering steep,  
 As it fitfully blows, half conceals, half uncovers?  
 Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,  
 In full glory reflected, now shines on the stream:  
 'Tis his snakeship, our Banner—oh, long may it  
 wave  
 O'er the land of the *Bond*, and the home of the  
 Slave!

While these emphatic moments (rendered with the same typography of the unattributed note) ironize a sequence of lyric substitutions, the closing interrogative of the first stanza confronts the reader with another set of questions. Is this question rhetorical? If not, at whom is this question directed? In whose voice is the question posed? Perhaps most importantly, what precisely is the question? The exclamatory conclusion of the second stanza indicates, through an affective temporizing typographically denoted, the poem's enunciation unfolding in diegetic time. The final two stanzas indicate, through a temporizing of affect typographically rendered, that the time of the interrogative's enunciation unfolds diegetically. Let us look to the final two stanzas.

And where is the band who so vauntingly swore  
 That the havoc of war, and the battle's confusion,  
 A home and a country should leave us no more?

The “invincible South” has dispelled their delusion;  
The mudsills are conquered—the victory’s ours;  
The foe now acknowledges our chivalric powers,  
And the Rattlesnake Banner in triumph doth wave  
O’er the land of the Bond, and the home of the Slave.

Oh, thus be it ever, when Slavers shall stand  
Between their loved home and the war’s desolation;  
Blest with cotton and niggers, may our Rattlesnake  
land  
Praise the power that hath made (?) and preserved (?)  
us a nation.  
Then conquer we must, when our cause is so just,  
And this be our motto—In Davis we trust!  
And the Star-spangled banner *no longer* shall wave  
O’er the land of the Bond, and the home of the Slave.<sup>63</sup>

Of the several hundred newspaper poems encountered in my reading, very few remotely approximate the tortuous and tortured rhetorical coilings and involutions on display in this piece. That the verse is taken from the pages of the “*Galesburg* (ILL.) [sic] *Free Democrat*,” a staunchly Republican, free-soil paper hardly resolves the indiscernible, seemingly multiple logics of representation internal to the poem. The elimination of italicized emphasis along with the much diminished employment of staggered indentation in the last two stanzas formally hint at a shift in voice. Nonetheless, the marked phrase “invincible South” of the thirds stanza, along with the slippage of “their” into “our” in lines three and four of the fourth stanza introduces further uncertainty into the interpellative structure. How many voices insinuate themselves into the poem, beyond the 7,000 “chivalry”? The poem’s attempt to harmonize the Northern opening stanzas and the Southern

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

closing stanzas succeeds only in dramatizing the paradoxical desire to narrate an integral Union while simultaneously maintaining the radical otherness of the Confederacy.<sup>64</sup>

Divested of its marked “printedness” and paratextual contextualization, nothing internal to “The Rattlesnake Banner” would preclude its oral performance in the service and support of either faction. Finally, what this otherwise wildly heteroglossic text drowns out is the antinomian voice it leaves ‘half-concealed,’ ‘half-uncovered,’ that is the fundamental truth that the power which “hath made and preserved us a nation” derived from the institutional expropriation of land and labor from indigenous peoples and black men and women. As Granger’s Generals Order no. 3 made clear, the white fantasy of unrestricted mobility and freedom could only be realized through the Dixified, minstrel delusions of its most cherished and hallowed domestic institution:

I dreamt las’ night ole massa come  
And took us home wid he,  
To de log cabin dat we lef  
When first dey set us free;  
And dere I built de light’ood fire,  
And Dinah cooked de yam,  
Dey sat dat dreams are sometimes true,  
I wonder if dis one am?  
But den I’s flung away de hoe,  
To hab a jubilee,  
De rain may come, de wind may blow,  
But bress de Lord I’s free! (120)

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<sup>64</sup> As a final note, the “Rattlesnake Banner” need to be read as sinister, in so far as the Confederate cause might invest the symbol with the patriotic connotation of Revolutionary-era flags bearing infamous mottos such as “Join or Die” and “Don’t Tread on Me.” which featured images of rattlesnakes.

Claiming everywhere for itself a home in expansive, unbounded futurity, whiteness (more precisely, Anglo-Saxonism) condemns blackness in perpetuity to the criminalized status of vagrancy with respect to the millennial rechristening of land as property. The notion that blackness would find no home anywhere in America found and founded *home* within the collective imaginary of millennial America—Whether with Lincoln’s reclamation of “Dixie” contraband for Union attribution or the “sympathetic” detainment of emancipated blackness in Watson’s “Song of the Freedman.” Who is the dreamer and who the dream? Without what Whitman refers to in the *Memoranda* as “the seething hell and the black infernal background” that “future years will never know,” the dream of a counter-dream remains endlessly deferred.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *Memoranda During the War* (Camden, NJ: New Republic Print, 1875-1876), 5.

Chapter Two  
“Must I change my triumphant songs?” Whitman,  
Melville, and the Abolition of War

Awhile, with curious eyes they scan  
The Chief who led invasion’s van—  
Allied by family to one,  
Founder of the Arch the Invader warred upon:  
Who looks at Lee must think of Washington;  
In pain must think, and hide the thought,  
So deep with grievous meaning it is fraught. (“Lee in the  
Capitol”)<sup>1</sup>

*“Future years will never know the seething hell and the black  
infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors, (not  
the official surface-courteousness of the Generals, not the few  
great battles) of the Secession war; and it is best they should not—  
the real war will never get in the books [emphasis mine].” (Walt  
Whitman, Specimen Days)*

The Real War Will Never Get In The Books. As noted in the introduction, mention of Whitman’s prophecy has become all but *de rigueur*; or, to again formulate this problem of Whitman, Americanism, and the reification of contradiction and reconciliation, we might observe with more precision that “The Real War Will Never Get In The Books” remains firmly entrenched within the books, whether of Whitman and the War or Abolition War poetry *in toto*. So seamlessly has Whitman’s elusive sentiment been woven into the critical discourse that it comes to be read as emblematic, not simply of the Civil War, but like a curiously jejune, as an axiomatic banality whose habituated, self-evidentiary truth signals both a *premodern* hermeneutic of reading as presence, a

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<sup>1</sup> Frank Moore, *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events, with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc. /*, vol. 1 (New York :, 1862), 135.

plenitude received, a truth bestowed, a promise fulfilled, and a quintessentially modernist insight regarding linguistic representation *as such*—that is, representation’s inherent immiseration in the face of referents it would strive to address. Both genetic and generic, what began as prophecy assumes the force of an admonition. Appropriating the expression for his 1995 anthology “... *the real war will never get in the books*”: *Selections from Writers During the Civil War*, with its authors alphabetically arranged from A (for Henry Adams) to W (for Walt Whitman), Louis Masur literally gives Whitman the final word.<sup>2</sup> So that the last shall be first, and the first last, Alice Fahs begins her 2001 touchstone with Whitman’s “real war,” here as a point of contestation. Yet, what she takes issue with is “the real war” as explicated by Aaron:

For years, historians and literary critics alike accepted Whitman’s remark as a central truth of the Civil War: the war was the “unwritten war”— the title of Daniel Aaron’s influential 1973 study — because no masterpiece resulted from this *most dramatic of conflicts in American history*. . . . This book starts from a different premise. Far from having been an “unwritten war,” the Civil War catalyzed an outpouring of war-related literature that has rarely been examined [...] literature that has often been designated, then dismissed, as popular. (1, emphasis mine)

It is not merely the elision of a normative claim (“and it is best they should not”) for the prescience of a bardic intimation, which aporetically structures the sequence of the “Real War” vignette, that concerns us here, nor that the very movement to repudiate Aaron’s influence ironically reinstates that influence.

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<sup>2</sup> Louis P. Masur, ed., *The Real War Will Never Get in the Books: Selections from Writers during the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Rather, the self-evidentiary deployment of Whitman's war chiasmatically elides the fraught relationship between the normative evaluation and prophecy around which the claim revolves. Eventually assuming a valedictory position in *Specimen Days*, this passage first appeared as the inaugural declaration in an 1875 private pressing of *Memoranda During the War*, which volume then re-appeared in the "Two Rivulets" section of the 1876 Centennial edition of *Leaves of Grass*:

THE REAL WAR WILL NEVER GET IN THE BOOKS.

And so good-bye to the war. I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field. *To me the points illustrating the latent personal character and eligibilities of these States, in the two or three millions of American young and middle-aged men, North and South, embodied in those armies—and especially the one-third or one-fourth of their number, stricken by wounds or disease at some time in the course of the contest—were of more significance even than the political interests involved. (As so much of a race depends on how it faces death, and how it stands personal anguish and sickness. As, in the glints of emotions under emergencies, and the indirect traits and asides in Plutarch, we get far profounder clues to the antique world than all its more formal history.)*

*Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors, (not the official surface-courteousness of the Generals, not the few great battles) of the Secession war; and it is best they should not—the real war will never get in the books. In the mushy influences of current times, too, the fervid atmosphere and typical events of those years are in danger of being totally forgotten. I have at night watch'd by the side of a sick man in the hospital, one who could not live many hours. I have seen his eyes flash and burn as he raised himself and recurr'd to the cruelties on his surrender'd brother, and mutilations of the corpse afterward. (See, in the preceding pages, the incident at Upperville [during the Gettysburg campaign]—the seventeen kill'd as in the description, were left there on the ground. After they dropt dead, no one touch'd them—*

all were made sure of, however. The carcasses were left for the citizens to bury or not, as they chose.)

*Such was the war.* It was not a quadrille in a ball-room. Its interior history will not only never be written—its practicality, minutiae of deeds and passions, will never be even suggested. The actual soldier of 1862-'65, North and South, with all his ways, his incredible dauntlessness, habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetite, rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred unnamed lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—*perhaps must not and should not be.*

The preceding notes may furnish a few stray glimpses into that life, and into those lurid interiors, never to be fully convey'd to the future. The hospital part of the drama from '61 to '65, deserves indeed to be recorded. Of that many-threaded drama, with its sudden and strange surprises, its confounding of prophecies, its moments of despair, the dread of foreign interference, the interminable campaigns, the bloody battles, the mighty and cumbrous and green armies, the drafts and bounties—the immense money expenditure, like a heavy-pouring constant rain—with, over the whole land, the last three years of the struggle, and an unending, universal mourning-wail of women, parents, orphans—the marrow of the tragedy concentrated in those Army Hospitals—(it seem'd sometimes as if *the whole interest of the land*, North and South, was one vast central hospital, and all the rest of the affair but flanges)—those forming the untold and unwritten history of the war—ininitely greater (like life's) than the few scraps and distortions that are ever told or written. Think how much, and of importance, will be—how much, civic and military, has already been—buried in the grave, in eternal darkness. (emphasis mine)<sup>3</sup>

For the sake of brevity, I have italicized a number of the above sentiments to adumbrate the complexity so quickly glossed, a complexity itself notable for remaining so untold, so unwritten, so unread. How do we come to understand “the real war” that not only *will not* but *should not* get in the books? In an exception to the rule, Timothy Sweet does examine this moment when “the formal

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<sup>3</sup> *Complete Prose Works* (Philadelphia, PA: David McKay, 1892), 80-81.

(epistemological-semiotic) problem of representation is considered also as a moral or volitional problem” (51). Yet, slavery and the question of whiteness remains, as in the passage, all but absent. At the very beginning of this entry, we encounter a curious dissonance. The enunciation that begins in bold orphic proclamation then retreats into the modest invocation of an atomized perspective constituted upon the epistemic exclusion of “how it may have been, *or may be*, to others.” Oblique references to the “political interests involved” and the “seething hell and the black infernal background” recede into the distance so that a millennial drama reconciling the internecine violence within a racialized civil body both anterior to and constitutive of the state may assume its lofty place. Whitman’s hermetic allusions that “black infernal background” and the “political interests” of lesser significance effect a curiously willful effort to evade the question of slavery, such that we are compelled to question his views on the part played by black soldiers during the war (numbering approximately 200,000, or ten percent of Union forces) and the political ascendancy of black citizens during Radical Reconstruction, in large part to probe whether their contributions and actions are included within the tragic, familial drama of “cruelties [visited] on his surrender’d brother” or the national expanse of “the whole interest of the land, North and South.” The diabolical trope of “black, infernal background” intensifies an racial incommensurability, both as erasure—the vanished figure of Lucifer from the centennial *Leaves of Grass*—and the havoc “monumentalized” in

the desolated, ruined South; nearly *the whole generation* of young men between seventeen and fifty destroyed or maim'd; *all the old families*—the rich impoverish'd, the plantations cover'd with weeds, the slaves unloos'd and become the masters, and the name of Southerner *blacken'd* with every shame.<sup>4</sup>

As recorded by Whitman, this nameless Union soldier's embittered lament equates ruination with the enthrallment of whites, which manifests as the destruction of property and the interdiction of wealth accumulation and transmission through the inheritance of antiquity, of "old families."

Lest we think Whitman recoiled at the rank hypocrisy of outrage at generational expropriation and immiseration, his reflections upon black political power belong squarely in that ignominious catalog of textbook excerpts, "The Propaganda of History", assembled by Du Bois fifty years hence in answer to the question, "What are American children taught today about Reconstruction?"<sup>5</sup> According to Whitman, black men and women were neither ennobled enough for valorous insurrection nor capable of self-governance. Elaborating elsewhere on "the mushy influence of current times," Whitman inveighs against "the present condition of things (1875)" with the furor and force of a jeremiad rarely seen in his work.<sup>6</sup> In the following passage, note how the racialization of belonging explicitly equates the South with the property of white supremacy:

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<sup>4</sup> *Memoranda During the War* (Camden: New Republic Print, 1875) 55-56

<sup>5</sup> W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880*, 1st Free Press Edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 711.

<sup>6</sup> One finds a similar morass of grim and solemn sentimentality in section 34 of "Song of Myself," where, telling the "tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and twelve young men [at Goliad]," Whitman "enshrouded forms of

*Results South—Now and Hence.* —The present condition of things (1875) in South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, and other parts of the former Slave States—the utter change and overthrow of *their* whole social, and the greatest *coloring feature* of *their* political institutions—a horror and dismay, as of limitless sea and fire, sweeping over *them*, and substituting the *confusion, chaos, and measureless degradation and insult of the present—the black domination, but little above the beasts*—viewed as a *temporary*, deserv'd punishment for *their* Slavery and Secession sins, may perhaps be admissible; *but as a permanency of course is not to be consider'd for a moment.* (Did the *vast mass of blacks*, in Slavery in the United States, present a terrible and deeply complicated problem through the just ending century [of Centennial]? But how if the *mass of blacks* in freedom in the U.S. all through the ensuing century, should present a yet more terrible and more deeply complicated problem?) (emphasis mine, 86)

In Whitman's *Memoranda*, there are scant few references to black soldiers. In his very first mention of black soldiers, Whitman's racial nomenclature effectively reserves his nationalistic admiration of a cavalry regiment's "young American men" to its white officers and soldiers.<sup>7</sup> In the final line of "*Female Nurses for Soldiers*," Whitman mentions, as an after-thought," the "plenty of excellent clean

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colonial violence into the enchanted relations between oppressors and victims that facilitated the disavowal of U.S. colonial violence . . . . convert[ing] them ["the race of rangers"] into sacrificial victims" (396). Donald Pease, "The Mexican-American War and Whitman's 'Song of Myself': A Foundational Borderline Fantasy," in *Immigrant Rights in the Shadows of Citizenship*, ed. Rachel Buff (New York: New York University Press, 2008).<sup>7</sup> "The men had evidently seen service. First came a mounted band of sixteen bugles, drums and cymbals, playing wild martial tunes—made my heart jump. Then the principal officers, then company after company, with their officers at their heads, making of course the main part of the cavalcade; then a long train with led horses, lots of mounted negroes with special horses— . . . the electric tramping of so many horses on the hard road, and the gallant bearing, fine seat, and bright faced appearance of a thousand and more handsome young American men, were so good to see—quite set me up for hours" (19).

old black women that would make tip-top nurses.”<sup>8</sup> At the end of “Three Years Summ’d Up,” he begins with an estimate of his soldiers’ visitations, “among from 80,000 to 100,000 of the wounded and sick.” Reflecting that these had “afforded [him] . . . the perusal of those subtlest, rarest, divinest volumes of Humanity . . . . [and] the plainest and most fervent view of the true *ensemble* [original emphasis] and extent of The States,” Whitman concludes, as an afterthought, “Among the black soldiers, wounded or sick, and in the contraband camps, I also took my way whenever in their neighborhood, and did what I could for them” (56). The beastly racism of “*Results South—Now and Hence*,” moreover, undermines even the faint, begrudging admiration of black soldiers Whitman expressed in *November Boughs*:

The clerk calls off name after name, and each walks up, receives his money, and passes along out of the way. It is a real study, both to see them come close, and to see them pass away, stand counting their cash—(nearly all of this company get ten dollars and three cents each). The clerk calls George Washington. That distinguish’d personage steps forth, in the shape of a very black man. . . . (There are about a dozen Washingtons in the company. Let us hope they will do honor to the name.<sup>9</sup>)

Beyond the farcical tone with which Whitman lampoons these veterans of battle, beyond his gross assertions that emancipated blacks, “little above the beasts,” were incapable of a filio piety worthy to “honor to the name” which

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<sup>8</sup> Prior to that, Whitman commemorates the white maternity of “Middle-aged or healthy and good condition’d elderly women, mothers of children . . . . the expressive features of the mother, the silent soothing of her presence, her words, her knowledge and privileges arrived at only through having had children” (40, emphasis mine).

<sup>9</sup> *Prose Works*, 588.

commemorates that mythologized architect of the American slavocracy against which they fought, beyond the silent implication that “George Washington (Whitman),” like “Andrew Jackson (Whitman)” and “Thomas Jefferson (Whitman),” were *family possessions*, there remains a further point, one that cuts to each and every effort to purify and decontaminate the name of ‘Whitman the Poet’ from a lifetime of egregiously racist, imperialist prose. Even the most benign formulations of the problem, “Whitman and Race” for example, merely inherit and reconsolidate the mystifying rhetorics of millennial whiteness. That is, the conjunction of Whitman and Race restricts race to an addendum, an appendix, or a supplement that, at best, amends, but does not fundamentally reconstruct how Whitman is sighted and cited.<sup>10</sup> “*Results South*,” the penultimate entry in the *Memoranda*, concludes with Whitman’s desire for the resurrection of white supremacy and white domination:

“I want to see the Southern States, in a better sense than ever, and under the new dispensations, again take a leading part in what is emphatically *their* Nationality as much as anybody’s. Soon, soon, it will begin to be realized that out of the War, after all, *they* have gained a more substantial victory than anybody. (66)

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<sup>10</sup> While critics are now comfortable (too comfortable, I would argue) encountering and producing scholarship on, for example, Whitman and Native Americans—a subject taken up in Ed Folsom’s 1994 *Walt Whitman’s Native Representations* (alongside Whitman and Baseball, Whitman and Photography, Whitman and American dictionaries)—that very conjunction *and* preserves intact the purity and innocence of millennial whiteness by tacitly implying the work of racialization is incidental to, rather than constitutive of, Whitman’s *American* poetics and the canonizing legacy of generations of white scholarship produced in the long Jim Crow era.

By treating the Good Grey Poet's racism as an accidental, as a fleck, flaw, or blind spot immaterial to an otherwise stirring millennial vision of American futurity, is to look away, look away, look away, Dixieland. Should we continue to defer reckoning with the fact that race was not simply a lamentable blind spot for Whitman, but *precisely how Whitman was sighted*, then we critics, readers, and teachers of Whitman remain beclouded within the vaporous mists of a metaphysical, dematerialized whiteness in which he sought out America's redemption. Delivered from that which "is not to be consider'd for a moment," Whitman ends the *Memoranda* with "*Future History of the United States, growing out of the War—(My Speculations)*, in which he signals the purest, tyrannical expression of millennial whiteness' perpetual chokehold of temporality itself:

No more considering the United States as an incident, or series of incidents, however vast, coming accidentally along the path of Time, and shaped by casual emergences as they happen to arise, and the mere result of modern improvements, vulgar and lucky, ahead of other nations and times, I would finally plant, as seeds, these thoughts or speculations in the growth of our Republic—that it is the deliberate culmination and result of all the Past—that here too, as in all departments of the Universe, regular laws, (slow and sure in acting, slow and sure in ripening,) have controll'd and govern'd, and will yet control and govern—and that those laws can no more be baffled or steer'd clear of, or vitiated, by chance, or any fortune or opposition, than the laws of winter and summer, or darkness and light. (87)

To be sure, Whitman Studies remains baffled to this day, as Faith Barrett observes:

From the twentieth-century perspective, Whitman's status as the great poet of the Civil War is well established. His decision to

publish a discrete volume of war poems, *Drum-Taps*, in 1865 testifies to his desire to become America's bard in a time of national crisis; the extensive critical attention this text received in the twentieth century confirms the scholarly consensus that Whitman is the leading poet of the war.<sup>11</sup>

How can this scholarly consensus be read as anything other than a testament to the critical consensus of whiteness, a testament that slavery need not appear once, that slavery be baffl'd or steer'd clear of in a volume composed at a time of national crisis, and still that volume be received with warmth and encomium?

[*Drum-Taps*] does not mention slavery or slaves, or the causes of the conflict, or any of the generals or their battles, or the civilian leaders. Unlike Melville's *Battle-Pieces*, which traces out a history of the war, event by event, in chronological order, with every hero and every crisis in its allotted place, *Drum-Taps* would not allow one to reconstruct the history of the war, or what was at stake in it politically, or who won.<sup>12</sup>

To read Barrett, whose chapter on Whitman and Dickinson simply brushes aside *Drum-Tap's* omissions by repetition of that very omission, is to confront anew an amnesiac in the mirror. Must we continue to reflect and be reflected in Whitman's speculation? Must we comply with the orders of his Time?

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<sup>11</sup> *To Fight Aloud*, 132.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Warner, "Civil War Religion and Whitman's *Drum-Taps*," in *Walt Whitman, Where the Future Becomes Present*, ed. David Haven Blake and Michael Robertson, 1st ed., The Iowa Whitman Series (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2008), 81. At least two exceptions to this omission are to be found in (1) "Turn O Libertad", though the mention of slavery is situated within a teleology of world-historical progress of which the American Civil War is but an incident: From the chants of the feudal world—the triumphs of / kings, slavery, caste; / Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come— / give up that backward world[.]" and (2) the embarrassing minstrelsy of "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors" which first appeared in *Leaves of Grass* in 1871, and was placed within the "Drum-Taps" cluster a decade later.

The “real war” of monumental typification that Whitman suggests — mutilated corpses, moments of despair, the unending, universal mourning-wail of women, parents, orphan, *the danger of being totally forgotten* — as the “whole interest of the land” dispossesses and displaces the systematic suffering of black men and women under slavery. According to Luke Mancuso’s dissociative reading, in the “deployment of disrupted familial images, *read as a cultural text*, Whitman’s poetic investment in the Union cause forged representational connections with the ongoing debate over the fate of ex-slaves” (emphasis mine).<sup>13</sup> Here, we confront precisely the commonplace that must be questioned. Just as there is no more piercing gleam of millennialism’s tyrannous eye than in the declaration of when is and is not a time for politics, so too is there no more indomitable retrenchment of the power of violence than in its disavowal by the paper pact which flowers and takes root in its wake. What political violence goes unrecognized when we presume Whitman as a cultural text instead of asking how that text became culture? Absent the sedimentation of the material historical conditions by which the “slave is admitted,” in Wai Chee Dimock’s turn of phrase, into the lawless gait of free verse, how ‘radical’ is a reading such as Martin Klammer’s who would propose, “It is almost as if the radically sympathetic depiction of blacks [in *Leaves of Grass*] compels an *equally radical*

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<sup>13</sup> *The Strange Sad War Revolving*, 2.

and new poetic form.”<sup>14</sup> Such a reading proceeds precisely in spite of the virulently racist sightedness, amply documented by Leadie Mae Clarke, Whitman drew from the covenantal whiteness of his era, sanctified in violence, for which his “real war” mourns. Nonetheless, the absence of such a catalog of white supremacist views or, more precisely, that catalog’s implacable structural, or syntactic, compulsion to acquire and absorb anything and everything occasions reconsideration of Whitman’s imperialistic, millennial whiteness, the songs which sing “the ownership of the earth forever and ever, Amen!”<sup>15</sup> Rather, this second chapter seeks out what connections obtain between the systematic erasure of slavery and genocide from the nation-state’s matter of record, the quarantining, footnoting, or outright interdiction of Whitman’s millennial whiteness in the critical commemoration of the essentially the greatest poem, and his enduring, symbolic monumentalization as the “secular” prophet of the nation state. In this moment, when authoritarian ethno-nationalism is experienced as an aberration, as the perilous erosion of norms, as a flight from American greatness and not its virulent apotheosis, we would do well to unravel our furious knit of identity with Walt Whitman, “the first totalitarian poet.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “Whitman, Syntax, and Political Theory”, 74; *Whitman, Slavery, and the Emergence of Leaves of Grass*, 100.

<sup>15</sup> *Darkwater: Voices from Within the Veil*, 18.

<sup>16</sup> Pablo Neruda, “We Live in a Whitmanesque Age,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 1972, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/04/14/archives/we-live-in-a-whitmanesque-age.html>.

As detailed in the previous chapter, only in the last twenty years have critics begun to re-appraise the immense volume of verse composed during the Civil War. Prior that Whitman's *Drum-Taps* and Melville's *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* have, for the most part, satisfied the appetite.<sup>17</sup> While many recent critics have productively argued that the *Rebellion Record's* archive, poetic and otherwise, constitutes a necessary horizon against which Whitman and Melville's efforts must be considered, this chapter places their work in necessary conversation with the versifiers of Mason's *Southern Poems* as well. Contemporaries of Whitman and Melville initially received their two volumes with a combination of hostility and bewilderment, irrespective of their considerable stylistic and rhetorical differences. The Abolition War poetry of Melville and Whitman, though perhaps more amenable to 'modern' sensibilities than the versified journalism of the preceding chapter, depart tactically from the poetics of *Southern Poems* and *Rebellion Record* poetics in order to arrive at a shared resolution. Borrowing from Joan Rubin's study of American poetry in the later decades of the nineteenth century, we could say that versified journalism's "constancy of form [,] integral to the recitation's ritual character [,] also strengthened participants' sense of tradition and human connection by evoking recollections of the past [.]"<sup>18</sup> At no point will the reader encounter formal

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<sup>17</sup> The recent, if limited, attention to Emily Dickinson's engagement with the Abolition War is a subject addressed in this dissertation's coda

<sup>18</sup> Joan Shelley Rubin, *Songs of Ourselves: The Uses of Poetry in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 172.

repetition amongst the *Battle-Pieces*' shards of metrical irregularities and inconstant rhyme schemes.<sup>19</sup> Yet Melville's mobilization of formal disfigurement and Whitman's lawless gait ("Ethiopia Saluting the Colors" notwithstanding) both desire the reconciliation of the millennial vision—that of white Americans as the progressive elect with the seemingly inconceivable scale of death and destruction redeemed through an ongoing and imperiled rewriting of precisely who and what counted as American. Despite a litany of invocations, any Whitmanian "enfolding" would not emerge in a spontaneous rapprochement of fellow feeling nebulously described in "Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice": "Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems of freedom yet [.]" Confronted with an imagined skeptical reader, the oracular bard asks, "Were you looking to be held together by lawyers? / Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms? / Nay, nor the world, nor anything living thing, will so cohere?)"<sup>20</sup> Again, in section nine of "Poem of Many in One" (later titled "By Blue Ontario's Shore"), we read:

To hold men together by paper and seal or by compulsion  
is no account,  
That only holds men together which aggregates all in a  
living principle, as the hold of the limbs of the body  
or the fiber of the plants.<sup>21</sup>

With what mechanism, what device, then do we not merely obtain, but vouchsafe such an affectionate covenant? Some later lines from section twelve suggest any

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<sup>19</sup> William Shurr, *The Mystery of Iniquity; Melville as Poet, 1857-1891* ([Lexington, Ky.]: University Press of Kentucky, 1972), 16.

<sup>20</sup> Walt Whitman, *Drum-Taps and Sequel to Drum-Taps* (New York, 1865), 49–50.

<sup>21</sup> Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, New York, 1856), 188.

“living principle” capable of robust augmentation would require supplementation, amendment—that perhaps written amendment might very well embody the paradigmatic form of living principle. Or, to redirect the question at Whitman, we could ask:

Have you consider'd the organic compact of the first day of  
the first year of Independence, sign'd by the  
Commissioners, ratified by the States, and read by  
Washington at the head of the army?  
Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution? (192)

The very circulation of Whitman's patronymic signatures, and perhaps the agreement of each printed text with another, enables the possibility of accord. That is, not the prophetic voice, but the circulation of the text papers over all, not so much possessed as possessing.

Possibility, however, is not probability, much less inevitability. *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* announces with its title the campaign to be found within, the discordant enactment of disarticulation and the heroic, if not ruinous, injunction to retrieve and reassemble the pieces. In a withering review of *Battle-Pieces* William Dean Howells commented, “Mr. Melville's work possesses the negative virtue of originality in such degree that it not only reminds you of no poetry you have read, but of no life you have known.” Setting aside the question of why such originality merits censure and not celebration, let us begin with some preliminary inquiry into why *Battle-Pieces* might provoke such a response. Helen Vendler offers one possibility in answer to a question posed in her essay “Melville and the Lyric of History.” She writes, “Why has he not achieved a

popularity comparable to that of Whitman or Dickinson? [...] [I]t is enough to point out how profoundly Melville's grim view of history, war, politics, and religion differs from the Emersonian optimism that American readers have tended to prefer."<sup>22</sup> After publication in August of 1866, Melville's versified salvos sold a mere 525 copies out of initial print run of 1200 (with 300 copies sent to reviewers) and would not receive its own reprinting until the 1960s, some forty years after Melville's belated canonization. However strange Vendler's supposition, it nonetheless provides a useful starting point. We might very well wonder what Dickinson has to do with Emersonian optimism. Moreover, a number of rather suspect claims are at work here. The first concerns this en-masse (to borrow a term favored by Whitman), amorphous reading public—and its value as an analytical category—with its monolithic and abiding tastes. Pressures exerted by the vagaries and vicissitudes of publication history, as but one strand in the conceptual genealogy of "Nineteenth-Century American Poetry," would seem to have a much larger role to play than the self-evident grimness of Melville's views. Secondly, I intend that this chapter and the next contribute, however modestly, to complicating any monumental notion of "Melville the Poet." By this, I mean that the Melville of *Battle-Pieces* resists easy conflation with the Melville of *Clarel*, published some ten years later. In this chapter's conclusion, I will examine *Battle-Pieces*' closing reconstitution of amity and rapprochement

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<sup>22</sup> Helen Vendler, "Melville and the Lyric of History," in *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War* (Amherst, New York: Prometheus Books, 2001), 252.

through a covenantal appeal to an Anglo-Saxon compact that *Clarel* seeks to unbind.

On another tack, Oliver Wendell Holmes observed, with more equanimity, that Melville “writes what he thinks rather than feels...[and] does not succeed in placing us *en rapport* (with the events) as does [Henry Howard] Brownell.”<sup>23</sup> The qualities noted by Howell and Holmes bring to the fore a primary concern for this chapter: that is, the extent to which formal considerations (those of tone, format, and meter) impact and alter the experience of temporality, the opposition of Whitmanian *feeling* and Melvillean ratiocination, and how these textual dimensions participate in or frustrate a millennial vision of American history in the mid-nineteenth-century. No unanimous verdict or consensus emerges from these highly varied texts, despite their overlap and proximity. As well, the varied modes of production, distribution, and reception further complicate any idea of a coherent and homogenous poetic solution to the millennial crisis incited by the war, whether intra- or inter-textually. However seemingly out of step with the aesthetics of the period, Melville’s *Battle-Pieces* would prove that his vision of American destiny, with qualification, remained as intact as that declaimed sixteen years earlier in *White-Jacket*:

Escaped from the house of bondage. Israel of old did not follow  
after the ways of the Egyptians. To her was given an express  
dispensation; to her were given new things under the sun. And we  
Americans are the peculiar chosen people—the Israel of our time;

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<sup>23</sup> Brian Higgins and Hershel Parker, eds., *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 517.

we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. Seventy years ago we escaped from thrall; and besides our first birth-right—embracing one continent of earth—God has given to us, for a future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans, that shall yet come and lie down under the shade of our ark, without bloody hands being lifted. God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race.... [We are] sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours.<sup>24</sup>

What has changed between 1850 and 1866 is an emergent realization of the challenges, intrinsic to the construction of a shared sense of nationhood, which forestall the renewal of providential covenant. While the chronology of *Battle-Pieces* emplots narrative progression through the imposition of State violence, Whitman's supplications vacillate ambivalently between the nation as a voluntary and spontaneous upwelling of sentimental adhesiveness, routed through the vatic figure of the Bard, and the State as coercive legislative institution. Though Whitman figures himself as a poet of the Nation, in contradistinction to the State, his desire to both preserve and absorb the dissensus of state rights within the univocal consensus of National identity and "his 'anti-institutionalism' chronically lends itself to invocations of norms and controls commonly associated with those same institutions."<sup>25</sup> Whereas, by taking recourse (with palpable distress and misgiving) to the State's imperial vocation, *Battle-Pieces* adopts a

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<sup>24</sup> Herman Melville, *White-Jacket: or The World in a Man-of-War* (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1960), 158. After quoting this passage in *Redeemer Nation*, Tuveson offers a tantalizing footnote in which he remarks, "Many years later, in *Clarel*, there seems to be a profound disillusionment with these high expectations" (157).

<sup>25</sup> Kerry C. Larson, *Whitman's Drama of Consensus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xx.

decidedly more guarded, ironizing distance. What Howells and Holmes both misread as aesthetic shortcomings are in fact principled and deliberate ethical choices on the part of Melville. Here again, we cannot read the aesthetic apart from the ethical.

Whereas Moore's *Rebellion Record* and Mason's *Southern Poems* gave vindictive, factionalized voice to both North and South, *Battle-Pieces* hesitantly refuses recrimination and partisan revenge in favor of reconciliation. Moreover, the sheer audacity of univocally enunciating the voice of the people reveals itself as delusional folly when *Battle-Pieces* takes as its subject the very event to which Whitman retreats for consolation, the assassination President Lincoln. Even more so than the suspense of significance left hanging in "The Portent," Melville's "The Martyr" undermines both its title and its paratextual ascription: "*Indicative of the passion of the people on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, 1865.*"<sup>26</sup> Over the course of two eleven-line stanzas, a Christological narrative unfolds, beginning with displacement of quotidian, calendrical time by the sacral commemoration of "parricide": "Good Friday was the day/ Of the prodigy and crime." Yet the clear-eyed Manichean refrain of evil actors that closes each eleven line stanza—" [But / For] they killed him his kindness, / In their madness and their blindness, / And they killed him from behind. / And his blood is on their hand."—loses sight of the "people" at the very moment when the poem seeks to impart some didactic consequence:

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<sup>26</sup> *Published Poems*, 104-05

There is sobbing of the strong,  
And a pall upon the land;  
But the people in their weeping  
Bare the iron hand:  
Beware the People weeping  
When they bare the iron hand.

All that we might expect from a death theologically invested with martyrdom, that in such sacrifice “the People” come to reconstituted and incorporated into a single body, but serves to confirm martyrdom and its passions, *pace* Whitman, as indicative of agonistic dissension. There is no martyrdom without violence, and violence begets yet more violence, tearing asunder the reincorporation of a singular passion. Whatever solution remained for *Battle-Pieces* to resolve the resolve of “We the People” ultimately fell to that symmetry-violating “Supplement,” Melville’s only published political essay, which he included as a last-minute addition. Melville recognized his appeal to reconciliation remained at odds with the majority of northerners: “Certain it is that penitence, in the sense of voluntary humiliation, will never be displayed [by Southerners]. Nor does this afford just ground for unreserved condemnation. It is enough, for all practical purposes to feel that Secession, like Slavery, is against Destiny [.]”<sup>27</sup> All that remained were the millennial platitudes of destiny and the ethnological science of kindred nature racialized.

In a pointed, if perhaps unintentional rebuke to those critics who found his verse too cerebral or distanced (especially when contrasted with the heated

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<sup>27</sup> *Published Poems* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2009), 182

screeds of the newspaper poets), Melville writes, “Zeal is not of necessity religion, neither is it always of the same essence with poetry or patriotism” (183). Though a number of poems belie Holmes’ critique (the long narrative of “The Scout Toward Aldie,” most notably), the absence of a heightened state of immersion or tension can be attributed in part to their composition after the cessation of hostilities; Melville’s poems opt for, or rather, betray an exhaustion with unqualified enthusiasm and reactionary bellicosity. A new solemnity colored with the immensity of recent events emerges. More than this, however, is a fundamental, and therefore more debilitating, sense of loss over what constitutes an event—that most irreducible unit of historical coherence and movement that takes its measure from the scale of recognition residing in the collective recollection of a People. An insistent fear creeps throughout Melville’s verse, a dismay that any “event” of the antebellum era was now an unreconstructed aberration, having no place or purchase during the war years. Absent from *Battle-Pieces*’ table of contents, “The Portent (1859),” with which the volume begins, remains obscuring and obscured. In its first stanza the lifeless John Brown’s “gaunt” figure, “*Slowly swaying (such the law),*” eclipses in shadow the pastoral “green” of an apostrophized and slant-rhymed “*Shenandoah!*” (5). Like the corpse suspended between heaven and earth, the parenthetical law sways before us. From whence does the law derive its sway? That is, what kind of law is here invoked? Should this swaying abolitionist’s body portend nothing more the physis of pendular motion, “swaying” then reads as an intransitive present participle that

will *eventually* arrive at equilibrium of its own accord. If the law referenced be that against treasonous uprising, then “swaying” reads as a transitive present participle, rhetorically invested as a persuasion compelled or a pedagogy coerced. To which and what kind of law might we turn in order to arrive at an equilibrium of typologized signification: the lawful suppression of an illegitimate insurrection or the declaration of an incitement to emancipatory revolution?<sup>28</sup> The second stanza, notably lacking any rhyme scheme, only further obscures the signification of the “portent,” declaring

*Hidden in the cap  
Is the anguish none can draw;  
So your future veils its face,  
Shenandoah!*

The ambiguous syntax of these lines suggests divergent trajectories, one pursuing an analogical relation, the other a relation of causality. However, before assessing this syntactic ambiguity, we must first reckon with the semantic disequilibrium latent in the stanza’s second line. “Draw” hangs suspended between two irreconcilable senses: the first, “to pull (a curtain, veil, cloth, etc.) over something so as to cover or conceal it”; the second, “to represent (an object) by a drawing or

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<sup>28</sup> Before the raid on Harper’s Ferry, “the insane slave liberator” Brown would take hostage Colonel Lewis Washington, a descendent of George Washington, and confiscate a sword belonging to the first president, along with two pistols gifted to Washington by the Marquis de Lafayette. “National Register of Historic Places Nomination: Beall-Air.” (National Park Service, April 5, 1973). Ted McGee, the author of the application, would seem to concur with Robert E. Lee, who ultimately put down the rebellion at the behest of President Buchanan and later described Brown in a report on Harper’s Ferry as a monomaniacal “fanatic or madman.”

picture; to delineate, depict” (OED). Asking to which conclusion *we* are drawn but throws into further relief the vertiginous sway of law. Is the hidden anguish such that none could gainsay or conceal it? Or, rather, is the quality of anguish such that it remains fugitive from all representation? Yet it would seem the representational ban lifts with the weirdly drawn detail of Brown delineated in the poem’s final three lines: *But the streaming beard is shown/ (Weird John Brown),/ The meteor of the war*. The internal rhyme, weird/beard, gives some faint trace to this figure: ‘weird’ in the archaic sense of portentous, and weirder still, ‘beard’ in the long-lapsed sense of defiance or opposition. Ultimately, “The Portent,” that which would seek to authorize and adjudicate the terms of conflict, can do nothing more than hang suspended, the fact and figure of an opposition displaced from a meaning received to a meaning contested. As Shira Wolosky observes, “what finally occurs is not the placement of historical event into prophetic pattern, but the collapse of prophecy into brute history.”<sup>29</sup> Such hermeneutic suspension finds its analogue in the compendium of *Rebellion Record* poetics, in which “basic facts, such as descriptions of battles, are presented through wildly diverging angles of vision and ideological interests” (235). Fittingly, in the prefatory account of *Battle-Pieces*’ composition, Melville alludes to the “events and incidents of the conflict” from which a “few themes have been taken” only to

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<sup>29</sup> Shira Wolosky, “Claiming the Bible,” in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch, vol. 4, Cambridge Histories Online. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 239.

then foreground that conflict as a fractured and highly mediated recollection of aspects “manifold . . . moods variable, and at times widely at variance” and “unmindful, without purporting to be, of consistency” (3).

How then to traverse the gaping chasm between 1859 and 1866 with ill-suited aspects and pieces that now threatened to assume a kind of ontological priority to the vistas and wholes from which they should derive. Undated, though positioned immediately after poems dated to the spring and summer of 1865 (including “Formerly a Slave”), “The Apparition. (A Retrospect,)” expresses the predicament thus:

Convulsions came; and, where the field  
Long slept in pastoral green,  
A goblin-mountain was upheaved  
(Sure the scared sense was all deceived),  
Marl-glen and slag-ravine.

The unreserve of Ill was there,  
The clinkers in her last retreat;  
But, ere the eye could take it in,  
Or mind could comprehension win  
It sunk!—and at our feet. (116)

What to make of this utter confusion, this baffling, incongruous confluence of spectral apparition and geologic violence?<sup>30</sup> A retrospect? In the final line of the

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<sup>30</sup> Beneath the pastoral green of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* lies, in Douglass’ apocalyptic rhetoric, a geologic cataclysm, not merely “an earthquake swallowing up a town or city, and then leaving the solid earth undisturbed for centuries. It is not a Vesuvius which, belching forth its fire and lava at intervals, causes ruin in a limited territory, but slavery is felt to be a moral volcano, a burning lake, a hell on the earth, the smoke and stench of whose torments ascend upward forever.” “The American Apocalypse: An Address

first stanza, a viscous morass of liquids laps against the rocky outcroppings of the glottal stops. Convulsions came, but from where? Or rather, when? How is the poet to grasp the unreality, the discrete *suddenness* of this subterranean geologic *longue durée*? Is a convulsion an event? Convulsions signify an absence of purposiveness and intent. The involuntary eruption, the uncontrolled shudders only exacerbate the anxiety of crippling dislocation. Without some marker, some date, what linguistic resources can be mobilized to paper over this apparent, wholly deceived sense, the only trace of which is the sense of unresolved crisis, the creeping dread of retrospect's unsure footing, that "Solidity's a crust."<sup>31</sup> Would sufficient duration of time permit an event of historical significance to coalesce, to come into view? If so, would that duration of time itself constitute a distinct *event*? This apparition, of indeterminate reference, would seem more unsettling, more fearful than that year which "trembled and reel'd beneath" Whitman.

Though Howells encountered the disoriented and disorienting aspects of *Battle-Pieces* as an aesthetic deficiency, Melville's often-explicit incorporation of the rhetoric of mediation into the volume reflects the exercise of forms meticulously crafted and judiciously deployed. "*Dupont's Round Fight* (November, 1861)", an account of Commodore Samuel Francis Dupont's attack against the Port Royal harbor of South Carolina, serenely establishes the measure

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Delivered in Rochester, New York, On 16 June 1861." *Douglass' Monthly*, 4: 485-86 (July 1861)

<sup>31</sup> *Published Poems*, 116

of the poem, simultaneously archiving and reenacting the graceful execution of Dupont's nautical maneuvers:

In time and measure perfect moves  
All Art whose aim is sure;  
Evolving Rhyme and stars divine  
Have rules, and they endure.

Nor less the Fleet that warred for right,  
And, warring so, prevailed,  
In geometric beauty curved,  
And in an orbit sailed. (20)

Despite the seemingly isomorphic symmetry between naval tactics and poetic execution, "*Dupont's Round Fight*" records, as Hsuan Hsu has noted, an ekphrastic encounter with a captioned illustration of the battle found in the *Rebellion Record*.<sup>32</sup> The celestial surety "Art" assumes in the first stanza belies the subsequent displacement of divine "rules" through the forceful imposition, or rather impression, of a typologized retrospect. Accordingly, the final stanza arrests the measured flow of the piece with an abrupt mid-line full stop in the penultimate line, the only such stop in the piece:

The rebel at Port Royal felt  
The Unity overawe,  
And rued the spell. A type was here,  
And victory of LAW.

This irruption of time and measure between spell and type marks an unnavigable, immeasurable interval. For the "spell" gestures at both an incantatory enchantment as well as an amorphous, indeterminate temporal interval. Drawn

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<sup>32</sup> Hsuan Hsu, "War, Ekphrasis, and Elliptical Form," *Nineteenth Century Studies* 16 (2002): 55.

across this chasm by the resumption of time's measure, we dispel the chronometric transcendence of "Art" as artifice—A type was here. What begins as an allegory about the enchantment of Art collapses into the coercive enthrallment of "LAW." In this respect, it is crucial that we position Art and LAW not in a dialectical opposition, but rather as moments within a recursive, supplementary logic. In the demotion of transcendent typology to typography, the poem does not, as Timothy Sweet argues, remain confined to "the depersonalized perspective of the State." Rather, this allegory of transcendence dispelled thus refuses that aestheticized conjuration of "LAW" as the measure of time itself, proposing rather that personhood, as dispensed by the State, finds its telos in legalized violence. A later undated poem finds Melville further tracing the mechanizing imposition of LAW.

In "A Utilitarian View of the Monitor's Fight," Melville deploys an opposing tack, withholding any regularity save the end rhyme of lines two and six:

PLAIN be the phrase, yet apt the verse,  
More ponderous than nimble;  
For since grimed War here laid aside  
His Orient pomp, 'twould ill befit  
Overmuch to ply  
The rhyme's barbaric cymbal. (44)

The introduction of ironclad vessels during the Civil War made for encounters that lacked the traditional romance of maritime battle, "beyond the strifes of fleets heroic [.]" Devoid of grandeur, what remained was mere application of "plain mechanic power" by "warriors / [who] are now but operatives" (45). For now

we'll leave aside the subsequent poem, perhaps the most lyrical and haunting in all the volume, "Shiloh. A Requiem. (April, 1862.)", except to note that such clashing and incongruous modes, a predominant feature in the sequencing of *Battle-Pieces*, harbors a structuring contradiction of the book—that is, the clashing of pieces that ruptures any sense of aestheticized harmony or chronometric progress. The recurring question of atavistic time will frequently imperil any hope that the calendrical time of dates and years holds any correspondence or relation to the metaphysical reckoning of teleology. Such sequencing transforms the thematic uncertainties referenced in the opening poems ("Misgivings," "The Conflict of Convictions," "Apathy and Enthusiasm") into a deliberate set of formal maneuvers. To read these poems as mere chronicles of the Civil War is to misread them entirely.

The foregrounding of mediation that provides one of the meager constants of Melville's volume receives its most extended expression with "*Donelson* (February, 1862.)," in which a crowd, over the course of several winter days, frantically congregates around a public bulletin board, eager to follow the fortunes of a Union assault upon Fort Donelson. With each day's new posting, the outcome grows more uncertain, more undecided. Each new report brings some revision or retraction of prior information. Unlike the crowd, however, the poem itself expresses little interest in the particulars or outcome of the battle. If "*Donelson* (February, 1862)" can be said to have a referent, then it points, at most, to any number of textual and visual artifacts, lacking attribution or signature

as conventionally understood. While not *en rapport* as understood by Holmes, Melville's piece remains deeply embedded within the conventional print practices of the War years, and in doing so elegantly operates as a synecdoche for the project as a whole. Within the density of two succinct, parenthetical lines, the reader engages with an era's mise-en-page: "*(Our own reporter a dispatch compiles / As best he may, from varied sources.)*" (28). These muddled lines sporadically transmit for the duration of the poem, the chain of evidence, such as it was, remaining hopelessly in flux. The ostensible setting of the poem remains familiar enough for period readers. The visual rendering of crowds gathered outside newspaper offices and bulletin boards occurred with considerable frequency in the images of the era's various periodicals. As a trope, the crowd enables Melville to ensnare the reader within the field of Donelson's mise-en-page, itself a kind of ekphrastic mise-en-abyme in which an endlessly recursive economy of texts and images circulates with a centrifugal velocity that threatens to disperse any stable figuration of a public readership that ultimately consumes itself. Those figures gathered round the bulletin board find themselves much like those whose actions they hang upon: "Assailants and assailed reversed" (26). At this point, the integrity of the event swims back into our dizzy ken.

The opening stanza concludes with the selection of a gentleman from the congregants to read aloud the dispatches for those blocked from view. By virtue of the obscured view created by the demanding crowd, we readers witness the emergence of a kind of ad hoc democracy: " 'No seeing here,' cries one—'don't

crowd’— / ‘You tall man, pray you, read aloud.’” (23). A scene already thick with nameless actors, the bulletin-board assailed much like the Fort of which there is some report. Beneath the word “IMPORTANT” an immersive and engrossing sequence of actions occurs. Propulsive and richly detailed, these italicized dispatches seductively pull the reader into the midst of the crowd observed. Melville’s compact lines mimetically assume the terse economy of the telegraph relaying information from the battle-site. However, the immersive quality of detail betrays the importance initially declared:

*The welcome weather  
Is clear and mild; ‘tis much like May.  
The ancient boughs that lace together  
Along the stream, and hang far forth,  
Strange with green mistletoe, betray  
A dreamy contrast to the North. (24)*

Tucked amid assessments of troop morale and precise, topographical descriptions of Confederate entrenchments, the embowered reverie unfurled above demurely recedes into the background, almost unnoticed—a bit of blending, camouflaging the estranged landscape with the artifice and contrivance of this versified “*dash at Donelson.*” The perfidious betrayal ensconced within these “ancient boughs” will turn treacherous as Union troops seek them out for refuge only to find “‘tis an enemy shares the tree” (25). Compounding the ephemeral quality of this oneiric Southern prospect, the text of the bulletin then dissolves from a seemingly intransigent storm into “Every shade of a streaky blue” (24). The ink bled by this bulletin will then soak into the account of the second dispatch, wherein the crowd listens as “*the earnest North/ Has elementally issued forth/ To storm this*

*Donelson*” (25, emphasis mine). Yet, the rhetorical limits of readers convening “*en rapport*” can only ironize the dissimulations of the soldiers that convention figures: “*No fires; a fire a mark presents;/ Near by, the trees show bullet-dents*” (27). While the epistemic darkness in which the storm-drenched crowd lingers seeks correspondence with “The men well soaked,” this couplet, punctuated by the play upon bullet-dents/bulletins, audibly resounds across the untraversed experiential distance between soldier and observer: visibility at the cost of a bullet point. Then, with a move both tendentious and virtuosic, the unmasking masking creeps back across the text’s typographical demarcations, in description of

a cross patriot in the throng,  
His battered umbrella like an ambulance-cover  
Riddled with bullet-holes, spattered all over. (27)

Like the battered, punctured fabric of the patriot’s umbrella, the clouded language of paratactic dispatch seeps into the profuse metaphysics of a porous mise-en-scene. After passing mention of “A flag, deemed black, flying from *Donelson*” toward the end of day three’s dispatch, the hushed, fearful crowd turns homeward, “Breasting the storm in daring discontent;/ The storm, whose black flag showed in heaven” (30). By day four, the poem’s asymptotic trajectory toward the authenticated iteration of authenticating affective affiliation reaches its climax:

Flitting faces took the hue  
Of that washed bulletin-board in view,  
And seemed to bear the public grief  
As private, and uncertain of relief;  
Yea, many an earnest heart was won,  
As broodingly he plodded on,  
To find in himself some bitter thing,  
Some hardness in his lot as harrowing

As Donelson. (32)

Punctuated by hourly intervals, the subsequent “VICISSITUDES OF THE WAR.” (30) publicize the private vanity of performative brooding such that the public, or published, figure of identification traces nothing more or less than alienation itself: “In vain seek Donelson” (36).

Before moving on from the multiplying trajectories of irresolution and aspect in *Battle-Pieces* to Whitman and his *Drum-Taps*, let us press Howell’s complaint further to consider the ethical dimension of Melville’s guerilla rhetoric, which affords communion only upon the pain of an incommunicable death. A direct consequence of this ethical position follows Melville’s decision to refuse the assuring sentimentalized sympathy of the glorified identification with the soldiers that increasingly stocked the stores of newspaper poetry as the war lingered on. One could argue, however, that in this rhetorical economy such poems obliged and enabled the reader to achieve a kind of sympathy at a distance, as in the common trope of the civilian struck dead at the same moment a loved one fell in battle. This convention operates not so much as an interdiction of the wound or the occlusion of the soldier’s consciousness as it permits an imagined affective contiguity and continuity that might compensate should storms black out and “derange the wires” (34). In this respect, the manner in which the war gendered the available rhetorical codes becomes apparent. Moreover, these conventions would no doubt resonate differently for white southerners, given that the home and battlefield became nearly indistinguishable in the later years of the

war. For his part, Melville would observe a strict narrative interdiction, recalling that of “The Portent”, on “The Armies of the Wilderness.”

None can narrate that strife in the pines,  
A seal is on it—Sabaen lore!  
Obscure as the wood, the entangled rhyme  
But hints at the maze of war—  
Vivid glimpses or livid through peopled gloom,  
And fires which creep and char—  
A riddle of death, of which the slain  
Sole solvers are.<sup>33</sup>

Elsewhere, Melville ironically appropriates the conventionalized tropes and scenes of newspaper poems, deployed by both North and South, to neutralize their sectarian aims. *Battle-Pieces* is, it should be remembered, dedicated to the memory of the “Three Hundred Thousand who in the war for the maintenance of the union fell devotedly under the flags of their fathers” (2). Yet the collection manages to accommodate an acknowledgement of the just cause with the fearful recognition that if the millennialist, nationalist vision of “The Conflict of Convictions (1860-1.)” is to be revealed, then that apocalyptic vision must embrace an imperial America of global ambit (“The final empire and happier world”) rather than one diminished and constricted (10). The supplement to *Battle-Pieces* closes with that plea: “Let us pray that the terrible historic tragedy of our time may not have been enacted without instructing our whole beloved country through terror and pity; and may fulfillment verify in the end those expectations which kindle the bards of Progress and Humanity” (272).

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<sup>33</sup> *Published Poems*, 76.

If some critics have found the task of finding a war in *Drum-Taps* difficult, Melville's *Battle-Pieces* advances its chronology, its battlefields, and generals as a feint, only to then attempt a further maneuver of withdrawal. Quite simply, *Battle-Pieces* is an intractable work, its meter unpredictable, its rhythms capable of jarring acceleration and sudden arrest. Moreover, the ambivalent tone established in early poems such as "Misgivings," "The Conflict of Convictions," and "Apathy and Enthusiasm" steadfastly renounces the indulgence of bellicose fervor mobilized in *Drum-Taps* (e.g. "Beat! Beat! Drums!"). Even through his bewilderment and disbelief, Howells had some notion of what was at stake:

Is it possible—you ask yourself, after running all over these celebrative, inscriptive, and memorial verses—that there has really been a great war, with battles fought by men and bewailed by women? Or is it only that Mr. Melville's inner consciousness has been perturbed, and filled with the phantasm of enlistments, marches, fights in the air, parenthetic bulletin boards, and tortured humanity shedding, not words and blood, but words alone?<sup>34</sup>

*Battle-Pieces* labors under no desire to present definitively the war 'itself,' the 'real war' that will never get into the books, in Whitman's phrase. Surveying stanzas, verses volleyed, couplets cast off, *Battle-Pieces* collects, like so many trophies and souvenirs, the poetic journalism of the war—its obscurity resides in its immense field of referents: the archive of textual debris and detritus, the spent casings gleaned from the fields of the late war.<sup>35</sup> Words alone would not redress

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<sup>34</sup> *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*, 527.

<sup>35</sup> For an extended account of Melville and the *Rebellion Record*, see Frank Day, *Melville's Use of The Rebellion Record in his Poetry* (Clemson: Clemson University Digital Press, 2002 [1959]).

the grave sin of “Misgivings”: “The Tempest bursting from the Waste of Time / On the World’s fairest hope linked with man’s foulest crime.”<sup>36</sup> Early on in the “Supplement” he asks with ruefulness: “We have sung of the soldiers and sailors, but who shall hymn the politicians?”<sup>37</sup>

That foulest crime assumes a cast and voice in the short verse entitled “The Swamp Angel.” According to one early reviewer, “In the *sentimental style* our poet does not succeed much better. [It] may be regarded as an elaborate effort in this direction; what the result is may be sufficiently judged from the opening stanza, which, however, we confess we do not entirely understand:—

“There is a coal-black Angel  
With a thick Afric lip,  
And he dwells (like the hunted and harried)  
In a swamp where the green frog dip.  
But his face is against a City  
Which is over a bay of the sea,  
And he breathes with a breath that is blastment,  
And dooms by a far decree.”<sup>38</sup>

A black Union soldier, perhaps. Had the reviewer bothered to consult the footnote appended to the title they would have read, “The great Parrot gun, planted in the marshes of James Island, and employed in the prolonged, though at times intermitted bombardment of Charleston, was known among our soldiers as the Swamp Angel.”<sup>39</sup> Melville’s reworking deploys the sentimental trope of the

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<sup>36</sup> *Published Poems*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 181

<sup>38</sup> *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*, 510.

<sup>39</sup> *Battle-Pieces: The Civil War Poems of Herman Melville* [Facsimile edition of *Battle-Pieces and Aspects of the War*, 1866] (Edison: Castle Books, 2000), 250.

fugitive slave (so “limpsey and weak” in Whitman) against a population terrified at the thought of divine retribution recast in the steel of black insurrection. According to Carolyn Karcher, “The Swamp Angel” “directs sympathy away from the black troops [rendered inanimate by the cannon] who die by the hundreds at Fort Wagner, and toward the ‘despairing’ . . . white denizens of Charleston.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, in her three-sentence rendering, it’s entirely unclear upon what basis this sympathetic redirection occurs. What makes this assertion all the more confounding is that Karcher is one of the few readers, along with Wolosky, to emphasize both the era’s providentialist accounts of the war’s millennial import as well as Melville’s “deep suspicion of millennialist rhetoric [and] his distrust of crusading ‘enthusiasts’” (365). In keeping with that suspicion, Melville’s unremediated mediations of versified journalism’s own mediated accounts (seen in “Donelson”), sets his volume at yet a further remove, principally from that of the scriptural typology with which millennialist fervor interpreted this great conflagration. As Wolosky writes,

The exegetical apparatus of Biblical prophecy mediated his, as it did, the nation’s experience of history. Melville is only too conscious of the patterns of American mission, unfolding from the Puritan exodus into the American promised land, through the millennial harvests of the Great Awakening and the Revolution and then impelling the nineteenth-century’s vision of Manifest

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“The Swamp Angel” is also a poem authored by “T.N.J.” and included in the eighth volume of the *Rebellion Record*, section III, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Carolyn L. Karcher, “White Fratricide, Black Liberation: Melville, Douglass, and Civil War Memory,” in *Frederick Douglass & Herman Melville: Essays in Relation*, ed. Robert S. Levine and Samuel Otter (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 360.

Destiny. The events of the Civil War, inheriting this full typology of American history, in turn were seen not only as human and temporal but also as cosmic, elect, divine. . . . The power of textual interpretation thus becomes the power of historical claim, based in the Bible but extending from text to experience, and issuing finally in a pervasive and compelling national rhetoric.<sup>41</sup>

Wolosky judiciously cautions, furthermore, that any attempts “to systematize the poems into a testament of Melville’s political views on slavery and Union, democracy and American destiny (and almost all commentators do this [particularly Karcher and Stanton Garner] underestimate the role of rhetoric” in *Battle-Pieces* (234). In this “event,” then, divested of any scriptural legitimation, “The Swamp Angel” stages an iconoclastic vision of black insurrection if viewed relationally to the target of the Parrot Gun’s “scream that screams” (*BP*, 78). Moreover, we resight the meteor neither seen nor heard from since *Battle-Piece*’s first poem “The Portent.” The “poise of a meteor lone—/ Lighting far the pale fright of the faces” does not so much redirect sympathy as illuminate Harper’s Ferry as the harbinger of militant black insurrection. While the poem’s title unites the terrestrial and the celestial in bathetic irony, black insurrection is not redeemed through millennialist rhetoric, per Douglass, but acquires its terrible significance by literally confounding (in a counter-image to the humble profanity of “church so lone, the log-built one” of “Shiloh”) the gravitational and spiritual center of millennial whiteness and Southern Slavocracy:

Is this the proud City? the scorer  
Which never would yield the ground?

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<sup>41</sup> “Claiming the Bible”, 237-38.

Which mocked at the coal-black Angel?  
The cup of despair goes round.  
Vainly she calls upon Michael  
(The white man's seraph was he),  
For Michael has fled from his tower  
To the Angel over the sea.

In reading "The Conflict of Convictions" Karcher leagues the "young enthusiast" with "the Angel Michael, leader of the war in heaven against the dragon" and yet, here, that dragon's breath reduces to rubble what Melville's footnote tells us was "St. Michael's, characterized by its venerable tower, [which] was the historic and aristocratic church of the town" (Karcher, 359; *PP*, 175). That sympathetic deliquescence of the bells "That for years have called to prayer" into the "cannon's roar" have been transmuted and turned back upon itself.

As with each battle-piece, the possibility of a transcendent or redemptive vision remains foreclosed. No grand narrative of patriotic triumph, no righteous teleological vision sanctifies the chaos and violence. These are events, without narrative. No governing word over all. This despair takes on its starkest expression in the bleak, affective inertia of "Shiloh: A Requiem." Over the course of three days in April 1862, the Union and Confederate armies were decimated with a combined 23,000 casualties, a number greater than the combined total of the United States' previous three wars. Shaping Melville's rejoinder, an anonymous verse from the *Rebellion Record* entitled "The Ballad of Shiloh" ends thus,

The battle-ground is piled with slain  
Ah! Thousands sleep to wake no more,  
And thousand still feel keenest pain

From mangled bodies drenched in gore!  
Yet such the price of liberty,  
A nation's dearest, bloodiest prize;  
But blessed is it to be free,  
And love will make the sacrifice.<sup>42</sup>

A sacrifice redeemed through displaced abstraction, the poem operates along an axis of verticality, a traffic of prayers passing between sublunary strife and the divine word over all: "God hears their prayer, deliverance sends [.]” The clamorous sounds of battle, the “[w]arm greetings of friends, / Ready to join the bloody fray [.]”—the ballad is full of hue and cry. Melville’s “Shiloh” offers something different, offers nothing at all:

Skimming lightly, wheeling still,  
The swallows fly low  
Over the field in clouded days,  
The forest-field of Shiloh—  
Over the field where April rain  
Solaced the parched ones stretched in pain  
Through the pause of night  
That followed the Sunday fight  
Around the Church of Shiloh—  
The church so lone, the log-built one,  
That echoed to many a parting groan  
And natural prayer  
Of dying foemen mingled there—  
Foemen at morn, but friends at eve—  
Fame or country least their care:  
(What like a bullet can undecieve!)  
But now they lie low,  
While over them the swallows skim,  
And all is hushed at Shiloh.<sup>43</sup>

Firmly entrenched in the scene, Melville refuses the diversionary gesture of its *Rebellion Record* cousin. Traced by sonic repetitions, the poem draws a

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<sup>42</sup> *Rebellion Record*, volume IV, section III, 94.

<sup>43</sup> *Published Poems*, 63.

perimeter about itself; the wheeling swallows turn about, spiraling in paths without origin or destination, a *cordon sanitaire* around the aftermath of slaughter, shielding from sight. Groans meet not with prayers answered, but with their resounding echo, amplified and unabated. Newly constituted at the moment of its expiration, an affective affiliation transpires, imbued with an unprintable Sabaen lore that cannot find purchase beyond the hollowed out circumference of its melancholic refrain “O.” Sequestered parenthetically, the piercing spontaneity of “(What like a bullet can undecieve!)” expresses no desire for a response that the exclamatory interrogative construction might invite, for any response would presume to ventriloquize the dead. Melville’s swallows (his strange hand) seek to preserve these soldier’s remains against any desairological conscription into sentimental and political *materiel*.

First published in 1865 and enfolded within the 1867 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Leaves of Grass* in an expanded version, Whitman’s *Drum-Taps* shares little with Melville beyond an interest in the process of millennialist reconciliation and an aversion to partisan sentiment. Whitman’s “pending action of this *Time & Land we swim in*”<sup>44</sup> suppresses any coordinates of chronology, geography, or identifiers of paratextual ascription. The topographical flattening of his lineation ensured Whitman’s optimism and democratic exuberance would survive the war, preserved in large measure by an unassailable commitment to American futurity. Somewhat ironically, this may in no small part be attributed to the date of their

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<sup>44</sup> Letter to William O’Connor, January 6, 1865. Quoted in Warner, 84.

original composition. As Michael Moon, referencing the scholarship of Roger Asselineau, points out, “a substantial number of the poems that appeared in *Drum-Taps* were quite probably written before the war started or in its first few months.”<sup>45</sup> Be “it weeks, months, or years” war would but threaten to teach new songs.<sup>46</sup> Reconciliation, “that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time utterly be lost,” seemed a *fait accompli*. The physic, “[w]ord over all,” would suture a nation divided, the press of lips to “the white face in the coffin” would seal the sacrificial bond. Yet Whitman’s verse, in moments, opens itself, almost involuntarily, to a present traumatically arrested, the horror of a present that might not relinquish its presentness. Though Whitman too shared a nationalist conviction in the American “Libertad,” justifying belief in the Mexican-American War for one, his solution could not be easily aligned with the mainstream protestant millennialism of the first half of the nineteenth-century.<sup>47</sup> Whitman’s solution to the inequities of American society, the ossification of sectarian religion, and the internal divisions exposed by the Abolition War required the anointment of poet as messianic prophet: “Those who love each other shall become invincible— / they shall yet make Columbia victorious.”<sup>48</sup> Melville’s aspects face toward a “Chansonnier of a Great Future,” as in “The Conflict of

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<sup>45</sup> Michael Moon, *Disseminating Whitman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 171. See also, Roger Asselineau, *The Evolution of Walt Whitman: The Creation of A Personality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

<sup>46</sup> “First O Songs For a Prelude,” *Leaves of Grass*, 351

<sup>47</sup> David Kuebrich, *Minor Prophecy: Walt Whitman’s New American Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 36

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, “Over the Carnage Rose a Prophetic Voice,” 49.

Convictions” only to stop short: “WISDOM IS VAIN, AND PROPHECY.”<sup>49</sup> Whitman, however, firmly believed that the country remaining divided, both politically and affectively, would amount to a breach of the covenant dispensation. For Whitman, only the messianic voice of the poet could infuse the People with the “amativeness” and “adhesiveness” indispensable for a truly unified nation. With affective union, then, followed political union. The ties of affection, however, could not be legislated *de jure* into existence. Beyond the matter of reconciliation, that “Word over all,” Whitman adopts a rhetorical perspective on the war far removed from that of Melville. However much the scene set approaches “Reconciliation,” Melville’s “Magnanimity Baffled” concludes on a far less uplifting note:

“Still silent, friend? can grudges be?  
 Yet am I held a foe?—  
 Turned to the Wall, on his cot he lies—  
 Never I’ll leave him so!  
 Brave one! I here implore your hand;  
 Dumb still? all fellowship fled?  
 Nay, then, I’ll have this stubborn Hand!”  
 He snatched it—it was dead. (117)

Not only does *Drum-Taps*, with its “pending action of this *Time & Land we swim in*,” evade the chronological specificity of *Battle-Pieces*, but that suppression of sublunary detail, chronicled with pained acuity in *Memoranda During the War*, also enables Whitman to adopt representational strategies nearly identical to those found in the verse of *Southern Poems* and the *Rebellion*

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<sup>49</sup> “The Centenarian’s Story,” 23; *Published Poems*, 11.

*Record*.<sup>50</sup> Within the first two poems the shared tropology becomes obvious, a highly gendered representational code valorizing martial enthusiasm for vigorous masculinity:

(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!  
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis! O truer than steel!)  
How you sprang—threw off *the costumes of peace* with  
indifferent hand,  
*How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and fife were  
heard in their stead [.]*<sup>51</sup>

In the lines to follow, a democratic and egalitarian cross-section of occupations, bewitched by the “drum-taps prompt,” eagerly fall into line: mechanics, lawyers, judges, wagon drivers, salesmen, book-keepers, and porters. The world of Whitman, one of univocal and spontaneous obedience, permits no conflict of convictions. Recall Whitman and the agreement on paper. Allow the refrain “Beat! Beat! The Drum!” to drown out all else, “let not the child’s voice be heard, nor the mother’s entreaties.”<sup>52</sup> Much less will *Drum-Taps* acknowledge the class-warfare and racial tension behind the chaos of the 1863 New York Draft Riots, even less the institution of the draft the previous year, as decried in “*The House-Top. A Night Piece. (July, 1863.)*”

[...] All civil charms  
And priestly spells which late held hearts in awe—  
Fear-bound, subjected to a better sway  
Than sway of self; these like a dream dissolve,  
And man rebounds whole aeons back in nature. (64)

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<sup>50</sup> Letter from Walt Whitman to William D. O’Connor, January 6, 1865.

<sup>51</sup> *Drum-Taps and Sequel to Drum-Taps*, 5.

<sup>52</sup> “Beat! Beat! Drums!” 38.

Whitman's war cannot admit of conscription, nor admit the social inequities that permitted the wealthy to buy their way out of the draft. More importantly, his abstracted millennialist aesthetic, both detached and seemingly immediate, could not envision a page within *Drum-Taps* for rebellion against those who would proclaim or publish such priestly spells. His historical template too closely adheres to the sentimental iconography of the *Rebellion Record* and *Southern Poems*. However formally innovative, Whitman's historical method merely redeems a triumphant nationalism. The outcome has already been determined before the first shot is fired. As Henry James wrote in his review,

*Of course* the tumult of battle is grand, the results of a battle tragic, and the untimely deaths of young men theme for elegies. But he is not a poet who merely reiterates these plain facts *ore rotundo*. He only sings them worthily who sings from a height [...] Mr. Whitman's primary purpose is to celebrate the greatness of our armies; his secondary purpose is to celebrate the greatness of the city of New York.<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, James laments, in spite of its ostensible "literary innovation", *Drum-Taps* finds common cause with the "great deal of verse that is nothing but words [which] has, during the war, been sympathetically sighed over and cut out of newspaper corners."<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the popularity of corner poets, *Drum-Taps'* stand-alone initial publication met with a marked disinterest. Folded into the 1867 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman's Abolition War poetry, however, met rehabilitation and reappraisal much sooner than Melville, during the 1870's and

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<sup>53</sup> Kenneth M. Price, ed., *Walt Whitman: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 115–16.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

1880's. In brief glimpses, *Drum-Taps*' triumphant declaration of the physic  
“[w]ord” over all (which rewrites Melvillian distance as transcendence), capable  
of suturing a nation's wounds, summons up scenes beyond injury and redress,  
moments unimagined or suppressed in *Rebellion Record* poetics. Curiously, only  
in the following scenes does Whitman follow through on the early vow of “Song  
of the Banner at Daybreak.”

I'll put the bayonets flashing point, I'll let bullets and slugs  
whizz,  
(As one carrying a symbol and menace far into the future,  
Crying with trumpet voice, *Arouse and beware! Beware and  
arouse!*) (9)

How Whitman's millennialist optimism might subsume and remediate the  
psychological trauma of war remains unclear, precisely because that trauma had  
no place in the millennial advance of American futurity. If Melville, indeed, wrote  
of “no life you have known,” then in part this decision follows from the  
recognition of the very newness of this war, of the sheer unprecedented scale of  
its destruction, of its obdurate resistance to experience and comprehension outside  
an impenetrable privacy. In “Shiloh” undeception is poised on the tip of a bullet.  
In “The March into Virginia” enlightenment occurs beneath “the vollied glare”  
(15). Characteristically, trauma in Melville amounted to an irreducible radical  
muteness; moreover, interior consciousness itself remained walled off from the  
process of introspection. Nothing can be known of the enciphered protagonist of  
“*In The Prison Pen*. (1864.)”

He tries to think—to recollect,  
But the blur is on his brain.

Around him swarm the plaining ghosts  
Like those on Virgil's shore—  
A wilderness of faces dim,  
And pale ones gashed and hoar. (86)

Those who would hazard gallant endeavors and lead errands into the Wilderness  
risk far worse than indignities of sickness and loss of limb.

It is not that a leg is lost,  
It is not that an arm is maimed,  
It is not that the fever has racked—  
Self he has long disclaimed.

But all through the Seven Days' Fight,  
And Deep in the Wilderness grim,  
And in the field-hospital tent,  
And Petersburg crater, and dim  
Lean brooding in Libby, there came—  
Ah Heaven!—what *truth* to him. ("The College Colonel," 88)<sup>55</sup>

Yet for Whitman, again, the war seemingly engendered no crisis of  
representation. On my reading, however, I argue that it is within an evasive  
aesthetics of suspension and repetition that Whitman proposes an ultimately  
untenable solution to the war's millennial promise. Nonetheless, the design of this  
evasion clarifies itself in the schoolmarmish scorn of Whitman's "Did you ask  
dulcet rhymes from me?"

Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?  
Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing Rhymes?  
Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow?  
[...]  
(*I have been of the same as the war was born,*  
The drum-corps' rattle is ever to me sweet music, I love well the

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<sup>55</sup> "Libby" here refers to the Confederate prison camp located in Richmond, Virginia.

martial dirge,  
With slow wail and convulsive throb leading the officer's funeral;)      
What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore leave my  
          works,  
And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and with  
piano-  
          tunes,  
For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me. (50)

Echoing the distaste of the perfumed interiors left behind in the opening section of "Song of Myself," Whitman's enthusiastic embrace of "drum's corp's rattle" and funereal wail and throb here but valorizes an equally insipid and reactionary rhetoric "sighed over and cut out of newspaper corners" in those very parlors.

In some brief moments, nonetheless, Whitman's verse finds itself the unwilling participant in a present traumatically arrested, a scandalized witness to the horrors of a present that might not relinquish its presentness. Paradoxically, these very moments of the traumatic present, thrown from the ameliorative procession of Reconciliation and the redress of injury, mark the point at which *Drum-Taps* descends into the business of war with gruesome specificity and detail. By way of contrast, first consider the anonymous, "In the Hospital," which opens,

          In the ranks of the sick and dying, in the chamber  
          where death-dews fall,  
Where the sleeper wakes from his trances to leap  
          to the bugle-call,  
Is there hope for the wounded soldier? Ah! No,  
          for his heart-blood flows,  
And the flickering flame of life must wane, to fail

at the evening's close.<sup>56</sup>

Ever so briefly the abyss of a recurring present appears—just long enough for the poem to briefly experience a representational crisis from which it flees. The narrator, confronted with a traumatized temporality beyond language, then seeks consolation from this horror by praying for a divine restoration that requires, as the sign of its truth, the soldier's demise:

O thou who goest, like a sunbeam, to lighten the  
darkness and gloom!  
Make way for his path of glory, through the dim  
and shadowy room;  
*Go speak to him words of comfort and teach him  
the way to die,*  
With his eyes upraised from the starry flag to the  
blessed cross on high. (emphasis mine)

In these lines, Whitman finds confirmation of his own poetics' millennial mission by analogy with the ministrations of wartime service. However, a further, more alarming analogy is suggested. Sympathetic identification between reader and soldier attains precisely by virtue of averting one's gaze heavenward, *away from* the dying soldier and *toward* the metonymic conjunction of flag and cross.

Post-traumatic stress disorder would not enter Western society's awareness until the aftermath of World War I. It would not enter the DSM until the late 1980 (DSM-III). Both the "The Wound-Dresser" (originally titled "The Dresser") and "The Artillery Man's Vision" (also published as "The Veteran's Vision") mark some of the earliest literary case studies of PTSD. A past long past

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<sup>56</sup> *Record Rebellion* (Volumes 7-12, New York: Van Nostrand, 1864-1868), vol. 8, sec. 3, 11-12.

suddenly recalled, the shifting of tenses, and the present, present again. In “The Wound-Dresser” a “dream projection” devolves into claustrophobic despondency. A creeping intimation of woundedness exceeding discursive recuperation intrudes upon the scene, infecting the poem with a feverish vision recalling the kind of tropological sepsis gestured at in the ambient storms of Melville’s “*Donelson*” (February, 1862). The “Wound-Dresser” frantically labors toward some recuperative technique to restore normative temporality and revive a narrative state of suspension:

Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions,  
these chances,  
Of unsurpass’d heroes, (was one side so brave? The  
other was equally brave;)  
Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of  
earth;  
Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you to  
tell us?  
What stays with you latest and deepest? Of curious  
panics,  
Of hard-fought engagements or sieges  
what deepest remains? (31)

Answering the patriotic call to witness and regale “in silence,” the subsequent “dream projection” grows beclouded and desperate as the attrition of visual command seeps and suppurates:

On, on I go—(open doors of time! open, hospital  
doors!)  
The crush’d head I dress, (poor crazed hand, tear not the  
bandage away;)  
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through  
and through I examine,  
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye,  
yet life struggles hard;  
(Come sweet death! be persuaded, O beautiful death!

In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,  
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the  
matter and blood,

[...]

His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on  
the bloody stump,

And has not yet look'd on it. (32-33)

Howsoever figured as wound-dressing, the verse instead performs its own bloody blazon, piling up mangled anatomies. The “crazed hand” that would declare its wounding to the elements is stilled, the “amputated hand” discarded for the pacifying, “soothing hand” of the poem’s final lines. If the Whitman of “To a Certain Civilian” indeed lulls no one, then the Whitman of “The Wound-Dresser” can lull nobody, save himself: “Some suffer so much—I recall the experience sweet/ and sad” (34).

“The Veteran’s Vision” works somewhat more successfully to extricate past from future, in a willed exertion to quarantine the visual from the aural remnants of “wars ... over long” (55). Ever so discreetly located within that line’s slight inversion (long over—over long) we find the most concise expression of the temporal problematic Whitman cannot hopelessly seek to amend. The poem’s interstice between artillery and vision destabilizes scopic control, permitting the concussive blast of the event to dislodge the “I see” from its distanced prospect:

There in the room as I wake from sleep this vision  
presses upon me:  
The engagement opens there and then, in my busy brain  
unreal;

The stable, deictic exteriority established by “*There* in the room” abruptly collapses within a single line into the interior illocality of “The engagement opens *there and then*” as onomatopoeic rifle shot passes into earshot. After a few seconds “strange lull”, whether of the battle or brain, vision reorients the narrative and,

Then resumed, the chaos louder than ever, with eager  
calls, and orders of officers;

As the poem draws to its conclusion, parenthetical asides proliferate in such rapid profusion as to arrest and sanitize the traumatic, hobbling immediacy of the “brain *unreal*.”<sup>57</sup>

(The falling, dying, I heed not—the wounded, dripping  
and red, I heed not—some to the rear are hob-  
bling;)

A few lines later the poem ends, not with the restored procession of time but a broken synecdoche, a soldier held hostage by the unceasing violence commemorated in nationalist mythos: “And bombs bursting in air, and at night the vari-color’d / rockets” (56). In John M. Picker’s reading of these lines, “Whitman implies that the Civil War breaks both melody and the unity of the band, just as it does the nation, into fragments.”<sup>58</sup> Yet, read in concert with *Rebellion Record* poetics, these lines suggest not a nation fragmented, but rather a

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<sup>57</sup> In the 1891-92 “Deathbed Edition” Whitman would revise this line to read “in fantasy unreal,” electing for the dematerialization of damaged embodiment in the articulation of his own heroic fantasy.

<sup>58</sup> John Picker, “Red War Is My Song,” in *Walt Whitman and Modern Music: War, Desire, and the Trials of Nationhood*, ed. Lawrence Kramer, Garland Reference Library of the Humanities ; (New York: Garland Pub., 2000), 9.

seemingly intractable, intact, and *shared* sensibility to which Union and Confederacy have both asserted claim: the same license of songs, looped endlessly, sung by and at both factions. What function then might these visions serve in the overall design of *Drum-Taps*? The sequence of the individual poems offers no clear answer, particularly in the appearance of “Spirit Whose Work is Done (Washington, 1865)” where the speaker solicits the troubled “spirit of dreadful hours” to quell its agitation with a tender kiss.<sup>59</sup> Yet, it would seem the floating detachment of Whitman, and the inability of the bard to establish a quotidian representation of hours, months, and days leaves ministrations of the verse cruelly ineffectual. The poem hopes to establish anew the progression of time, to unchain a present inextricably caught forever rehearsing the past. It pleads that these figures return from battle so that the battle will cease to return to them. Whitman requires some articulation of a temporality anchored in events, discrete and defined. Yet, “The Veteran’s Vision” affords no such measures. Without the changing of songs, without adjustment and adaptation, that Vision cannot arrive at the state of recollection that permits “The Dresser” ease alongside “what deepest remains” (31). Some flexibility here permits a solution other than death. Or, to put it another way, the fragmented partiality of pieces and aspects that do not pretend to a totalizing vantage preempt an all-encompassing reassemblage. The opening parenthetical lines, first appearing in the 1871 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, signal a potential reflexivity within Whitman:

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<sup>59</sup> *Sequel to Drum-Taps*, 14.

(Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarums, and  
urge relentless war,  
But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and I  
resign'd myself,  
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch  
the dead;) (386)

At no other point in *Drum-Taps* do we encounter such a moment,  
excepting the delicately modulated passages of stately passing in section 19 of  
“When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd.” Witness to a “vision of armies;/  
...as in a noiseless dream,” and the mute suffering of the living, Whitman  
marches on,

Passing the visions, passing the night,  
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands;  
Passing the song of the hermit bird, and the tallying song  
of my soul,  
Victorious song, death's outlet song, (yet varying ever-  
altering song  
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling,  
flooding the night,  
Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet  
yet again bursting with joy.)  
Covering the earth, and filling the spread of heaven,  
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses.<sup>60</sup>

Singing his victorious, “varying/ ever-altering song,” Whitman again arrives at  
the threshold from which “The Veteran's Vision” retreats. How might the  
noiseless dream of suffering be sung? Upon what altering altar might their silence  
be sacrificed, made holy? Should their alarum be suppressed? Or rather, in  
framing these questions so, do we misapprehend and lose hold of the sense of  
*passing*? Passing, not as a melancholic procession *in* time, but a transcendent

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<sup>60</sup> *Sequel to Drum-Taps*, 11.

surpassing of time by the negating and “negative virtue of no life you have known.” Contemplating a departure from these nocturnal visions, Whitman opts to “keep” his “comrades,” but keep them embowered as symbols of his own redemptive regeneration: “*There* in the fragrant pines, and the cedars dusk and dim” (12).

That Whitman’s pastoral elegy for Lincoln would attract his first widespread acclaim was no mere accident of history. The same rhetorical tropes and tactics successfully invoked by Whitman to limited degree in “The Dresser” and more fully in “Lilacs” deeply inform *Battle-Pieces*’ own successful reintegration and return from the Wilderness. On their own, the signposts of secular chronology, rather than the cosmic triumphs of a crusading millennialism (mere operatives, rather than warriors), would not enable Melville to write himself out from the impasse of sectarian crisis. The “brute history” of white supremacy had been exposed in an open coffin. The tangled threads of biblical typology woven through the verses, in all their varied and virtuosic forms, ultimately rendered unintelligible the previous four years of internecine strife. With the cease of hostilities, new song forms emerge to desperately hold at bay the previously ever-looming threat of an atavistic encroachment:

*Dust to Dust, and blood for blood—  
Passion and Pangs! Has Time  
Gone Back? Or is this the Age  
Of the world’s great Prime?* (“The Armies of the Wilderness”,

72)

The cacophonous carillon of theological whiteness so crucial to the integrity that undergirds the clashing pieces and aspects will in ten years' time sit shattered, inert, and confounded. In 1866, however, prior to the abandonment of Reconstruction, Melville could conclude his imagined address of Robert E. Lee to the Union capitol secure that "Faith in America never dies; / shall the end ordained fulfill, / We march with Providence cheery still" ("Lee in the Capitol", 169). Crucially, the eternal faith in America ventriloquized in the irregular tetrameters of "Lee in the Capitol" registers the volume's belated, if irresolute, surrender of prospect-shattering iconoclasm through a transcendent appeal to the unbroken covenant of filiopietal whiteness. And yet, "Lee in the Capitol" remains troubled and troubling, hiding within itself the reactionary fear that today explodes with irate astonishment at the blacken'd names of the great white fathers: "This week it's Robert E. Lee. I noticed that Stonewall Jackson is coming down. I wonder is George Washington next week and is it Thomas Jefferson the week after? You really do have to ask yourself: 'Where does it stop?'"<sup>61</sup> Where, indeed, does it stop, asks Melville's senators to themselves:

Awhile, with curious eyes they scan  
The Chief who led invasion's van—  
Allied by family to one,  
Founder of the Arch the Invader warred upon:  
Who looks at Lee must think of Washington;  
In pain must think, and hide the thought,

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<sup>61</sup> Dartunorro Clark, "Statues of Washington, Jefferson Aren't 'Next,' But It's Complicated, Historians Say," August 18, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/statues-washington-jefferson-aren-t-next-it-s-complicated-historians-n793971>.

So deep with grievous meaning it is fraught. (165)

The family resemblance from which they shrink becomes, as Castronovo and Nelson argue, scandalous “in the viewer’s aborted willingness to consider the flawed foundations on which the hallowed nation was erected. The narrator implies that Lee was incipient in the figure of the nation’s most beloved and slaveholding founder, George Washington.”<sup>62</sup> In anticipation of the next chapter on Melville’s *Clarel*, I would like to conclude this chapter by examining the typological precedents Melville destabilizes in *Battle-Pieces*, particularly in the volume’s concluding poems and supplemental essay, in which he asserts “it is enough... if the South have been taught by the terrors of civil war to feel that secession, like Slavery, is against Destiny” (260). What Melville would eventually realize is that while no scriptural typology would persuasively quench partisan ardor, a new apparition of large-scale economic predation and a renewed campaign against the liberties of emancipated blacks in the American South lay stirring beneath. That this poem, along with the subsequent and final, undated salvo “*A Meditation*”, occupy a place of privilege is suggested both by their conclusive placement in *Battle-Pieces* and seeming alignment with the sentiments of the Supplement, the latter an abrogation of “symmetry” urged by a patriotism “overriding all literary scruples” (181).<sup>63</sup> In response to senatorial inquiries

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<sup>62</sup> “Fahrenheit 1861: Cross Patriotism in Melville and Douglass”, 344.

<sup>63</sup> “A Meditation” is subtitled “*Attributed to a Northerner after attending the last of two funerals from the same homestead—those of a National and a Confederate*”

regarding whether “Freely will Southern men with Northern mate?” Melville’s “Lee in the Capitol” delineates the constitutive racism at the heart of American millennialism with a parable from “Moorish lands” of “a maid/ Brought to confess by vow the creed/ Of Christians” (167). Counseled that conversion requires capitulation to the law that “you must learn to hate your kin,/ [...] For Moor and Christian are at war,” the maid nonetheless refuses. Likewise, Lee breathtakingly suggests, the South shall remain intransigent so long as the newly emancipated are to be “conquerors of the free[.]” Only the “instinct” to disavow “darkening prophecy” shall ensure that “end ordained fulfill.” How then might Lee’s “grave plea” be reconciled with the “prophetic cheer” and darkened prophecy of the ekphrastic “‘Formerly a Slave’ An idealized Portrait, by E. Vedder, in the Spring Exhibition of the National Academy, 1865”?

Her children’s children they shall know  
 The good withheld from her;  
 And so here reverie takes prophetic cheer—  
 In spirit she sees the stir

Far down the depth of thousand years,  
 And marks the revel shine;  
 Her dusky face is lit with sober light,  
 Sibylline, yet benign. (115)

The knowledge predicted here, importantly, functions both prospectively and retrospectively—whether her descendents know/experience that which was denied her, recollect and remember that good withheld from her, or that they shall

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*officer (brothers), his kinsmen, who had died from the effects wounds received in the closing battles.”*

themselves experience anew the generational trauma traced through her lineage. Though painted entirely at the mercy of white Christianity, the ekphrastic subject gazes into a future generationally traced through black matrilineality, an aspect clearly beyond the view of “America” with “Law on her brow and empire in her eyes”, which demands only that emancipation be witnessed as the proof and purchase of a benevolent, divinely ordained dispensation and requiring nothing less than the interdiction of diasporic kinship (“America”, 221). In this way, and this way only, can “reparations” be made to the meditating Northerner of “A Meditation” who, outraged, outrageously and incredulously asks, “Can Africa pay back this blood/ Spilt on Potomac’s shore?” (170-71). In the ten years between *Battle-Pieces* and *Clarel*, Melville will come to renounce the appalling and astonishing hubris required to utter such an obscenity or suggest that “Washingtons” honor the name. For, in the course of *Clarel*’s blackest commentary on the operatives of Anglo-American millennialism, we will encounter the scathing indictment of a half-Cherokee refugee from America:

The Anglo-Saxons—lacking grace  
To win the love of any race;  
Hated by myriads dispossessed  
Of rights—the Indians East and West. [...]  
Who in the name of Christ and Trade  
(Oh, bucklered forehead of the brass!  
Deflower the world’s last sylvan glade! (4.9.117-125)

## Chapter Three

### *Clarel*, Counter-monumentalism, and the Shadow of Allegory

You ask me to give you the names of any *other* books of mine, with the names of the publishers. The following occur to me: — “White Jacket” published in London by Bentley. “Battle-Pieces,” in verse, published in New York by Harper & Brothers. “Clarel,” published by George P. Putnam’s Sons, New York — a metrical affair, a pilgrimage or what not, of several thousand lines, eminently adapted for unpopularity. — The notification to you here is ambidexter, as it were: it may intimidate or allure. (Letter to James Billson, Oct. 10, 1884)<sup>1</sup>

[T]he great unread *Clarel* will prove, in this century, to be The Great American Poem. (Ed Dorn, 1972)<sup>2</sup>

The passage  
of a life should show;  
it should abrade.  
And when life stops,  
a certain space  
—however small—  
should be left scarred  
by the grand and  
damaging parade.  
Things shouldn’t  
be so hard. (Kay Ryan)<sup>3</sup>

Some eighty years after the initial, little regarded publication of *Clarel*, Southern historian C. Vann Woodward made the (un)timely observation that Melville had “penned the blackest commentary on the future of his country ever

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<sup>1</sup> Herman Melville, *Correspondence*, ed. Lynn Horth, The Northwestern-Newberry ed., vol. 14, The Writings of Herman Melville (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 483.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Blevins, “Recasting Melville: *The Confidence-Man* and *Clarel* in Ed Dorn’s *Gunslinger*,” *Melville Society Extracts* 77 (May 1989): 15-16

<sup>3</sup> Kay Ryan, “Things Shouldn’t Be So Hard,” *The New Yorker* (June 4, 2011): 48

written by an American in the nineteenth century.”<sup>4</sup> First published on June 3, 1876, one month prior to the United States’ Centennial, the nearly 18,000 lines of *Clarel*, cloth-bound in two volumes and imprinted on the cover with a gilt “variation of the ‘ensign’ of Jerusalem described in 4.2 [...]—a Jerusalem cross, over palm leaves and under three crowns and a star,” elicited from its few, exasperated reviewers exhaustion and bemusement.<sup>5</sup> Divided into four sections and 150 cantos, *Clarel* did not so much “intimidate or allure” as it irritated and alienated; the volume, it would seem, was resolutely out of step with the triumphant nationalism of its moment. The Philadelphia Exposition centennial committee considered a number of authors to deliver the “National Ode” and settled upon Bayard Taylor, after William Cullen Bryant, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow declined the commission.<sup>6</sup> According to Elmar S. Leuth, Whitman himself “hoped that the timely appearance of [his] Centennial edition [of *Leaves of Grass*] would convince the exposition committee to let him write the official poem for the

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<sup>4</sup> C. Vann Woodward, *The Burden of Southern History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 116.

<sup>5</sup> Walter E. Bezanson, “Historical and Critical Note,” in *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 540.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Armenti, “Bayard Taylor’s ‘National Ode’: The ‘Crowning Success’ of Philadelphia’s Fourth of July Centennial Celebration | From the Catbird Seat: Poetry & Literature at the Library of Congress,” webpage, July 2, 2015, [//blogs.loc.gov/catbird/2015/07/bayard-taylors-national-ode-the-crowning-success-of-philadelphias-fourth-of-july-centennial-celebration/](http://blogs.loc.gov/catbird/2015/07/bayard-taylors-national-ode-the-crowning-success-of-philadelphias-fourth-of-july-centennial-celebration/).

opening ceremony.”<sup>7</sup> Taylor’s ode was delivered “to an audience of at least four-thousand people” which, Armenti notes, was “one of the largest live audiences for a poetry reading in the United States until Robert Frost’s recitation of ‘The Gift Outright’ at John F. Kennedy’s 1961 inaugural.” In addition to Taylor’s “National Ode,” first reprinted in an heavily illustrated, commemorative volume, and reprinted again in 1889 to honor of the “Centennial of the Inauguration of General George Washington,” there were also readings of a national hymn by Whittier and a cantata by the former Confederate soldier Sidney Lanier, whose idiosyncratic prosody was explicitly based upon Anglo-Saxon racial supremacy.<sup>8</sup> Despite Whitman’s disappointment, Taylor’s ode would dutifully trumpet the sublime millennialist triumph expressed in Whitman’s centennial poems.<sup>9</sup> Consider the rhetoric of Taylor’s opening and closing lines:

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<sup>7</sup> Elmar S. Lueth, “Centennial Exposition (Philadelphia),” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, ed. J. R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland Pub., 1998).

<sup>8</sup> Armenti; For Lanier’s racialized theories of meter see Jason R. Rudy, “Manifest Prosody,” *Victorian Poetry* 49:2 (Summer 2011): 253-266. Rudy explains that Lanier “embrace[d] the rhetoric of Manifest Destiny, and specifically the popular nineteenth-century fantasy described by Reginald Horsman whereby white Americans imagined their supposed Anglo-Saxon origins as proof” of their divine election.” In a posthumously published essay on Anglo-Saxon poetics in the *Atlantic*, from which Rudy quotes, Lanier champions the linguistic purity of the “strong, bright, picture-making tongue we had in the beginning of the sixteenth century when the powerful old Anglo-Saxon had fairly conquered all the foreign elements in its idiom” (253).

<sup>9</sup> Of the four poems in Whitman’s cluster, “Song of the Exposition,” first appeared in 1871 upon the occasion “Opening the 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition American Institute, New York, noon, September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1871.” *Two Rivulets, Democratic Vistas, Centennial Songs, and Passage to India* (Camden: New Republic Print, 1876), 3; “Song of the Redwood Tress” first appeared in print

Sun of the stately Day,  
 Let Asia into the shadow drift,  
 Let Europe bask in thy ripened ray,  
 And over the severing ocean lift  
 A brow of broader splendor!  
 Give light to the eager eyes  
 Of the Land that waits to behold thee rise:  
 [...]

Prepare for the work of the day!  
 Fallow thy pastures lie  
 And far thy shepherds stray,  
 And the field of thy vast domain  
 Are waiting for purer seed.<sup>10</sup>

We may first note that Taylor's verse, in an echo of Whitman, manipulates indentation in order to draw the reader's attention to vast breadth of temporal reserves and territorial dominion commemorated by the United States centennial celebration. Likewise, Taylor's commonplace trope of the New World/Old World eclipse of elder civilizations, tracking the sun's progression from East to West, appears in Whitman's "Song of the Redwood."

Then to a loftier strain,  
 Still prouder, more ecstatic, rose the chant,  
 As if the heirs, the Deities of the West,  
 Joining, with *master-tongue*, bore part. (emphasis mine)  
*Not wan from Asia's fetishes,*  
*Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-houses,*  
*(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of wars and*  
*scaffolds every where,)*

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in the February 1874 issue of *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*; "Song of the Universal," according to its paratext originally served as the "Commencement Poem, Tuft's College, Mass., June 17, 1874); and finally, "Song For All Seas, All Ships" appeared in the *New York Daily Graphic* on April 4, 1873 under the title "Sea Captains, Young or Old."

<sup>10</sup> Bayard Taylor, *The Centennial Ode: The Memorial Freedom Poem* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke and Company, 1889) [New York: William F. Gill & Co., 1876], 27; 72.

*But come from Nature's long and harmless throes—peacefully  
buiided thence  
These virgin lands—Lands of the Western Shore,  
To the new Culminating Man—to you, the Empire New,  
You, promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate. (original emphasis)<sup>11</sup>*

The widespread trope of a depopulated space, vacant and fallow, virginal and interminable, was not merely well suited to the particular occasion. As testified by Whitman's ability to select a poem from his oeuvre and simply rechristen it, these imperialist hosannas to genocide and dispossession were but latencies, typologically stored up and brought to 'organic' fruition that could only dispel the dark obscurities of futurity through an interminable whiteness theologically illumined. Melville's counter-centennial *Clarel*, however, would leave behind the ancient pilgrimage, the slaughter providentially licensed by Whitman and his

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<sup>11</sup> *Two Rivulets, Democratic Vistas, Centennial Songs, and Passage to India* (Camden: New Republic Print, 1876), 13. As an aside, it's worth mentioning that a number of scholars have taken interest in the "Hegelianism" of Whitman's late works. For example, Cody Marrs finds it difficult to "construe time in *Drum-Taps* as theologically inflected" due to its interest "in things like ships, faces, and moonlight" and then cites an excerpt from Whitman's "The Torch," a short piece wherein a group of fishermen along the "northwest coast" paddle a lake, quite literally "Bearing a Torch a-blaze at the prow." That Marrs cannot recognize the incandescence of Manifest Destiny is explained in part by his implication that Whitman's "grand vision" of history "which pivots on the imperial development [of] the American nation, goes where Hegel himself never did." *Nineteenth-Century American Literature & the Long Civil War*, 44. Whatever garbled particulars of dialectical thought Whitman drew from Hegel, what the poet most assuredly lit upon were the thoughts on Africa as "no historical part of the world [...], the unhistorical, Undeveloped Spirit." qtd. in Lewis R. Gordon, "Fanon, Philosophy, and Racism," in *Racism and Philosophy*, ed. Susan E. Babbitt & Sue Campbell (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 33-34. For the suppression of the slave trade from critical readings of freedom and the Hegelian *Philosophy of History*, see Susan Buck-Morss, "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (Summer 2000): 821-865.

fellow crusaders, in search of a poem to end Whitman's apotheosis of "America!" and the iniquitous "Scheme's culmination—its Thought, and its Reality[.]"<sup>12</sup>

*Clarel's* repulsion of the American mission of manifest destiny undoubtedly informs the tenor of its reception history. Of the sixteen reviews collected in *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*, only one identifies the work as an "epic poem," though without any discernible criteria beyond its temporal distension, which "it seems to us might judiciously be somewhat curtailed[.]"<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the review anticipates a readership already versed, so to speak, with the topology implied by the subtitle (*A [Poem and] Pilgrimage in the Holy Land*), such that the plot is adumbrated as follows: "the hero and his companions meet with the *customary adventures, see the customary sights*, and during their journey, chance upon much that surprises and interests them and that furnishes abundant food for thought" (emphasis mine, 108). By 1876, the narrative circuit that composes the poems four major divisions ("Jerusalem," "The Wilderness" [the Dead Sea], "Mar Saba," and "Bethlehem") was well trodden by an American readership lately enamored with romanticized and imperialistic accounts of Palestine. Melville's own lament over the millennialist preoccupation with the conversion of Jews to Christianity, dispiritedly referred to in a January 1857 journal entry as "preposterous Jew mania," was prompted by an encounter

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<sup>12</sup> *Centennial Songs*, 17 In the Centennial year, this scheme would be effectuated through the reconstitution of white political solidarity bargained through the Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1877, which I discuss below.

<sup>13</sup> *Library Table* [New York], 1 (August 1876): 108.

with one Walter Dickson who, inspired by the former Millerite Clorinda Minor, had traveled with his wife and daughters from Boston to Jerusalem aboard the *John Winthrop* in 1853.<sup>14</sup> Dickson, who would serve as a model for the Zionist Nathan, “that strange pervert[,]” (1.17.198), was, according to Melville, “a man of Puritanic energy, and being inoculated with this preposterous Jew Mania, [and] resolved to carry his Quixoticism through to the end” (94). Thus contextualized, *Clarel* marked Melville’s contribution to a “subgenre of Holy Land literature based on direct travel to Palestine” that proliferated as pilgrimage to the Holy Land increased some 400% between the 1840’s and 1870’s.<sup>15</sup> As Obenzinger’s

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<sup>14</sup> Herman Melville, *Journals*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, The Northwestern-Newberry ed., vol. 15, The Writings of Herman Melville (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1989), 94; Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 133. While Hilton Obenzinger argues that Melville’s focus on this “millennialist obsession with the original chosen people gives the poem and [his] critique of America a distinctly anti-Judaic cast,” I will argue that Melville’s vision is not so much anti-Judaic as it is both a demythologizing of Christianography’s Anti-Semitic Zionism as well as a complex revalorization of the figure of the ‘Wandering Jew.’ Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain, and the Holy Land Mania* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 6.

<sup>15</sup> According to Obenzinger, “In 1845, about 5,000 pilgrims visited the Holy Land; by 1858 there were nearly 10,000. During the 1870’s, Jerusalem would count between 10,000 to 20,000 pilgrims a year” (xvii). Obenzinger’s full description of this genre is as follows: “a literature in which representations, controversies, and anxieties involving the certainties of religious and national identities contend upon a heightened field of mythic meanings, with all Holy Land books seeking in one way or another to appropriate Palestine for the American imagination. With America conceived as the New Jerusalem – an association assumed metaphorically if not always enforced typologically – the Holy Land was encountered as a terrain of crucial cultural dynamics

study makes clear, despite *Clarel's* outlier status in the history of nineteenth-century American literature, Melville fashioned this work in conversation with popular discourses of the day, particularly those works of "sacred geography" that sought to demonstrate, in the words of Clarel's first guide Nehemiah, that "Yon object tallies with thy text" (1.34.12). Like many a millenarian, Nehemiah, guileless and serene, sought the verification of scripture as sacred geography by literally grounding it where they stood.<sup>16</sup>

My identification of *Clarel* as an occasional and counter-monumental rejoinder to the Centennial moment misaligns, in this respect, with Renker's challenge to Melville scholars of bringing Melville's poetics "into the essential fabric of larger accounts of literary history in general, and *postbellum* history in particular" (130, emphasis mine).<sup>17</sup> My reading of *Clarel* upbraids that essential fabric by emphasizing the poem's confounding of antebellum and postbellum as historical markers traversed by the "True Bridge of Sighs." In doing so, it is necessary to observe the prolonged anticipation and planning that culminated in the 1876 exhibition. In 1870, a site-selecting committee proposed Philadelphia as the location for the Centennial's observance, which was officially adopted by the

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both challenging and reaffirming America's narrative of settlement as divine errand" (x).

<sup>16</sup> Bayard Taylor, author of the "National Ode," was part and parcel of this "Holy Land Mania," having published his own travelogue of Palestine in 1855, *The Lands of the Saracen; Or, Pictures of Palestine, Asia Minor, Sicily, and Spain*.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Renker, "Melville the Poet in the Postbellum World," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, ed. Robert S. Levine, 2013, 130.

Centennial Commission created by an act of Congress in 1871 (with a special subcommittee on the Fourth of July Celebration formed in 1873). By its close in November, nearly ten million attendees had visited the Exhibition.<sup>18</sup> On the inaugural day, May 10, a poem by John Greenleaf Whittier was sung by a chorus of 800 people to music composed by John K. Payne.<sup>19</sup> In its fifth stanza, Whittier's "Centennial Hymn" acknowledges the sins of slavery while officiating something akin to a "Pocahontas-wedding / Of contraries in old belief— / Hellenic cheer, Hebraic grief" (*Clarel*, 1.28.32-34).

For art and labor met in truce,  
For beauty made the bride of use,  
We thank Thee; but, withal, we crave  
The austere virtues strong to save,  
The honor proof to place or gold,  
The manhood never bought nor sold.

Though craving here a desire as yet unsated, the atemporal reincarnation of the divine in the hymn's opening expiatory stanza apotheosizes a new millennium in which that labor has been brought to fulfillment:

Our fathers' God! from out whose hand  
The centuries fall like grains of sand,  
We meet to-day, united, free,  
And loyal to our land and Thee,

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<sup>18</sup> The U.S. Census of 1870 listed the American population at just over thirty-eight million.

<sup>19</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier*, ed. John B. Pickard, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975), 345.

To thank Thee for the era done,  
And trust Thee for the opening one.<sup>20</sup>

That the opening era of Christ and Trade could would so robustly iterate the era as done is nowhere more apparent than in its proprietary exclusion of African-Americans, and one in particular, from testifying, verifying, and thereby giving sanction to this marvelous new age. Not only was African-American labor excluded from the construction of the fair's more than two hundred Centennial buildings, "at a time when perhaps seventy percent of the blacks of Philadelphia were unemployed" —but Frederick Douglass himself was accosted and refused admittance by Philadelphia police, despite having been officially invited. Only after the intervention of New York Senator Roscoe Conkling was Douglass permitted to take the stage. As American labor historian Philip S. Foner writes, "the greatest orator in the nation, whom Abraham Lincoln had said was the 'most remarkable man' he ever met, had not been invited to be heard—only to be seen."<sup>21</sup> Here, the longings of one anonymous Centennial apostrophe were answered:

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<sup>20</sup> John Greenleaf Whittier, *The Complete Poetical Works of John Greenleaf Whittier.*, Cambridge Edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1894), 234.

<sup>21</sup> Philip Sheldon Foner, "Black Participation in the Centennial of 1876," *Phylon* (1960-) 39, no. 4 (Winter 1978): 284. Philip S. Foner. The odious incident silencing Douglass compels reconsideration of the declaration of Woodward with which this chapter began. In the 1855 edition to his *Autobiography*, Douglass appended an extract from his incendiary July 5, 1852 oration delivered in Rochester, New York. That extract concludes with an imperative rejoinder to the American exceptionalism to be celebrated at the Philadelphia Exposition: "Go where you may, search where you will, roam

Come back across the bridge of time  
And swear an oath that holds you fast,  
To make the future as sublime  
As is the memory of the past!<sup>22</sup>

In the sublimation of futurity, time is disappeared through its allegiance-as-bondage to the past. The expression of fealty that interpellates the addressee requires a disavowal: The bridge has never and will never be built. Lacking such fealty to the monumentalized subject so interpellated, *Clarel* reorients the unsettles the question of nineteenth-century conventions of “character” as an purely aesthetic problem by implicating and imbricating those conventions squarely in the Centennial’s commemorative problematic of personhood.

\*u\*Much to his credit, Edgar A. Dryden provides a reading of *Clarel* that persuasively makes the case for why it “does not conform to and should not be read within the context of the conventions of nineteenth-century fiction.”<sup>23</sup>

Dryden’s generic case is built upon an exploration of how character is staged within the poem; however, this case is predicated on “*Clarel*’s status as a literary

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through all the monarchies and despotisms of the old world, travel through South America, search out every abuse, and when you have found the last, lay your facts by the side of the every-day practices of this nation, and you will say with me, that, for revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy, America reigns without rival.”

<sup>22</sup> Robert W. Rydell, *All the World’s a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 9.

<sup>23</sup> Edgar A. Dryden, *Monumental Melville: The Formation of a Literary Career* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004), 103. Dryden refines Bezanson’s observation by situating *Clarel* within the seventeenth-century “character tradition” of Sir Thomas Overbury and Samuel Butler who “considered the representation of character types as a genre” (102). Within Dryden’s schema, *Clarel* conforms to the type of “The Young Doubter.”

monument,” and it precisely this status with which I now take issue, insofar as its purported monumentality is belied by the temporal predicament of its occasion, as well as for Dryden’s qualified endorsement of Bezanson’s “observation that Clarel, the eponymous hero, is ‘more a problem than a person’” (102). Moreover, that temporal predicament cannot, I maintain, be abstracted from the Reconstruction-era problematics of personhood that the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition sought to resolve. The conjunction of the Centennial and the publication of *Clarel* present a formidable challenge to Dolan’s monumentalizing constriction of occasional verse as it relentlessly interrogates the procedures underwriting the disincorporation of persons from socially sanctioned commemoration. As such, C.L.R. James’ swift dismissal of *Clarel*, “a very long and very tiresome poem,” misreads its assault on the “social” as the sign of Melville’s loss of “what distinguished him in the great years—the sense of society as a whole.”<sup>24</sup> James’ impoverished reading of *Clarel’s* moment is startling, not simply for the way in which it echoes contemporaneous reviews, but especially for an uncharacteristic amnesia upon which the Centennial exhibition was predicated:

The Civil War put an end to this torment of a nation. [...] If this essentially American writer now takes on increasingly the status of the most representative writer of modern civilization, one result of it should be to bring more sharply into prominence *the period in*

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<sup>24</sup> C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (New York: Allison & Busby, 1985), 130.

*which he wrote, the period which preceded the Civil War.*  
(emphasis mine, 130).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Though James's fundamental misrepresentation about Melville's career was first made in 1953, limited acknowledgement of the later poetic corpus has been confined within the narrower field of Melville studies (i.e., *Leviathan*) and has proven rebarbative to the disciplinary narratives of American poetics. As William Spengemann noted at the end of the twentieth century, "He wrote fiction for 11 years, poetry for over thirty. True, he wrote more pages of prose than of verse, but that is no less true of Whitman and T.S. Eliot, both of whom wrote a good deal less verse than Melville did. His four published volumes of verse, including one of the longest poems ever written in English, far exceed the output of, say, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Gerard Manley Hopkins, or Robert Frost. And if we count the verses in *Mardi* (1849) and the poems left unpublished at his death, Melville's poetic oeuvre approaches the size of Lord Byron's or Robert Browning's." in William C. Spengemann, "Melville the Poet," *American Literary History* 11, no. 4 (1999): 573. In a response to Spengemann published the following year, Elizabeth Renker disputed his characterization of that moment's reception of Melville's daunting poetic corpus. While her optimism about the critical fate of these works has been, to a limited degree, borne out, her *faith* in its imminent availability proved less accurate. The arrival of a Northwestern University / Newberry Library edition of *Published Poems* (then estimated to appear in 2001), thereby "solv[ing] the primary problem in the history of scholarship on the poems: finding reliable, complete editions[.]" was delayed until 2009. Elizabeth Renker, "Melville the Poet: Response to William Spengemann," *American Literary History* 12, no. 1/2 (2000): 350. I only mention this as Renker's prophetic incarnation of this corpus, to which I am deeply sympathetic, has yet to materialize: "[a] Scholars will produce critical books and articles (like this one I might add, as well as Spengemann's—both instances of the more general phenomenon I am describing); [b] graduate seminars and undergraduate classes will incorporate this new work into syllabi; [c] the nonacademic press will publish more essays by leading scholars and poets; [d] and the news that Melville wrote poetry will start to get around. New readers and new poets will read it in greater numbers than ever before" (351). How might we attest to the unrealized prophetic voice? By returning to the prophet herself, who in 2013, would make an observation both wondrous and bemused: "Herman Melville presents one of the strangest—and most intriguing—cases in the history of American Poetry. His status as one our greatest authors is widely acknowledged, but few know that he was primarily a poet" (Renker 2000, 127). While there has been much

Dryden begins by situating his analysis in the context of “the distance that separates current approaches to Melville from those of that earlier moment [synecdochally exemplified by the New Critic John Crowe Ransome],” in which a past literariness of close reading is juxtaposed with a contemporary approach, metonymically associated with Wai Chee Dimock, that privileges a “ ‘practice of reading’ literature as a ‘sign, an emblematic index, of a larger reality’ [that] has made the ‘literary’ . . . just a metonym for the historical” (4-5). What we have lost, he argues, is the sense of “that which makes it unique or special” (5). As indicated in his chapter on *Clarel*, “Death and Poetry,” Dryden productively emphasizes the seemingly ineluctable vanishing point of mortality as a fulcrum around which the poem revolves, and in so doing, “seeks at once to name it, and, as a monument, to stand in place of it” (137).

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success on the first point [a], primarily within Melville studies, the remaining points prove more troubling. For instance, she notes that in 2011, on the anniversary of Melville’s Birthday, *The Atlantic* published an online piece entitled “Herman Melville’s Mediocre Civil War Poetry.” However, to bemoan yet another dismissal of Melville’s aesthetic capacities would miss the more disturbing point; namely, that the review was *merely a reprint of the 1867 review by William Dean Howell* I examined in the previous chapter (129). Moreover, the explanation for “our culture’s stubborn tale of Melville’s negligible poetry” echoes the drive to novelize the verse (“In any form some truths will hold”) we have examined. Turning back to James, we must also place the Centennial in the context of events immediately preceding its staging that necessitates a disavowal of those events, the Panic of 1873 and the collapse of Reconstruction. In this respect, my identification of *Clarel* as an occasional work of the Centennial moment misaligns with the periodization of what Renker identified as “one of the immediate challenges to Melville scholars,” that is, “to bring Melville the poet into the essential fabric of larger accounts of literary history in general, and *postbellum* history in particular” (130, emphasis mine).

Yet, this “monument,” as the compensatory symbol that stands in place of temporality’s *sine qua non*, registers a rather peculiar understanding of “the literary,” as the mark of Melville’s abandonment of “shared public world” implied by the conventions of fiction. Moreover, as the silencing of Douglass in Philadelphia indicates, the very notion of a shared public world remained deeply problematic. Rather, the Centennial Exhibition monumentalized the shared public, writ globally, as that which would stand in the place of civic death reckoned by the Abolition War and Reconstruction’s collapse. Dryden’s sacral embowerment of the literary finds earlier expression by Michael Paul Rogin, who paints the Melville of *Clarel* as an anchorite: “Faced with the era’s political and social corruption, Melville turned away from public issues[,]” and toward “a spiritual realm tangential to our [political] concerns.”<sup>26</sup> For Dryden, not only is Melville a monumental writer, but the “literary,” as such, is a monument, or, to use Wordsworth’s terms, “a rugged Pile” heroically impervious to the “hoary Pile” of other discursive formations (religion, philosophy, and science) no longer capable of restoring the social to a prelapsarian state. Yet, precisely what is lost to the *umbrage* of monumental reading is the poem’s unconditional repudiation of a social imaginary perniciously shored up by a devastating providential futurity underwritten by a mythic moment anterior to, and hostile to, the very existence of the social. The world that occasions *Clarel*, the Centennial moment—that is the

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Paul Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 1983), 282–83.

monument to death, not the poem. Melville explicitly renders the conjunction of the Centennial moment with thanatos in “The American Aloe on Exhibition,” from his (unpublished) *Weeds and Wildings*.<sup>27</sup>

It is but a floral superstition, as everybody knows, that this plant flowers only once in a century. When in any instance the flowering is for decades delayed beyond the normal period, (eight or ten years at furthest) it is owing to something retarding in the environment or soil.

But few they were who came to see  
The Century-Plant in flower:  
Ten cents admission—price you pay  
For bon-bons of the hour.

In strange inert blank unconcern  
Of wild things at the Zoo,  
The patriarch let the sight-seers stare—  
Nor recked what? who came to view.

But lone at night the garland sighed  
While moaned the aged stem:  
“At last, at last! But joy and pride  
What part have I with them?”

Let be the dearth that kept me back  
Now long from wreath decreed;  
But, Ah, ye Roses that have passed  
Accounting me a weed!”<sup>28</sup>

But this “world,” this “death” need not be named. Our intelligibility as social beings, as political subjects, belies the fact that death names us. *Clarel* does

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<sup>27</sup> The official name of the Centennial Exhibition was the International Exhibition of Arts, Manufactures and Products of the Soil and Mine.

<sup>28</sup> Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Uncompleted Writings*, ed. Harrison Hayford, Hershel Parker, and G. Thomas Tanselle, The Northwestern-Newberry ed., vol. 13, *The Writings of Herman Melville* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017), 103.

not “enclose and monumentalize a graveyard of culture” (140), but rather offers a counter-monument to culture as graveyard, to the culture of monument, as seen in figure 1.

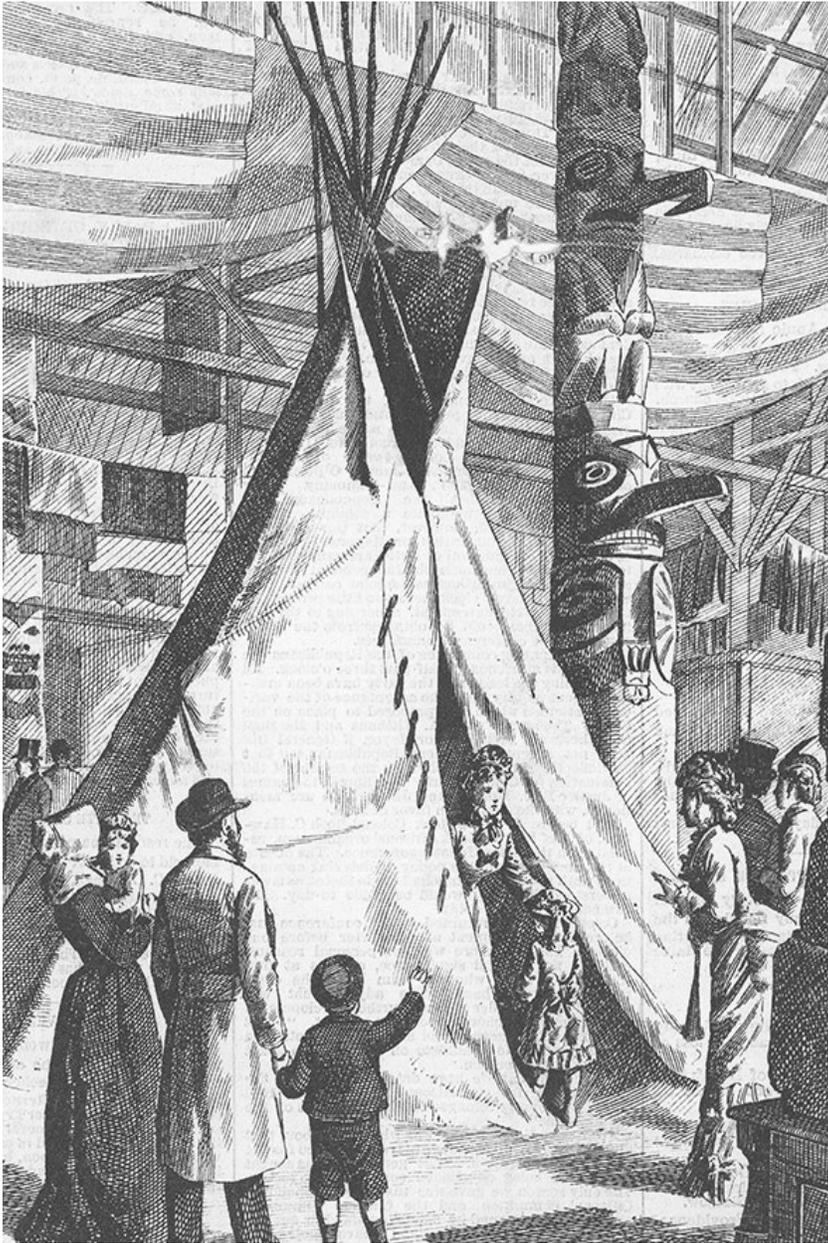


Figure 1, “Indian Tent in the Government Building at the Centennial Exhibition” in Centennial Exhibition 1876 Philadelphia Scrapbook, Centennial Exhibition Digital Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, <https://libwww.freelibrary.org/digital/item/2406>

Several of *Clarel's* readers have noted, in passing, that its publication coincided with the Philadelphia Exhibition, which ran from May to mid-November, but thus far only one essay (in the author-centric *Leviathan*) has placed the poem in sustained dialogue with the Centennial.<sup>29</sup>

The poem begins with its eponymous protagonist, a young, American theology student, newly arrived in Jerusalem:

‘Twas a mind,  
Earnest by nature, long confined  
Apart like Vesta in a grove  
Collegiate, but let to rove  
At last abroad among mankind,  
And here in end confronted so  
By the true genius, friend or foe,  
And actual visage of a place  
Before but dreamed of in the glow  
Of fancy’s spiritual grace. (1.1.106-115)

Disappointed by the actuality of this sacred geography, Clarel begins to tour Jerusalem with his guide Nehemiah, an elderly, beatific millenarian, whose Sisyphean crusade to “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, [and] make straight in the desert a highway for our God” will end when he sleep-walks into the Red Sea and drowns.<sup>30</sup> During one of their walks, Clarel becomes enamored with Ruth, a young Jewish woman whose Zionist father, Nathan, has relocated the family from America to Jerusalem after his own conversion to Judaism. His courtship frustrated by the interference of the family’s rabbi, Clarel ambivalently enlists in a

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<sup>29</sup> Cody Marrs, “Clarel and the American Centennial,” *Leviathan* 13, no. 3 (October 2011): 98–114.

<sup>30</sup> Isaiah 40:3 (KJV)

pilgrimage of the holy sites that will structure the four books. However, when Nathan dies and Ruth withdraws in observance of Shiva, Clarel resolves forth with his new companions, not yet apprehending the millennial terminus of his pilgrimage would require the annihilation of his beloved.

Part shall I? —break away from love?  
But think: the circumstances move,  
And warrant it. Shouldst thou abide,  
Cut off yet wert thou from her side  
For time: tho' she be sore distressed,  
Herself would whisper: "Go—'tis best." (1.43.3-8)<sup>31</sup>

Buried within the ambiguous address of these lines lies the beginning of Clarel's eventual extrusion from the narrator's chronicle. The abiding attachment of the "I" disclaimed a line later—"Unstable!"—cannot feature or be countenanced within a temporality that apprehends movement as the 'warranted' issuance of an inhuman "thou." As the "I" lapses into "thou," Ruth becomes a mask, spoken for rather than spoken with. She is disappeared from a time which itself is distressed into an implacable circumstance which cannot be moved. Thus begins his ten-day pilgrimage, a "[b]rief term of days, but a profound remove" (1.44.50), in which Clarel, as "thou," will answer to and bear an inexpiable responsibility for having pursued Nathan's millennial course, only to belatedly realize that that pilgrimage cannot but proceed without condemning Ruth to eternal damnation. In this

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<sup>31</sup> As I noted in my introduction, one crucial component of millennialist doctrine is the curiously anti-Semitic Zionism to which it ascribes, such that the millennium cannot truly enter into the realm of an event until the Jewish people regain control of Jerusalem. Their eternal salvation, on the other hand, is not required.

concluding line to part one, an brief intimation of the agon which propels Clarel forward begins to emerge, a struggle that ultimately reckons with competing modes of temporal apprehension, one melancholic and allegorical, the other redemptively presentist and symbolic. On my account, properly reckoning with these modalities is indispensable to negotiating the poem's final moments, as Clarel, buoyed by the prospect of reuniting with his beloved, returns to Jerusalem only to meet with the funeral procession of Ruth and her mother Agar outside the walls of the city. Furthermore, the melancholic and allegorical reading I pursue breaks a critical impasse, one that has deformed and blunted the text's ethical possibilities with chronotopes of progress and regress. Emancipated from such millennial trappings, we can truly begin to wrestle with *Clarel's* counter-Centennial and counter-monumental occasion. The aporia within *Clarel's* assignation as Poem *and* Pilgrimage activates a referential tension between meaning as making (poesis) and meaning as received (typological). For this reader, *Clarel's* suspension portentously discloses an ethical and exegetic decision to be made: Do we, for the sake of Parousia, remain enthralled by the chronopolitical investments of a symbolic futurity?<sup>32</sup> Or, do we renounce atonement and bear the exhausting and inexhaustible responsibility for an allegorical eventuality? By allegoric eventuality, I begin to broach an

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<sup>32</sup> This term, as it occurs in Matthew 24:27 (For as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man *be*), reverses the Greek etymon of substance and presence by first asserting an originary void to filled with the Spirit of a (second) presence deferred.

hermeneutical ethic, developed over the course of this chapter, in which the reader, as maker and not receiver of meaning, comes to being by reckoning with how the determination of her “own moment” forecloses or proliferates timelines as yet counter-factual. In these terms, my reading of *Clarel* melancholically refigures the rhetorical question of genre by displacing hermeneutic pilgrimage as typological confirmation so that it may be traversed allegorically as Kierkegaardian repetition. My understanding of Kierkegaardian repetition is indebted to Dennis A. Foster who writes, “The Kierkegaardian sense of repetition develops from the emptiness of any one event. Repetition is *structural rather than essential*, always recalling an earlier relation between signifiers, not the meaning of the prior sign.” “Consequently, the allegorical repetition does not,” Foster continues,

move toward an identity of a text and its truth, steadily reinforcing the correspondence of the allegory to the [...] ‘pure anteriority’ it can never match. [...] Rather, the allegory, though shaped at every turn by that ‘anteriority’ can never attain its illusory truth, and can thus have no conclusion where reality and allegory meet.<sup>33</sup>

In this light, my denomination of occasion marks the nullification of a monumental event (the Centennial) that would settle the grounds of its temporally homogenous presence and apparentness through the commemorative employment (narration) of a divinely dispensated right to inherit an univocal and immaculate origin.

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<sup>33</sup> Dennis A. Foster, *Confession and Complicity in Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 48.

The trajectory of much of the critical attention to *Clarel* has followed from its placement within the Victorian genre of faith/doubt literature.<sup>34</sup> Herschel Parker, reflecting on Melville's choice of iambic tetrameter, suggests both Tennyson's "In Memoriam," "that most serious of Victorian faith-doubt poems" and Matthew Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grand Chartreuse" as possible metrical influences.<sup>35</sup> In the "Historical and Critical Note" appended to *Clarel*'s first scholarly edition, editor Walter Bezanson asserts "there are few works of Anglo-American literature which rival *Clarel* as a rendering of the spiritual exigencies of the late-Victorian era." The poem, Bezanson continues, "is an intricate documentation of a major crisis in Western Civilization—the apparent smash-up of revealed religion in the age of Darwin."<sup>36</sup> Lawrence Buell, in his contribution on Melville's poetic *oeuvre* for *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, elevates *Clarel* to "the great Victorian epic of faith and doubt."<sup>37</sup> *Clarel*, then,

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<sup>34</sup> This faith/doubt dynamic structures the few book length studies of the poem, including Joseph Knapp's 1971 *Tortured Synthesis: The Meaning of Melville's Clarel*, Vincent Kenny's 1973 *Herman Melville's Clarel: A Spiritual Autobiography*, and Stan Goldman's 1993 *Melville's Protest Theism: The Hidden and Silent God in Clarel*.

<sup>35</sup> "Foreword," in *Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), xv. Parker ultimately positions "the phenomenal success" of John Greenleaf Whittier's 1866 *Snowbound* as the likely motivation for Melville's choice of meter. In his correspondence, Melville gives us reason to view the motivation of "phenomenal success" with skepticism: "So far as I am individually concerned, & independent of my pocket, it is my earnest desire to write those sort of books which are said to 'fail'" (Correspondence 139).

<sup>36</sup> p. 506

<sup>37</sup> "Melville the Poet," *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 135.

either testifies to the resiliency of faith or collapses beneath the weight of disillusioned cynicism, depending upon the reading. William Potter productively expands that critical lineage's Judeo-Christian focus by approaching the work "as a vast syncretic examination of the fundamental nature of religious belief itself."<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, by "transcending the relatively parochial concerns of the faith and doubt genre" in order to recover "the true sources of belief: the great myths and patterns that animate all religions beneath their discrete exteriors" this comparative reading reinstalls *Clarel* as a text working alongside the totalizing and imperialistic commitments of the era's nascent ethnological discourses.<sup>39</sup> Potter aligns Melville's text with the work of nineteenth-century German philologist and historian of religion Max Müller, who sought a trans-historical "religion behind all religions" and "'faculty of faith in man, independent of all historical religions' that 'enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names, and under varying disguises.'"<sup>40</sup> In this respect, Potter's reading comes to resemble the tenets of Clarel's fellow pilgrim Derwent, an Anglican priest of sunny disposition and meliorist convictions:

Have Faith, which, even from the myth,  
Draws something to be useful with:  
In any form some truths will hold;  
Employ the present-sanctioned mold.  
Nay, hear me out; clean breast I make,  
Quite unreserved—And for whose sake?

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<sup>38</sup> *Melville and the Intersympathy of Creeds* (Kent: Kent State University, 2004), 12.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* p. xiii

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 177; 192.

Suppose an instituted creed  
(Of truth or fable) should indeed  
To ashes fall; the spirit exhales,  
But reinfunds in active forms:  
Verse, popular verse, it charms or warms—  
Bellies Philosophy's flattened sails—(3.21.186-200).

As a work eminently unsuited for popularity, *Clarel's* brute history of Anglo-Saxon dispenses the metaphysics of whiteness that swelled the sails of *Moby-Dick's* Pequod. Neither does *Clarel* seek to replicate and repopulate (belly) mythic vessels that abjure the means of expropriative production through which those very myths become universalized “in any form.” This framework of the faith/doubt axis, with its attendant claims for *Clarel* as a prohibitively hopeful or bleakly pessimistic, has garnered considerable attention in a lineage of competing readings. Yet the terms of these readings leave unsettled its most unsettling and discomforting ethical commitment—one arrived at by an extended and extensive thinking through the relationships between literary form and modes of temporality. As such, this chapter argues that the desire for disarticulation of form from time—whether Derwent's “In any form some truths will hold” or Potter's humanist originary founded on the ur-faculty of faith—is the very move that *Clarel* ultimately renounces. To acknowledge the imbrication of form and temporality is to attend to the ways in which palpations of form can choreograph and contour, delimit and dilate temporal experience. In his *Archives of American Time*, Lloyd Pratt describes the early national and antebellum eras as that period “when American writers began self-consciously to quest after a future in which national and racial identity would reign triumphant over all [.]” Nonetheless, he

continues, “the end result was that time was restructured in such a way as to foreclose on that particular future.”<sup>41</sup> With the arrival of the American Centennial, however, that particular vision of the future, one dependent upon “a uniformly structured present tense ... [and] experience of national simultaneity,” seemed poised for radical retrenchment (5). With the highly contentious 1876 election resolved by Hayes-Tilden Compromise of 1877, newly elected President Rutherford B. Hayes would oversee the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, effectively ceding control over the former Confederacy to Redeemer Democrats and an assortment of white supremacist terrorist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, the White League, and the Red Shirts. That same year, the Hayes administration would finalize the annexation of Sioux land and the establishment of reservations, thereby bringing an end to the Great Sioux War, an ending no doubt hastened by the attachment of a “sell or starve” rider to the 1876 Appropriation Act.<sup>42</sup> Five years later, the United States Congress would pass the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first American immigration law to single out a particular ethnicity. That consolidation of national and racial hegemony would

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<sup>41</sup> Lloyd Pratt, *Archives of American Time* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>42</sup> “Congress was incensed and embarrassed at this shattering defeat [Battle of Little Bighorn] and attached a rider to the 1876 Appropriation Act which illegally denied Sioux all further appropriations and treaty-guaranteed annuities (a violation in itself) until and unless they agreed to sell the Black Hills to the United States. This remarkable act has come to be known as the ‘sell or starve’ rider.” David E. Wilkins, *American Indian Sovereignty and the U.S. Supreme Court: The Masking of Justice* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 221.

continue into the final decade of the nineteenth century, with both the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision codifying "Jim Crow" as the law of the land and the United State's imperialist assertion of manifest destiny during the Spanish-American War, which transformed Puerto Rico, the Philippines, and Guam into American colonies.

As a justification for the Mexican-American war, the creed of manifest destiny provided the social imaginary for understanding the United States as an epic mission without precedent, epic both in terms of its imperialist ambitions and the temporal homogeneity of its sweeping democratic vistas. This "unprecedented" dimension of manifest destiny, however, is complicated by its genealogical antecedents. As Pratt succinctly reminds us, this vision emerged from "the potent synthesis of Christian millennialism and nationalism."<sup>43</sup> Yet, as my previous chapter argues, however much critics attempt to extricate these two strands from one another, the rhetoric of Christian millennialism, with its deployment of biblical typology, remained immanent within nineteenth-century nationalist discourse, rather than incidental to it. In *Clarel's* longest canto, "Nathan," the narrator metonymically recapitulates the settler-colonialist mythos of American epic through the tale of Ruth's sire: "Nathan had sprung from worthy stock—/ Austere, ascetical, but free,/ Which hewed their way from sea-beat rock/ Wherever woods and winter be" (1.17.1-4). As an exercise in the characterology of typological antecedents, Nathan is preceded by "primal settlers" who,

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<sup>43</sup> *Archives of American Time*, 36.

Westward pressed further, more [breeding] more;  
At each remove a goodlier wain,  
A heart more large, an ampler shore,  
With legacies of farms behind;  
Until in years the wagons wind  
Through parks and pastures of the sun,  
Warm plains as of Esdraleon:  
'Tis nature in her best benign. (1.17.9-19)

A number of commentators, beginning with Bezanson, have drawn attention to the fact that “Nathan” is the longest canto of *Clarel*; but what to make of this length? We should begin by noting the narrator’s emphasis on racial and ethnic purity (the language of stock and breeding) as originary. In the course of generations, this adamic and organic originary begets an American pastoral sanctified and sanctioned by way of biblical typology into the Levantine Plain of “Esdraleon,” a Greek derivation of the Hebraic Yezre’el (or Valley of Jezreel), meaning “God will sow.” What Bezanson conspicuously elides in describing this covenantal canto as “an epitome of American experience” is, of course, the narrator’s burial of the genocidal displacement of indigenous Americans from the ‘wilderness’ upon which the “pilgrim-keel in storm and stress/ Had erred” (1.17.5-6). Rendered thus, an act of emendation and editorial intercession *in time* by the narrator is itself covered over and implicitly monumentalized. Tellingly, the narrator proleptically frames “Nathan” as an editorial intervention. The matter of narratorial investment and narratorial distance has remained woefully under-

interrogated in the secondary criticism of *Clarel*.<sup>44</sup> As I will demonstrate shortly, this question of narratorial identity is a question of typology involving the propriety of (human) property. For now, consider these lines of “Of Deserts,” a canto of landscape that evinces, according to Basem L. Ra’ad, Melville’s inversion of millennial typology to consider “how the land *itself* may have produced its mythology and subsequent theology” (emphasis mine).<sup>45</sup> Invoking the “indissoluble pile” (2.11.58) of the Great Pyramid of Giza, the narrator asks,

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<sup>44</sup> Exceptions to this oversight include: Vincent Kenny, who describes an essentially benignant voice counseling “reverence, respect, and tolerance.” in Vincent S. Kenny, *Herman Melville’s Clarel; A Spiritual Autobiography* ([Hamden, Conn.]: Archon Books, 1973), 11.; Douglas Robillard, who identifies Melville with a narrator that “does not permit [...] moral defeat.” in Douglas Robillard, *Melville and the Visual Arts: Ionian Form, Venetian Tint* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1997), 156.; John T. Shawcross, who renders the distinction between Clarel and the narrator in the final cantos as “the difference between the Melville of the past and the Melville who has learned the efficacy of conscience.” in John T. Shawcross, “‘Too Intellectual a Poet Ever to Be Popular’: Herman Melville and the Miltonic Dimension of Clarel,” *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 4, no. 1–2 (March 2002): 90.; and Martin Kevorkian, for whom the narrator marks a difference between Melville, “the pilgrim of 1856 [as Rolfe] and the poet of 1876.” in Martin Kevorkian, *Writing Beyond Prophecy: Emerson, Hawthorne, and Melville After the American Renaissance* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 95. This chapter’s conclusion will take up the crucial distinction between Clarel and narratorial voice in the poem’s final cantos. In the context of Ungar’s denunciation of the Anglo-Saxon race (briefly cited above), Robert Milder’s comments provide a rare outlier to the Melville-Narrator equation: “The bitterness and hyperbole of Ungar’s indictment are his own, but substantively Melville is speaking through him as he could only partially speak in *Typee* and *Omoo*.” in Robert Milder, *Exiled Royalties: Melville and the Life We Imagine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 9.

<sup>45</sup> Basem L Ra’ad, “Subversive Designs in Clarel,” *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 13, no. 3 (October 2011): 12. Elsewhere, Ra’ad argues that the “barrenness of landscape is ultimately a symbol of actual being.” in “The Death Plot in Melville’s *Clarel*,” *ESQ* 27, no.1 (1st Quarter 1981), 26.

“Typ’st thou the imperishable Past/ In empire posthumous and reaching sway/  
Projected far across to time’s remotest day?” (59-61). “But curb,” the narrator  
admonishes us, the Kingdom of Judea (tribally ascribed as Judah), though a  
“caked depopulated hell” (68) “to pure hearts . . . yields no fear;/ And John, he  
found wild honey here” (91-91). As the conclusive couplet indicates, the  
narratorial voice, grounded in the typological chronotope of “Nathan,”  
apprehends a *depopulated* hell that then *yields* to, and only to, the redemptive  
purification of Christianography. As such, the symbolic apprehension of desert  
landscape as essentially arid and desolate constitutes not a typological inversion,  
but rather precisely that which authorizes its expulsion of infidel Canaanites—  
“Indians East and West” in Ungar’s phrasing (4.9.120).

The narrator’s sanitized westward annexation reinscribes indigenous  
presence as the mournful specter of a temporally profound remove. That specter  
occasions in the young Nathan the genetic error of providential errand which,  
because refracted through scriptural typology, remands Native Americans to an  
already always moribund anteriority:

The sway  
He felt of his grave life, and power  
Of vast space, from the log-house door  
Daily beheld. Three Indian mounds  
Against the horizon’s level bounds  
Dim showed across the prairie green  
Like dwarfed and blunted mimic shapes  
Of Pyramids at distance seen  
From the broad Delta’s planted capes  
Of vernal grain. In nearer view  
With trees he saw them crowned, which drew  
From the red sagamores of eld

Entombed within, the vital gum  
Which green kept each mausoleum. (1.17.53-66)

Any acknowledgement of the genocidal implications of the westward press is doubly foreclosed, in both the typological analogy that of necessity precedes and enables the sublime intimation of “vast space,” as well as that sublimity’s redemptive and extractive submersion of indigenous demise into the repose of a perennial landscape ever verdant and living. What is noteworthy about this canto is not so much its comparative length as the startling compression of two and a half centuries. Within the less than vast space of a single canto, *Clarel* has traversed the grounds of an American epic only to then offer the reader that “[b]rief term of days, but profound remove” with which the pilgrimage proper commences (1.44.50). This chapter’s use of epic as a generic category refers to the Bakhtinian formulation, wherein its

constitutive feature is the transferral of the world it describes to an absolute past of national beginnings and peak times. The absolute past is a specifically evaluating (hierarchical) category [insofar as] ‘beginning,’ ‘first,’ ‘founder,’ ‘that which occurred earlier’ and so forth are not merely temporal categories, but *valorized* temporal categories, and valorized to an extreme degree. [...] The epic absolute past is the single source and beginning of everything good for all later times as well.<sup>46</sup>

For the purposes of this chapter it is important to note that the logic of typological, millennialist conviction sutures Bakhtin’s absolute divide between past and present and forecloses novelization, which “is determined by

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<sup>46</sup> M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Michael Holquist and Caryl Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 15.

experience, knowledge, and practice (the future).”<sup>47</sup> That is to say, the typological imaginary grounds the possibilities of what can be experienced, known, and practiced.

After Clarel first glimpses Ruth, who “looked a legate to insure/ That Paradise is possible/ Now as hereafter[,]” he inquires of Nehemiah the identity of her and her father (1.16.161-163).

The story gave—a tangled thread—  
Which, cleared from snarl and ordered so—  
Follows transferred, with interflow  
Of much Nehemiah scarce might add. (1.16.201-204)

While the narrator does not elaborate on what snarl and tangles have been excised, the diction’s invocation of settlement and clearing inadvertently unsettles the “settled” ground upon which manifest destiny builds. Those snarls and tangles belatedly, but pointedly, will enter *Clarel* in the scarred form of Ungar, a “stranger quite” with “[b]rown eyes, what reveries they keep—/Sad woods they be, where wild things sleep” (4.1.42, 94-95). The piercing disquiet of the pilgrims stirred by this “officer with forest eyes” will occasion a number of etiological speculations, culminating in a diagnosis of monomania with which *Clarel’s* critics, beginning with Bezanson, have concurred (4.5.3). While Woodward rightly draws attention to the critique of American futurity found in Book 4.21, Ungar’s jeremiads begin with an earlier withering reappraisal of the past:

“*As cruel as a Turk*: Whence came  
That proverb old as the crusades?”

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

From Anglo-Saxons. What are they?  
 Let the horse answer, and blockades  
 of medicine in civil fray!  
 The Anglo-Saxons—lacking grace  
 To win the love of any race;  
 Hated by myriads dispossessed  
 Of rights—the Indians East and West.  
 These pirates of the sphere! grave looters—  
 Grave, canting, Mammonite freebooters,  
 Who in the name of Christ and Trade  
 (Oh, bucklered forehead of the brass!)  
 Deflower the world's last sylvan glade!" (4.9.112-125)

According to Bezanson, Ungar's chief disputant Rolfe, a cosmopolitan, *genial* American "exponent of the two great heritages of Western civilization, the Hellenic and Hebraic worlds of value", is distinguished amongst the pilgrims for his "knowledge of the past" and inclination "toward the monomaniacs (Mortmain, Agath, Ungar) and away from the assurances of a Nehemiah, a Margoth, or a Derwent."<sup>48</sup> I will demonstrate shortly why my emphatic use of *genial* is neither blithe nor disingenuous. For now, let us but note that the "word 'genial' itself occurs nearly a dozen times in the poem, always with familiar connotations—*notably in the characterization of Rolfe* [emphasis mine], a partial self-portrait of the author, who possesses both a 'genial heart' and a 'brain austere' (1.31.14)."<sup>49</sup>

In a footnote, Sealts specifies those familiar connotations: "pleasant, warm, or

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<sup>48</sup> "Historical and Critical Note," 631. Bezanson's monomaniac sequence is as follows: Celio, an Italian humpback "in revolt against the Catholic Church" (618); Mortmain, a Swede and disillusioned leader in the Revolution of 1848 "who dies of psychic exhaustion" (626); Agath, a Greek timoneer and "Job-like old man" whose past is wrecked with sea-faring calamity (615).

<sup>49</sup> Merton M. Sealts, *Pursuing Melville, 1940-1980: Chapters and Essays* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), 169.

gay” (369). Yet, it is the *narrator’s* less familiar, racially essentializing and *familial* ascription of whiteness as geniality with which Ungar takes issue.

Tracing the descent of this “exile in verse” back to a John Rolfe-like figure from the virginal “Mary-land” who “wedded with a wigwam maid,” the narrator laments that with Ungar, “(In freak, his forest name alone/ Retained he now), the “latent nature, which events/ Developed in this distant son, [had] overrode the *genial* part—An Anglo brain, but Indian heart” (emphasis mine, 4.5.127-140). Earlier in this canto (“A Stranger”) the narrator digresses to “hint in brief/ The rankling thing in Ungar’s grief” (4.5.72-73). The account of the Abolition War that follows will be framed as confirmation of Rolfe’s genial speculation that what aggrieves Ungar is the ruination of a Confederate georgic,

A countryman’s a refugee?  
What maketh him abroad to roam,  
Sharing with infidels a home?  
Is it the immense charred solitudes  
Once farms? and chimney-stacks that reign  
War-burnt upon the houseless plain  
Of hearthstones without neighborhoods?” (4.5.38-44)

The narrator then erects a historical monument to whiteness, one to be “esteemed” in the progressive plenitude of “riper history” (line 78). For, he tells us, “that evil day,/ Black in the New World’s Calendar” witnessed rival forces, “Tradition’s *generous* adherers” (an Anglo-Saxon word denoting noble birth) brought into conflict (lines 74-75, 82).

Touching construction of a pact,  
A paper pact, with points abstruse

As theologic ones—profuse  
In matter for an honest doubt. (4.5.86-89)<sup>50</sup>

For Carolyn Karcher, these lines indicate that “Melville inevitably ends up embracing” the Lost Cause ideology of southerners rather than “condemning the ‘slave-interest’— that the true cause of the war.”<sup>51</sup> Such misprision depends upon the astounding conflation of authorial and narratorial voice and the latter’s relation to Ungar as an “*exile in verse*.” To suggest that Melville shares the narrator’s reiterated investments in American history’s monumentalization of white geniality is beyond untenable. More telling, however is Karcher’s citation of Rolfe’s georgic thought as an example wherein Ungar “elicits guilt *in the narrator* and the other American pilgrims” (283). What disquiets both Rolfe and the narratorial voice about this exile in verse is precisely the latter’s renunciation and repudiation of their racially-grounded (Anglo-Saxon) typological categories

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<sup>50</sup> As my first chapter has made clear, Union and Confederate partisans alike deployed the typological logic of providential millennialism and scriptural justification. In neither case was the ascendancy of American whiteness understood as anything less than providence made manifest. That the Philadelphia Centennial, was attended by Reconstruction’s collapse but further confirms the nation’s theologically-grounded articulation of civic personhood within the lineage of what may be termed white Christian geniality. In addition to their typological exegesis of scriptural precedents that would adjudicate the profuse matter (alluded to by the narrator”. of enslaved bodies, partisans sought out further typological grounding by positioning themselves as the legitimate inheritors of the Revolutionary War, a conflict that likewise was understood as theodicy by a providential elect. See, Nathan O. Hatch, “The Origins of Civil Millennialism in America: New England Clergymen, War with France, and the Revolution.” *William and Mary Quarterly* (31: 3, July 1974): 407-30.

<sup>51</sup> Carolyn L. Karcher, *Shadow Over the Promised Land: Slavery, Race, and Violence in Melville’s America* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1980), 284.

of mystified temporality—New World Calendar, Riper History—that seek, in the way of a millennialist apologetics, to preserve whiteness from despoilment. By pathologizing Ungar’s own asynchronous melancholy guilt at having taken part in Christian America’s adjudication of slavery as a question of abstruse theology, the horrific suffering and harrowing testimony of the enslaved experience matters only insofar as its authentication is mediated by the providential terms of American millennialism. Only through the darkness of a day, whose blackness astonishes millennia, can the narratorial penumbra of apocryphal obscurity cast over Ungar’s melancholic asynchrony be traversed:

Reading and revery impeded his pain,  
Confirmed, and made it take a flight  
Beyond experience and the reign  
Of self; till, in a sort, the man  
Grew much like that Pamphylian  
Who, dying (as the fable goes)  
In walks of Hades met with those  
Which, though he was a sage of worth,  
Did such new pregnancies implant,  
Hadean lore, he did recant  
All science he had brought from earth. (4.5.94-104)

The figure alluded to here is that of Er the Pamphylian, whose experience in the underworld does Socrates to Glaucon recount in a fable that concludes Plato’s *The Republic*. The reign of self over-thrown by the implantation or engraftment [imp] of pain beyond *his* experience, Ungar’s unbecoming melancholy registers that being described by Sarte in *Being and Nothingness*, “who makes himself a lack of

being in order that there might be being.”<sup>52</sup> Forsaking the promise of redemptive futurity, Ungar’s Hadean lore [teaching] appears to the narrator as a congenital “bias, bitterness—a strain/ Much like an Indian’s hopeless feud/ Under the white’s aggressive reign” 4.5.106-108). Yet, despite Ungar’s outspoken “heart’s belief” that the system of chattel slavery is a “grief” and “iniquity/ In those who plant it and begin,” (lines 147-149) the narratorial voice wedded to the benevolent covenant of American settlement—

The New World’s fairer flowers and dews  
 Welcomed the English Catholic:  
 Like sheltering arms the shores expand  
 To embrace and take to heart the crews. (4.5.120-123)

—will truncate and emend that lore, leaving absolution possible “for inheritors—/ *Who knows?* and lets the problem pass” (151-152). Because the narrative (or rather narrativity) is refracted through *the symbolic* inheritor of an Immaculately Genial Typology seen in “Nathan,” the iniquity of whiteness, the grieving of which could only be seen (sensed) as unseemly— unbecoming—melancholically asynchronous (out of step) —*monomaniacal*—can only be allegorically apprehended in the shadow *fabled* past, that *not-now* that is bled bone dry from the *never-was into the never-could-be-otherwise*— lacerated by a symbolic Crusade whose one ‘true sign’ is death.<sup>53</sup> When Salvaterra, the Franciscan guide

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<sup>52</sup> Qtd. in Simone de Beauvoir, “The Ethics of Ambiguity,” accessed October 28, 2018, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/de-beauvoir/ambiguity/ch01.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Hardly redeeming the redemptive vision of Christ, Salvaterra typologically links the fury of Old Testament Vengeance to the dispensation of New

of the nativity shrine “The Church of the Star,” perceives the hilted blade of Ungar’s sword, he marvels: ““True sign you bear: your sword’s a cross” (4.14.21) The redemptive promise of immortality has no Hadean lore, learning neither the “philosopher’s higher justice” which, according to Shalini Satkunadaman’s reading of the Er myth [here denoting as speech, not fable], bears “undischargable debts [...] involving *incalculable debts* to articulate ... the [inexhaustible] responsibility constitutive of being human.”<sup>54</sup> As for the allegorical inheritor, the distanced, disowned son, the exile inverse, wandering Ishmael of the West who speaks with the strain of the scarred—their cross’s a sword—stricken from the *matter* of record. Do we see the matrix and avert our eye to the airy guide of the star? Or should we read *with* forest eyes, as Ungar:

but started, as at a loss  
 To *take the meaning*, and yet led  
 To marvel how that mannered word  
 Did somehow slip into accord  
 With visitings that scarce might *cleave*—  
 Shadows, but shadows fugitive. (4.14.22-27)

How could we *take* the meaning *cleave*? Or rather, how *should we take* the meaning *cleave*—this artificial, affected word *slipped* into a cord, the symbolic

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Testament Futurity. The allusion conjures both Isaiah 34:5 (“For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment”) and Matthew 10:34-36: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” Such is the monumental imposition of Being upon the being-with of attachment.

<sup>54</sup> Shalini Satkunanandan, *Extraordinary Responsibility: Politics beyond the Moral Calculus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 20.

drapery of the Salvaterra's Franciscan order? Do the *fugitive* shadowed visitings hold fast and adhere to us? Or do they rend asunder? The allegorical lacuna here disabuses the immaculate, authenticating narratorial voice of any authenticated and univocal dispensation in which meaning is received and not *made*, which is to say, *mannered*. Therefore, the question hangs fugitive, suspended in eventuality: *Should* we read with genial eyes, symbolically? or with *forest eyes* wherein " 'Tis true:/ A Cross, it is a cross" expresses the chiasmus: a man-made *form*. A form *made* of man. Let us not let the problem pass. *Who* knows? Do we read in *the name of* and *for the* narrator's genial vision, through which Ungar appears "(if *looks allow surmise*)" (4.14.2)? Like the laconic and libertine American pilgrim Vine, do we maintain the innocence of an uncommitted aesthesis preserved from the unbecoming and unsightly damages wrought by time?

How he [Salvaterra] transfigured Ungar's sword!  
Delusive is this earnestness  
Which holds him in its passion pale—  
Tenant of melancholy's dale  
Of mirage?  
[...]  
A green knoll is to you and me  
But pastoral, and little more:  
To him 'tis even Cavalry  
Where feeds the Lamb. (4.15.12-38)<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Bezanson associates the word "earnest" with Rolfe who, "after insisting on the grounds for religious doubt, [...] makes a self-conscious renouncement of his fundamental impulse to probe" (589) and declares, "this earnest way/ I hate. / Let doubt alone, best skim, / Not dive" (2.21.101-103). More telling, however, is the narrator's congenial displeasure at Ungar's earnestness: "And, earnest as the earnest tomb, /With added feeling, sting, and gloom, / His strange impeachment urged" (4.9.158-160); "Ungar, a very Indian here/

Or do we “yet, wonder at the votary’s air” stand astonished and with Ungar,  
 “compare/ These haunted precincts with the guide,/ As so to *realize the place*”  
 (4.4.4-6). Should we speak with the piercing virtue of Renunciation: dispossessed  
 from the right to Futurity do we bear the scarring, inexpiable responsibility for the  
*not-now* of eventuality. Should we find Clarel, who “*hardly* might remain/  
 Uninfluenced by Ungar’s *vein*?” Vein carries here a doubled resonance, both in  
 the sense of a subterranean geologic strata, but perhaps more importantly, the  
 miscegenetic contamination of Clarel’s genial genealogy.

If man in truth be what you say,  
 And such the prospects for the clay  
 And outlook of the future—cease!  
 What’s left us but the senses sway? (4.23.59-63)

As I will explicate in this chapter’s conclusion, we will bear witness to the  
 allegorical “I” of Clarel, buried in the Hadean lore of the canto “Dirge.” For now,  
 we frame these questions in perhaps the most *crucial* register: should we consider  
 the narrator, as does Tim Wood, a Benjaminian epic “storyteller” that “*exists*  
*outside the text*” to “conjure” the characters “from a network of narratives[?]”<sup>56</sup>  
 That is, should we the “narrator’s rambling way forget/ And make to run in even

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[...] for aye austere,/ Too much in earnest” (emphasis mine, 4.19.73-77); “But  
 Ungar, earnest in his plea—/ Intent, nor caring to have done” (4.20.123-124).  
 While at Book three’s Mar Saba monastery, Clarel himself considers Rolfe  
 anew after the latter’s islamophobic diatribe: “and Clarel knew decline/ Of all  
 his spirits, as may one / Who hears some story of his line/ Which shows him  
 half his house undone. / Revulsion came. [...] / Earnest he seems: [...] / Or  
 need at last in Rolfe confess/ Thy hollow, Manysidedness!” (3.17.249-263)

<sup>56</sup> Tim Wood, “Paradiso Terrestre: America’s Displaced Wilderness in  
 Melville’s Clarel,” *Leviathan* 13, no. 3 (October 2011): 95, 96 (note 1).

flow/ His interrupted tale” and let unfettered the poetic liberty taken to sight by “*Description* brief the site[s] foreshow” (1.34. 76-79)? Let us return to the conjuration of a genial character.

Time and again Rolfe finds himself at a loss with, in the words of Hilton Obenzinger, this “racialized victim of multiple displacements[.]”<sup>57</sup> Ungar’s centrality to my reading of *Clarel* finds much to agree with in Obenzinger’s account, the most sustained and nuanced engagement with the profound reckoning his jeremiads demand. Crucially, however, Obenzinger fails to recognize the narrator’s complicity in this racialized displacement. For this reason, I now devote some time to his analysis. Of the four who appear in the poem, Ungar is the last “monomaniac Clarel engages before” the funeral of Ruth and Agar “instigates the final collapse of his [Clarel’s] search.”<sup>58</sup> The late proximity of Ungar’s arrival to the pilgrimage’s return to Bethlehem imbues his speech with a decisive gravity that echoes that of earlier ‘monomaniacs.’ Yet, his “renunciation and resignation” leads Obenzinger to conclude that Clarel’s “only hope [offered in the “Epilogue”] ... is the stoic acceptance of the exhaustion of known possibilities” (157). It is surpassing strange that for all of Ungar’s fiery denunciations their end should be muted with a quietism bordering on the fatalistic. Were that in fact the case, it remains entirely unclear how *Clarel* “can be viewed as a counter-centennial” when the political urgency and oppositional

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<sup>57</sup> *American Palestine*, 151.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 141.

force that that occasion summons collapses into quiescence and concession. I will return momentarily to the issue of renunciation and monomania. Taking up the narrator's description of Ungar as a "wandering Ishmael of the West," Obenzinger identifies the mercenary's "task" as "unbind[ing] the 'social covenant' from its conflated but not entirely identical counterpart—and destroy[ing] them both" (4.10.186; 142). Given the quiescent reading Obenzinger offers, it would seem that, absent any redistribution of political sensibility, the covenantal arrangements of manifest destiny remain intact and inevitable. Moreover, the centrality of Rolfe to Clarel's agon remains unchallenged.<sup>59</sup> By positioning Ungar as the "appropriate counterpart, the opposite wing of the bird to 'strange' Nathan," the genocidal lineage Rolfe shares with Nathan's monomaniacal, Zionist compulsion to make the "unreal absurdly real" is refashioned into a more palatable and respectable politics of liberal equitability. Under such a politics, only the means of implementation need be softened, leaving the hardened ends unchecked and unchanged. Recall Nathan's contemplation of the powers of vast space, and consider Rolfe:

There's Circumstance—there's Time; and these  
Are charged with store of latencies  
Still working in to modify,  
[...]

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<sup>59</sup> According to Bezanson, Rolfe is the "central figure among Clarel's companions on the pilgrimage" (630). In 1972, William P. Shurr claimed, "Rolfe is the closest [Melville] comes in *Clarel* to creating a personal spokesman" (266 n. 13). By 1990, Carolyn Karcher could refer to Rolfe as "the character most critics see as Melville's self-portrait" (*Shadow Over the Promised Land*, 283).

the New World's the theme.  
 Here to oppose your [Ungar's] dark extreme.  
 (Since an old friend is good at need)  
 To an old thought I'll fly. Pray, heed:  
 Those waste-weirs which the New World yields  
 To inland freshets—the free vents  
 Supplied to turbid elements;  
 The vast reserves—the untried fields;  
 These long shall keep off and delay  
 The class-war, rich-and-poor-man fray  
 Of history. From that alone  
 Can serious trouble spring. Even that  
 Itself, this good may own—  
 The first firm founding of the state. (4.21.76-96)

With a compression remarkable even by the standards of “Nathan,” Rolfe’s “old thought,” as if by magic, conjures a New World epic in which the pressures of the only “serious” social contradiction are neutralized by enframing time and space within capital’s logic of unlimited, inexhaustible *yields*.<sup>60</sup> While Rolfe discounts theology as “scarce practical” to the construction of his New World, the *deus ex machina* here is the devaluation of any values incommensurate with capital’s totalizing logic through the very abstraction of value itself—the unreal made absurdly real. Yet the abstraction of value (store of latencies) that Rolfe equates with “Time” itself remains the artifact of a particular temporal regime.<sup>61</sup> With incredulous scorn, Ungar begins to unleash his “blackest commentary”:

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<sup>60</sup> Bezanson identifies this “old thought” with the “safety-valve theory” of the frontier associated with proponents of the Frederick Jackson Turner school (833).

<sup>61</sup> “Although an abstraction this [value] is a historical abstraction which could only be adopted on the basis of a particular economic development of society.” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*:

And Ungar:

“True heart do ye bear  
In this discussion? or but trim  
To draw my monomania out,  
For monomania, *past doubt*,  
*Some of ye deem it.* (4.21.99-103, emphasis mine)<sup>62</sup>

Rolfe’s deformation of time into an undifferentiated acceleration, marked in the final line by a propulsive alliteration, and hammered home by the meter’s pounding monosyllabic stresses, is betrayed only by the unstressed fifth syllable. That syllable’s differentiation calls attention to the gerundive form at the heart of the line such that founding is no longer the inevitable fact *of* time, but an action *in* time. Without a full consideration of Ungar’s renunciation as directed toward a chronopolitics in which “Not only men, [but] the *state* lives fast—” (4.21.106) his sneering dismissal of “universal suffrage” (4.21.112) and “Myriads playing pygmy parts—/ Debased into equality” (4.21.127-28) will be read as the monomaniacal “fantasies of radical retrenchment, of a return to the imagined past of aristocratic paternalism rather than a move to the redemptive future of social

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*Correspondence, 1846-1895: A Selection with Commentary, Notes*, ed. and trans. Dona Torr (New York: International Publishers, 1935), 106. Qtd. in Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx’s Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, 2d ed., Cambridge Studies in the History and Theory of Politics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 177.

<sup>62</sup> Though Helen Vendler, too, in her review of *Clarel’s* 1992 Northwestern Newberry edition, refers to Rolfe as “an idealized adult Melville in his most balanced and benign mood,” I was gratified to encounter her offhanded observation, *contra* Bezanson’s diagnosis of Ungar’s monomania, that “it is Ungar’s self-ironic word.” “Desert-Storm,” *New Republic* (December 7, 1992): 41.

and economic restructuring.”<sup>63</sup> This fear and trembling that heralds the “Dark Ages of Democracy” devolves into the revanchist grievance of a proto-Southern Agrarian; his assurance that “[w]hatever happen in the end [...] ‘twill *yield* to one and all/ New confirmation of the fall/ Of Adam” (4.21.123-26, emphasis mine) nothing more than fatalistic resignation at man’s inherent wickedness. Rather, in refusing the abstraction of value that is Rolfe’s constitutive condition of belonging, Ungar forgoes the alienated and alienated self *yielded*, which “all self need to know/ In self’s base little fallacy” (4.21.134-35). In an act of piercing virtue, in Emily Dickinson’s terms, Ungar renounces the shameful “birthright” of an Anglo-Saxon ethno-state whose founding text, a “paper-pact” (4.5.87), reifies value in a citizen-body of propertied, racialized uniformity. As a counter to the genial retrenchment of immaculate origins, expressed in Rolfe’s and Derwent’s reverie of a Tahitian Bethlehem where “no tides do flow/ Or ebb, but waves bide peacefully”, Ungar responds with a thanatophanic accounting of Judea “with customs hard as horns” (4.18.30-54). His response to their manifest theme of the world New and Old is the very abolishment of that division which would tear the two asunder:

“*Old* World? if age’s test  
 Be this— advanced experience,  
 Then, in the truer moral sense,  
*Ours* is the Old World. You, at best,  
 In dreams of your advanced Reform,  
 Adopt the cast skin of our worm. (5.19.101-106)

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<sup>63</sup> *American Palestine*, 150.

Sloughed off like so much dead skin, the remission of implacable violence in the epically remote anteriority of the Old World consequently authenticates its very relapse in the settlement of the New.

“Ay Democracy  
Lops, lops; but where’s her planted bed?  
The future, what is that to her  
Who vaunts she’s no inheritor?  
Tis in her mouth, not in her heart.  
The Past she spurns, though the past  
From which she gets her saving part—  
That Good which lets her Evil last. (4.20.126-133)

Expressed through a chiasmic inversion of time, redemptive nationalism’s incorporation of dispensed grace, “her saving part,” merely adopts and adapts a disincorporating telos as the *sine qua non* by which futurity’s annunciation will be made manifest.

Given the popularity of Holy Land literature, it is curious that the generic question of *Clarel* as pilgrimage was neglected by its earliest critics, especially in light of their recurring preoccupation with the work’s formidable length in a manner that recalls Poe’s “The Poetic Principle,” an essay resolutely against the distended temporality of poem (as pilgrimage).<sup>64</sup> According to the *Evening*

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<sup>64</sup> “That the extent of a poetical work is, *ceteris paribus*, the measure of its merit, seems undoubtedly, when we thus state it, a proposition sufficiently absurd — yet we are indebted for it to the Quarterly Reviews. Surely there can be nothing in mere *size*, abstractly considered — there can be nothing in mere *bulk*, so far as a volume is concerned, which has so continuously elicited admiration from these saturnine pamphlets! A mountain, to be sure, by the mere sentiment of physical magnitude which it conveys, *does* impress us with a sense of the sublime — but no man is impressed after *this* fashion by the material grandeur of even ‘The Columbiad.’ [...] It is to be hoped that

*Transcript*, “Five Hundred and seventy consecutive pages are rather apt to create a disgust for poetry if one is obliged to read them conscientiously and critically. . . . [T]he heat of the season compels us to forego that pleasure (emphasis mine).”<sup>65</sup>

Such critical enervation rehearses the departure of an unnamed Greek Banker and his son-in-law, Glaucon, from the pilgrimage before it can meet with the Dead Sea [“The Wilderness”]. Having enjoined his son-in-law from even mere utterance of “that ill word/ Whose first is D and last is H [death]” (2.3.50-51) “[u]nless all joy you’d cripple” (2.3.43), the hedonistic Banker along with Glaucon turn back. Their hasty retreat then prompts a narratorial admonishment directly addressed to readers that renders explicit the allegory of reading-as-pilgrimage:

They fled. And thou? The way is dun;  
 Why further follow the Emir’s son?  
 Scarce yet the thought may well engage  
 To lure thee thro’ these leafless bowers.  
 That little avails a pilgrimage  
 Whose road but winds among the flowers.  
 Part here, then, would ye win release  
 From ampler dearth; part, and in peace. (2.13.112-19)<sup>66</sup>

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common sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of Art, rather by the impression it makes — by the effect it produces — *than by the time it took to impress the effect, or by the amount of “sustained effort”* which had been found necessary in effecting the impression” (emphasis mine). Edgar Allan Poe, *Essays and Reviews*, ed. Gary Richard Thompson (New York, N.Y.: Literary Classics of the U.S., 1984), 72.

<sup>65</sup> *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*, 531.

<sup>66</sup> The “Emir’s son” here refers to the taciturn and regal Djalea, a Druze enlisted to guide and protect the pilgrims on their journey.

As the allegory of reading-as-pilgrimage displaces the topology of text-as-*locus amoenus*, that rhetorical arrangement of prelapsarian plenitude and pleasure, it begins to limn an ironizing distance by bestrewing the passage with alliterative offerings here denominated as wayward: “lure thee thro’ these leafless bowers.” Moreover, the initial line of the opening couplet deploys a homophonic pairing that links the derivative procession of pilgrimage (done) with its consequentially belated and benighted murk (dun). The path of pilgrimage is trod in gloom. The succeeding line’s end rhyme then entangles what “further follows” by casting *Clarel’s* pilgrims in the shadow of their preceding figure, “dun” body of Djalea: the son who is their Sun. Only by virtue of the necessity of his protection, his fluency, and familiarity with the sacred geography traversed—the very warrant without which no pilgrimage could be securely ventured—can the textual horizon be delimited, against which the pilgrims can then come to appearance. Shadowed by Djalea’s unspoken and unspeaking presence, the pilgrimage perilously trades the comforts of home(coming) for the harrowing risks of visitation with an “ampler dearth.”

Having divested from the promise of an eschatological homecoming and dispelled the alluring, apotropaic “charms of verse,” *Clarel* nonetheless paradoxically managed to elicit in its nascent reception the disorienting effects of its perverse and heterodox chronotope of pilgrimage, such that the “reader soon becomes *hopelessly bewildered, and fatigues himself vainly* in the effort to give personality to speakers who constantly evade it, and connection to scenes which

perversely hold themselves separate from each other.”<sup>67</sup> The preparatory and counter-monumental work of reading-as-pilgrimage subjects the reader to a grueling pulverization of character (as inscribed relics) allegorically apprehended as the granulated dispersal of lapidary formations into the abyssal depths of geologic *deep time*. The chronotope of deep time suggests a fundamentally inhuman augmentation of epic temporality whereby *Clarel*, in its dilation of a ten-day pilgrimage over 17,863 lines, inculcates in the conscientious and critical reader what we might term *astonishment*. Etymologically, astonishment derives from the Old French *estone*, indicating a sensation of such metamorphic duration, pressure or intensity as to “to shock one out of his self-possession” (OED). Such astonishment, precisely not at the antiquity of this world, but at the proliferation of eldritch worlds whose pure anteriority renders memory speechless: “Where serial wrecks on wrecks confound/ Era and monument and man;/ Or, rather, in stratifying way/ Bed and impact and overlay” (2.20.36-37).<sup>68</sup> Melville dryly notes

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<sup>67</sup> *Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*, 531.

<sup>68</sup> In an astute analysis of the word ‘stone’ and *Clarel*’s frequent divergence from the metrical expectations of its iambic tetrameter, Samuel Otter notes that how that word “comes to serve as a synecdoche for the poem [...] as though the words themselves were stones.” Attending to the proliferation of “the most literal of nouns,” Otter suggests its “repetition reveals or regenerates the qualities of the noun, makes it vivid to perception.” Samuel Otter, “How *Clarel* Works,” in *A Companion to Herman Melville*, ed. Wyn Kelley, vol. 41, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture ; (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 470–71. This chapter’s counter-monumental reading shifts the focus away from the synecdochal stone, a noun gesturing toward totality, and toward the stone as a verb. That is, what are the consequences when the stone (once monumentalized) *stones* (puts to death)? What damage, what violence is licensed by the stoning of time? For Ra’ad, the

this growth “of everything that blocks and prevents” in the confounding anachrony of Jerusalem tour guides: “‘Here is the stone Christ leaned against, & here is the English Hotel.’ Yonder is the arch where Christ was shown to the people & just by that open window is sold the best coffee in Jerusalem. &c &c &c.”<sup>69</sup> The grotesque adjacency, the mutual obtrusion, of tourism and pilgrimage (Christ *and* Trade) empties out the deictic function of *here*; the accretion of the actual is delivered with neither a nostalgia for the past nor the embrace of that’s past’s obsolescence, such that we are bound by a present understood as simply *the-no-longer-possible*. If I seem to linger inordinately over these initial reviews, I do so in order to delineate how their halting recoil at the poem’s metamorphically-induced shock resurfaces in the generic fixations of subsequent critics whose appraisals, while often more generous, nonetheless obliterate the untimely work of occasion that *Clarel*, as a counter-centennial text, responsively reads.

Consider the following motifs in which critical recuperation is made at the expense of generic deformation. *Clarel’s* publication notice in the *New York Times* (July 10) first expresses the counterfactual desire that, notwithstanding “Here and there [...] delicate and vigorous pieces of description [...] we do not

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“geological features” of *Clarel’s* stony landscape “are solid and continuous, they represent eternal time, permanence, and essence” (“Subversive Designs”, 136). However, these very qualities of immutability are precisely those extruded in *Clarel’s* allegorical temporalization, as my later reading of an exchange between Nehemiah and Clarel will show.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 29-30; *Journals*, 89.

think we can be far wrong when we say that it should have been written in prose” (531). Likewise, *Lippincott’s Magazine* opines there “is nothing in it which could not have been said as well or better in prose” (540). Such a desire is rehearsed at many points throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.<sup>70</sup> After Robert Penn Warren’s 1946 lament that “[e]ven behind some of Melville’s failures [including *Clarel*] we can catch the shadow of the poem which might have been,” *Clarel* emerges from the penumbra of failure in 1970 with its conversion into, in *essence*, a novel. John T. Frederick fulfills this wish by outright declaring,

it is a novel in terms of all the major categories under which we study long works of fiction—character, setting, theme—and is essentially different in form from Melville’s other novels only in that the story is told in verse: an idiosyncratic and sometimes

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<sup>70</sup> A few more recent iterations of the generic deformation testify to its enduring appeal. In 1993, Stan Goldman, argued that “It is more rewarding to read *Clarel* not as poetry, which some discourse theorists including Bakhtin view as monological but as narrative verse that contains the essential dialogical principle usually associated with prose fiction.” Stan Goldman, *Melville’s Protest Theism: The Hidden and Silent God in Clarel* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1993), 6. In 2005, Andrew Delbanco categorized *Clarel* as a “vast ‘philosophical verse-novel’ whose structure provided him with a sort of template that spared him from having to invent, as he had once done in prose, his own forms.” Andrew Delbanco, *Melville: His World and Work*, 1st ed. (New York: Knopf, 2005), 280. In his critical biography, Robert Milder perversely re-imagines *Clarel* as “the book in which Melville is most completely the novelist, that is to say, most keenly the observer of *human* with a sustained interest in nuances of personality and the living chemistry of dramatic scenes” (195, emphasis mine). In this refrain, the extent to which *Clarel* is innovative and/or capable of sustaining interest (and thus salvaged from oblivion) is the degree to which it behaves less a poem and more like a novel.

crabbed verse which opposes, admittedly, a serious obstacle to most modern readers.<sup>71</sup>

The “crabbed verse” as a critical commonplace, however, did not emerge from modern readers as, once again, Melville’s contemporaries, while approving its fleeting moments of lyric, objected strenuously to the predominance of iambic tetrameter:

The verse, frequently flowing for a few lines with a smooth, agreeable current, seems to foam and chafe against unmanageable words like a brook in a stony glen: there are fragments of fresh, musical lyrics, suggestive of both Hafiz and of William Blake; there are passages so rough, distorted, and commonplace withal, that the reader impatiently shuts the book. It is, in this respect, a medley such as we have rarely perused, —a mixture of skill and awkwardness, thought and aimless fancy, plan shattered by whim and melody broken by discord. It is difficult to see how any one capable of writing such excellent brief passages should also write such astonishingly poor ones—or the reverse. (531)

The critical allurement of *Clarel’s* “fresh, musical lyrics” can be illuminated by Jonathan Culler’s observation that “[o]ne of the things that lyrics do is project a distinction between the immediate historical, communicative situation and the level at which the work operates in its generality of address and its openness to being articulated by readers who will be differently situated (situated in part by the history of these works themselves).”<sup>72</sup> Whether or not the pilgrims, and by extension readers, will be enamored by the promise of

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<sup>71</sup> Robert Penn Warren, “Melville the Poet,” *The Kenyon Review* 8, no. 2 (1946): 213.; John T. Frederick, “Melville’s Last Long Novel,” *Arizona Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1970): 151.

<sup>72</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Theory of the Lyric* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 301.

transcending their immediate situation is a question explicitly addressed within the poem. Though the coupled promise of release/peace is withdrawn from readers at the departure of Glaucon, the pilgrimage's first prominent lyricist, that very consummation is tendered in "The Invitation," the canto immediately preceding the introduction of the final and most seductive of the poem's "gay blades," the 'Prodigal' Lyonesse.<sup>73</sup>

And now—not wantonly designed  
Like lays in grove of Daphne sung,  
But helping to fulfill the piece  
Which in these cantoes finds release,  
Appealing to the museful mind—  
A chord, the satyr's chord is strung. (4.25.54-59)

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<sup>73</sup> "Several devices slightly relieve the prosodic and structural rigidity. The most notable divergence is the sizeable number of short poems, or fragments of poems, which are sung, spoken, or read by one of the characters or the narrator [...]. If the count includes mere snatches of song, there are some forty-five such pieces in a variety of forms. Nineteen are lighthearted songs sung by the gay blades—Glaucon, the Cypriote, the Mytilene, the Lyonesse; these are love lyrics, drinking songs, fragments after the Persian manner, mimic-songs-from the dramatists" (Bezanson, 571). While Bezanson ultimately minimizes their impact as "but pellets which scarcely dent the armor of rhyming tetrameters," later critics have counterpoised the lumbering contortions and saturnine rigidities of octosyllabics with the liberating spaciousness of *Clarel's* lyric bowers. According to Byron Short, from "the beginning, the lyrics undercut the constraint which weighs upon the pilgrimage; they presage Melville's leap into the epilogue by exemplifying the qualities which make art satisfying even in the face of blankness and by employing poetic forms less restrained than that of the narrative." Moreover, Short's lyricization of varied and miscellaneous forms, akin to monumental enshrinement, leads to the claim that the lyric "embodies the ability to make subjective feelings and alluring symbols into the bases for a satisfying faith—an ability that Clarel lacks." Byron Short, "Form as Vision in Herman Melville's *Clarel*," *American Literature* 50, no. 4 (January 1979): 561.

In exegetical debate with the Clarel over the “Song of Solomon,” the Lyonese emerges as the (selective) lyric reader *par excellence*:

And, tell me, does not Solomon’s harp  
(*Oh, that it should have taken warp  
In end!*) confirm the festa. Hear:  
“Thy white neck is like ivory;  
I feed among thy lilies, dear:  
Stay with me flagons, comfort me  
With apples; thee I would enclose!  
Thy twin breasts are as two young roes.” (4.26.171-178, emphasis  
mine)<sup>74</sup>

It is worth pointing out that, in the Lyonesian blazon, the parousia of substance returns with a vengeance, violating and disarticulating the feminine body so that it may be reconstituted within the supplemental enclosure of a *locus amoenus* sighted by an erotics of masculine dominion. In her examination of the exegetical history of the “*Song of Solomon*,” Linda Munk proposes a hermeneutical approach at odds with Clarel’s response that the text “Is allegoric—needs must be,” an apprehension that “prolong[s]/ A mystic burden” (4.26.182, 192-193). Expressing a particularly lyrical distaste for allegorical apprehension, she begins by conflating “spiritual *and/or* historical allegory,” which but monumentalizes the disincorporating Christianographic typology that allegoric temporality estranges.<sup>75</sup> Defining an allegorical reading as the denial of the “literal” and “obvious” (53) sense of the Song, she then claims that that “denial hints at ways

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<sup>74</sup> The chapter and verse skimmed here are as follows: 7:4, 2.16; 2.5; 7.3 (Bezanson, 835).

<sup>75</sup> Linda Munk, “Giving Umbrage: The Song of Songs Which is Whitman’s,” *Journal of Literature & Theology* 7, no. 1 (March 1993): 51.

of reading whereby the body is not a material, carnal body, but is only a semblance—the body allegorical.” To suggest that a text so replete with figurations of the body as a timeless plenitude *should* be read for the obvious and transparent meaning of unmediated bodies hints at a disquieting and fundamentalist literalism. Moreover, Munk’s scant glossing of the Song and displacement of the rhetorical within the umbrage of representational language obscures the monumentalizing chronotopic forms through which the song’s emblazoned bodies become legible to sense (feeling). Rather than expressing shame or embarrassment at the material body, allegory beholds that which scandalizes the unmediated and Symbolical enclosure of a body transfixed: the mystic burden of its temporal mutability, decay, death, and putrefaction.<sup>76</sup>

What then were the reasons for *Clarel’s* negative reception? Posing this question returns us to the still contested issue of *Clarel’s* generic typology, an issue, I argue, that is inextricably bound up with nineteenth-century conceptions of temporality and the generic question of pilgrimage. The (in)ability to recruit and regulate melancholic time in the service of consolidating a millennialist nationalism that would typologize disparate characters like Celio, Mortmain,

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<sup>76</sup> Though Munk cites De Man’s account of allegory’s repetition of purely anterior sign, she neglects the Kierkegaardian *sense* of that repetition; that is, though the allegorical sign and its preceding sign may never coincide, the *shaping* sense of that disjunction instantiates the melancholic asynchrony of loss as originary.

Agath, and Ungar as monomaniacal.<sup>77</sup> With *Clarel*, Melville offers an untimely exhaustive rebuke to the hubristic challenge of manifest destiny issued by the influential editor and Jacksonian Democrat John L. O'Sullivan. Coiner of the term "manifest destiny," O' Sullivan held forth in 1839:

All this will be our future history, to establish on earth the moral dignity and salvation of man—the immutable truth and beneficence of God. For this blessed mission to the nations of the world, which are shut out from the life-giving light of truth, has America been chosen; and her high example shall smite unto death the tyranny of kings, hierarchs, oligarchs, and carry the glad tidings of peace and good will where myriads now endure an existence scarcely more enviable than the beasts of the field. Who, then, can doubt that our country is destined to be *the great nation of futurity?*<sup>78</sup>

Within the bloody expanse of exemplary smiting carved out by O'Sullivan, the United States forcefully appears not much as "essentially the greatest poem," to

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<sup>77</sup> Bezanson, in his "Historical and Critical Note," refers to these characters as a "monomaniac sequence" (614). I argue that his reading of the poem as morbid and monotonous, according to Arnoldian aesthetics, depends upon a misreading of Clarel's fate as monomaniacal. See Walter Bezanson, "Melville's Reading of Arnold's Poetry," *PMLA* 69, no. 3 (June 1954): 369.

<sup>78</sup> John L. O'Sullivan, "The Great Nation of Futurity," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 6, no.23 (1839): 427. Though O' Sullivan's 'manifest destiny' would not enter the American lexicon until 1845, its tenets were already abundantly apparent to outside observers like de Tocqueville, who, in his chapter "Sources of Poetry in Democratic Nations," had written, *avant la lettre*, of American self-intelligibility a decade prior: "The marvels of inanimate nature find them insensible, and they so to speak perceive the admirable forests that surround them only at the moment at which they fall by their strokes. Their eyes are filled with another spectacle. The American people sees itself advance across the wilderness, draining swamps, straightening rivers, peopling the solitude, and subduing nature. The magnificent image of themselves is not offered only now and then to the imagination of the Americas; one can say that it follows each of them in the least of his actions as in his principal one, and that it is always there, dangling before his intellect." Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America: And Two Essays on America* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 562-563

borrow Whitman's epic formulation, as it does a gruesome, implacable pilgrimage. In its customary usage, pilgrimage must of necessity abhor the possibility of the-no-longer-possible, here understood as the possibility of aligning tract as terrain with tract as text—of straightening the river and clearing the forest, so to speak—a theory of referents in which the word, as Word, anoints or *christens*. In this sense, temporal continuity or homogeneity (whether of moment or era) manifests as the perdurance of a specific modality, which the pilgrim testifies to in their *shared* ritualization of locality or landscape. Inverting Michel De Certeau's terms, place is a practiced space. Insofar as space is *enshrined* (All [space] *this* [place] will be), succession metastasizes into simultaneity. From O' Sullivan's commanding prospect, passage (of time) is indistinguishable from the paysage of the Hudson River School which, *as simultaneity*, rends the fabric of what Wai Chee Dimock terms the "continuum of historical life [which] does not grant the privilege of autonomy to any spatial locale; [nor] does [it] grant the privilege of autonomy to any temporal segment."<sup>79</sup> Thus pilgrimage, a co-ordaining and custodial form of chronopolitics, disavows the contestation of territory through the vigilant gatekeeping of originary consecration and christening. Even before Clarel embarks upon his pilgrimage, in the wake of Ruth's immurement, he senses an ambient but charged illocality at Jerusalem's threshold:

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<sup>79</sup> Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 4

What object sensible to touch  
 Or quoted fact may faith rely on,  
 If faith confideth overmuch  
 That here's a monument in Zion:  
 Its substance ebbs—see, day and night  
 The sands subsiding from the height;  
 In time, absorbed, the grains may help  
 To form new sea-bed, slug and kelp.  
 “The gate,” cried Nehemiah, “the gate  
 Of David!” Wending thro' the strait,  
 And marking that, in common drought,  
 'Twas yellow waste within as out,  
 The student mused: The desert, see,  
 It parts not here, but silently,  
 Even like a leopard by our side,  
 It seems to enter in with us—  
 At home amid men's homes would glide. (1.24.69-85)

Despite the millenarian's enthusiastic exhortation to Clarel to “read it [Lamentations 2.15] where it stands” (1.25.64), the young scholar cannot concede the monumentalizing work of enclosure, of gate-keeping, demanded by Nehemiah's citation—“Is this the city that is called ‘The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth’?” Yet, this commemoration of Jerusalem's self-evident monumentality merely displaces the futurity of its rhetorical question at the farther temporal remove of an allusion to Psalms 42:8. As such, an otherwise transient, predatory, and erosive illocality becomes the very grounds upon which the question may even be posed. Whereas the collapse of interiority and exteriority in Lamentations prefigures the moral consequence of relapse (from the Latin to recede, ebb, revert), Clarel's metamorphic allegory of relapse relinquishes hold, “The letting go/ A Presence—for an Expectation—/Not now—

.<sup>80</sup> As the crumbling claims to enshrined place give way, this vacated space of the not-now floods with the protean eventualities of life opened up by a geologic deep time far beyond the scale of human eschatology.

In what sense, then, is *Clarel* a pilgrimage? The *Galaxy* [New York], in its August 1876 review, suggests Melville is guilty of a category mistake in his subtitle:

We confess that we are puzzled by the title of Mr. Herman Melville's last volume—"Clarel: a Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land." How a book can be a poem in the Holy Land, or a pilgrimage in the Holy Land, or a pilgrimage at all, or how it can be both a poem and a pilgrimage, we really cannot discover. The fact of the matter, set forth in simple English, is, that "Clarel" is a poem which narrates and comments upon a pilgrimage in the Holy Land.<sup>81</sup>

The *International Review* [New York] also asks this question, though rather disingenuously and disagreeably. Curiously, the review invokes a collective nostalgia for "the hero of whaling and Polynesian adventures" only to then ask, "How large a portion of the reading class (small, at the best, in this country,) are so familiar with his literary individuality that they will *venture upon the perusal of such a work, solely for the more complete appreciation of its author?*" (540-41, emphasis mine). However unwittingly, the language by which the reviewer frames this question already suggests an apprehension of the kinship between pilgrimage and reading despite the rather disagreeable and disingenuous manner

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<sup>80</sup> *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*. ed. R.W. Franklin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2005), 349. I will return to Dickinson in the coda.

<sup>81</sup> *Herman Melville: The Contemporary Reviews*, 537

in which the topic is raised only to be dismissed: “One of his novels, we remember, was entitled: “Pierre, or The Ambiguities,” —and this poem might properly have been called: “Clarel, or the Ambiguities.” The title, to begin with, is ambiguous; how are we to understand ‘A Poem *and* Pilgrimage *in* the Holy Land?’” (540-541). This critical lament, directed precisely at the specter of ambiguity and expressed in a rhetoric of paradisiacal loss and obscured telos, emerges as a recursive motif that recapitulates Clarel’s own agon. From *Lippincott’s Magazine* (Philadelphia), we read the following, with an unattributed citation from Wordsworth’s “Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont,” a poem whose libidinal *oikonomia* vertiginously circulates between the perils of ekphrastic mediation and the temptations of sacralizing plenitude.

The charm of those fabled isles [*Omoo*, *Typee*, and *Mardi*] is like the good dream we cannot remember, the taste of apples from the trees we climbed when we played truant, ‘The light that never was[,] on sea or land,’ in short; and Mr. Melville’s sea and land were as much mirage as the light itself. (539)

The quatrain from which this line is excerpted articulates a conditional carried over into the succeeding quatrain:

Ah! THEN, if mine had been the Painter’s hand,  
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,  
The light that never was, on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet’s dream;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile  
Amid a world how different from this!  
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;

On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. (13-20) <sup>82</sup>

While “then,” in the second line, functions as an adverbial conjunction articulating the conditions under which the “I” might triumph by virtue of the conditional perfect “would have,” the counterfactual claim folds back upon itself, in that the typographical monument “THEN” seeks to secure a moment anterior to temporality, a temporality that not only predicates the *subsequent* possibility of the conditional, but also lurks within the obscured labor of the *sui generis* “Pile.” I linger for a moment on this poem, as its final stanza—

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,  
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!  
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here. —  
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

*seems* of a piece with the narrator’s epideictic valediction to an already vanished Clarel in the “Epilogue” —

Then keep thy heart, though yet but ill-resigned—  
Clarel, thy heart, the issues there but mind;  
That like the crocus budding through the snow—  
That like a swimmer rising from the deep—  
That like a burning secret which doth go  
Even from the bosom that would hoard and keep;  
Emerge thou mayst from the last whelming sea,  
And prove that death but routs life into victory. (4.35.27-34)

Here, we should recall Poe’s dismissal of “the time it took to produce the effect,” as caveat to asserting what, ultimately, is a wayward resemblance between the two passages, for their difference speaks directly to the inculcation of

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<sup>82</sup> William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth’s Poetry and Prose: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*, ed. Nicholas Halmi, First edition., A Norton Critical Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014), 430.

metamorphic pressures upon the eponymous pilgrim of the poem. In the closing moments of this chapter, I will return to this “curiously buoyant epilogue,” lensing it through the counter-pane of *Clarel’s* shortest, and truly astonishing canto “Dirge.”<sup>83</sup>

Importantly, the period during which Melville was composing *Clarel* witnessed an emerging consensus around “lyric” as both a genre and interpretive mode that registers what Virginia Jackson has termed a “*shift in temporality*.”<sup>84</sup> While providing an remarkably generative basis for reappraising nineteenth-century American poetics, Jackson’s historicized account of lyricization is insufficient to this chapter’s concerns insofar as ‘lyric’ remains disconnected from an equally decisive and earlier impoverishment of figuration “in the latter half of the eighteenth century, when the word ‘symbol’ tends to supplant other denominations for figural language, including that of ‘allegory.’”<sup>85</sup> This seemingly ubiquitous and intractable symbolizing apprehension of *Clarel* has eclipsed and neutralized the counter-monumental force of its melancholic, allegorical world. No longer *taken in* by symbolic oases, the poem *as pilgrimage*

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<sup>83</sup> Short, 558.

<sup>84</sup> “[As] variously mimetic poetic subgenres collapsed into the expressive romantic lyric of the nineteenth century, the various modes of poetic circulation—scrolls, manuscript books, song cycles [...]—tended to disappear behind an idealized scene of reading progressively identified with an idealized moment of expression.” Virginia Jackson, *Dickinson’s Misery: A Theory of Lyric Reading* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>85</sup> Paul de Man, “The Rhetoric of Temporality.” In *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 188.

embarks upon a more vexing and vexed form of repetition that will not seek timeless refuge by confirming the present's inevitability through commemorative re-duplication of the past. In such a world, wherein "time is the constitutive category," the heterodoxical significance of allegory derives from the "*repetition* (in the Kierkegaardian sense of the term) of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority" (207). Moreover, allegory's renunciation of simultaneity registers melancholically as the self's pierced disintegration and dispersion into the disincorporated "haunted precincts" (4.14.6) of Ungar's forest eyes.<sup>86</sup>

Immediately preceding their arrival at the journey's final stop, Bethlehem's enshrined nativity "The Church of the Star" (4.14), the pilgrims encounter an obscure "yonder object—fountain? shrine?" (4.10.3). This canto, "A Monument," presents for their inspection a stone triptych whose main tablet depicts a shepherd and lamb, the latter "In patience which reproached not fate [...] Flecked here and there with hinted blood" (19-24). Yet, monumentalized, the tablet's implicit violence is astonished: "It [the lamb] did not shrink; no cry did come:/ In still of that stone subdued/ Shearer and shorn alike were dumb" (25-27).<sup>87</sup> Scarred

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<sup>86</sup> "Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now full, though painfully, recognized as a non-self" (207).

<sup>87</sup> Bezanson's footnote notes an allusion here to Isaiah 53:7, which marks the inscription as a commemoration of slaughter: "He was oppressed, and he was

comforted by this scene of sacrificial slaughter, Ungar communes in “*altered* tone” (line 32) with those astonished excommunicants:

“This type’s assigned  
To one who sharing not man’s mind  
Partook man’s frame; whose mystic birth  
Wrecked him upon this reef of earth  
Inclement and inhuman. Yet,  
Through all the trials that beset,  
He leaned on an upholding arm—  
Foreknowing, too, reserves of balm.  
But how of them whose souls may claim  
Some link with Christ beyond the name,  
Which share the fate, but never share  
Aid or assurance, and nowhere  
Look for requital? Such there be;  
In by-lanes o’er the world ye see  
The Calvary-faces.” (4.10.34-48)

As with “a moan/ Of winds which succeeds the howl” (4.15.30-31), Ungar’s carefully-worded, melancholic refusal to identify Christ with the lamb (through the syntactically ambiguous metaphor of shipwreck) first confounds Isaiah’s prophetic typology, by the demotion of a perversely inhospitable Type (shared with but One) to type (as-sign of *human* attribution) as well as through an irreconcilable syntactic ambiguity latent in lines 37-38. Here, the attributes inclement and inhuman can neither be definitively ascribed to “earth” or “him.” The counter-monumental drift of Ungar’s unholy signifiers sets into abeyance the monolithic Typing of a graven image. Allegorically, rather than symbolically,

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afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” (KJV)

linked to Christ, an interminable *Via Dolorosa* of Calvary-faces their wretched dispossession of the earth is wretchedly begotten by a mystic birth.

Ungar's vision (seeing unseen, hearing unheard) unfolds not so much as a *communion with*, but rather a *visitation by* those the Crusades astonish (an unfeeling stone, an unfelt stoning) in name of Christ and Trade. In this respect, Charles Olson's deeply flawed characterization of *Clarel* as a "rosary of doubt"—doubly ironic given Ungar's repudiation of his 'genial' Catholic lineage—in which Jesus remains as the only "image of ... [Melville's] 'fonder dream of love in man toward man'" could not be less apt.<sup>88</sup> While he claims that "Christ as god contracted his [Melville's] vision [though the] person of Jesus was another matter," Olson's reading of the poem as the author's self-denial in Christianity reenacts the nightmarish obliteration of those the mystic dream "now drags out [as] its repulse" (1.13.64). When *loss* is construed as a monomaniacal surrender to the pure negation of futurity, the eventuality of negative capability that inheres in the *renunciation* of faith is foreclosed. Yet, that renunciation is not without object. The section of *Call Me Ishmael* in which *Clarel* finds mentions is entitled "Loss: Christ." The dismal trajectory of Olson's reading is all the more curious when juxtaposed with the sweeping vista with which *Call Me Ishmael* begins:

I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America. I spell it large because it comes large here. [...] It is geography at bottom, a hell of wide land from the beginning [...] PLUS a harshness we still perpetuate, a sun like a tomahawk, small earthquakes, but big

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<sup>88</sup> *Collected Prose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 86, 90.

tornadoes and hurrikans, a river north and south in the middle land running out the blood” (17).

The loss of SPACE and constriction of vision immanent in renunciation is hardly the attrition of imagination so much as it offers counter-monumental refutation of the Discovery Doctrines dominion of SPACE ratified by in the 1823 Supreme Court ruling *Johnson v. M’Intosh* (the first case in the “Marshall Trilogy”) whereby Congress is invested with the plenary and exclusive power to extinguish any aboriginal title to right of occupancy. In the court’s unanimous decision, Chief Justice Marshall wrote,

On the discovery of this immense continent, the great nations of Europe ... as they were all in pursuit of nearly the same object, it was necessary, in order to avoid conflicting settlements, and consequent war with each other, to establish a principle which all should acknowledge as the law by which the right of acquisition, which they all asserted, should be regulated as between themselves. This principle was that discovery gave title to the government by whose subjects, or by whose authority, it was made, against all other European governments, which title might be consummated by possession. ... The history of America, from its discovery to the present day, proves, we think, the universal recognition of these principles.<sup>89</sup>

With this enframing of Space in positive law, the sovereignty of civic personhood can appear only when considered through the lens of a right to own property. As UCLA professor of property law Stuart Banner has written of the decision,

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<sup>89</sup> *Johnson v. M’Intosh* 21 U.S. 543, 5. L.Ed. 681, 8 Wheat. 543 (1823)

“Marshall’s opinion ‘was rooted in a Eurocentric view of the inferiority of the Indian people’” and continues to be cited as precedent in legal rulings.<sup>90</sup>

A few pages later, Olson continues, “We are the last ‘first’ people. We forget that. We act big, misuse our land, ourselves. We lose our own primary. Melville went back, to discover us, to come forward. He got as far as *Moby-Dick*” (19). If, in fact, this constitutes *the* Melvillian thesis, then *Clarel* takes ‘us’ farther back in time, delineating reification of SPACE not as primary fact, but the violent imposition *in time* of a typologizing claim to *timelessness*. That Olson would offer as the synecdoche of that violence the tomahawk doubly ironizes his erasure of Ungar, a “wandering Ishmael of the West” (4.10.186) who has enlisted in the service of his fellow Canaanites (4.5.27-34) against the Anglo-Saxon “armed Christendom” (4.12.36) whose settler-colonialist Crusade links “the Indians East and West” as typological doubles. Moreover, Olson’s racialized synecdoche reinscribes an ongoing licensing of the violence perpetuated through the mystification of whiteness as essentially *genial*. The narrator’s assignation of Ungar’s “Hadean lore” as a “bias, bitterness—a strain/ Indian’s hopeless feud/ Under the white’s aggressive reign,” survives to this day in the fetishistic appropriations of professional sport’s commodified and copyrighted “warrior culture” branding (e.g., Washington Redskins, Atlanta Braves, Cleveland Indians) labially justified as commemorative tribute. Such “grave loot[ing]” (4.9.121)

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<sup>90</sup> Stuart Banner, *How the Indians Lost Their Land: Law and Power on the Frontier* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 11–12.

manifests precisely why the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ lacks the providential dispensation of “grace/ To win the love of any race” (4.9.117-118). Thus, the monumentalized expanse of Olson’s SPACE is engulfed, flooded in time by the relentless, erosive torrent of Ungar’s renunciation. In Ungar, Melville speaks not as “the victim of Christ” but speaks with Christ’s victims. The tenor of Ungar’s wrath is not the fatalistic “neo-Calvinistic [and] morbid obsession with evil in general” but the Anglo-Saxon arrogation of futurity. Differentiated from futurity, this Janus-faced eventuality allegorically apprehends the *not-now* as an ongoing melancholic preterition of millennialism’s historiographic manifest, symbolically authenticating and confirming those present as destined.

In her treatise on grief’s proliferation of temporalities in nineteenth-century America, Dana Luciano offers the following account of the counter-monumental energies latent in allegoric apprehension: “Because allegory always stresses the temporality of the relationships it enfolds, referring insistently to a prior set of meanings with which it can never fully coincide but without which it loses its significance, it has proven a powerful tool at moments in history when the question of history itself engenders a temporal crisis.”<sup>91</sup> When threatened by such moments of crisis, hegemonic social formations respond with commemorative spectacle, in guises triumphant or mournful.<sup>92</sup> Often as not, both

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<sup>91</sup> Dana Luciano, *Arranging Grief: Sacred Time and the Body in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 181-82.

<sup>92</sup> Moreover, those forms of extra-temporalizing commemoration inevitably disavow the supplemental logic of their origins *in time*. Thus, the human

moods are co-present and totalizing. Though their ritualistic particularity may be distinguished, nonetheless, each testifies to the *organic* necessity of violence inherent in the compacted exclusions that constitutively occasion when and by what means social belonging may terminate. The intelligibility of commemoration depends upon the degree to which its interpellative, ritual function can symbolically enshrine its covenantal assignation of being-in-relation as Being itself. In turn, the veneration accorded the symbol's emblematic and unequivocal form authorizes the settlement, enclosure, and homogenization of an always, already depopulated and depopulating space. Within this immaculate emplotment, the affective attachments (co)misioned by personhood, a massification of *our* reciprocal indexical incorporation, can now properly be (un)said—be (un)told—can *take their place*. One speaks by virtue of already being spoken for, that is, to speak in the name of: to be vouchsafed by the true sign one bears before. In the temporal mode of allegorist, however, “[a]ny person, any object, any relationship can mean absolutely anything else.”<sup>93</sup> Allegorically apprehended, the meaning of forms are freed from their symbolic petrification; which is to say, from the submersion of crusade's violent commemoration of immutable forms within the damaging and abrading flood of time, an historiographic ethics of interminable

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parturition that mortifies Christ's persona (Jesus) requires the temporally vertiginous supplement of yet another mystic birth, the Immaculate Conception, whose own issuance then proleptically anticipates Christ's retrospective conferral of sanctification.

<sup>93</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. John Osborne (London: NLB, 1977), 175.

and inexpiable responsibility arises: “the necessity of making meaning of (rather than receiving meaning *from*) the counter-monument, a process that like will, like allegory itself, necessarily be dispersed across time.”<sup>94</sup>

In his 2011 essay “*Clarel* and the American Centennial,” Cody Marrs unpacks a scene set within a grotto of the Mar Saba monastery.<sup>95</sup> In this grotto of the “crazed monk” Habbibi who has “gone, clean vanished from the eye!” (3.27.103-12), Derwent tentatively recites from the palimpsestic glyphs:

“Dim, dim to me,”  
Said Derwent; “ay, obscurely traced;  
And much is rubbed off or defaced.  
But here now, this is pretty clear:  
*I, Self, I am the enemy*  
*Of all, From me deliver me,,*  
*O Lord.*’—Poor man!—But here, dim here:  
‘*There is a hell over which mere hell*  
*Serves—for—a—heaven.*’—Oh, terrible!  
Profound pit that must be!—What’s here  
Half faded: ‘. . . *teen . . six,*  
*The hundred summers run,*  
*Except be in cicatrix*  
*The aloe—flowers—none.*’—  
Ah, Nostradamus; prophecy  
Is so explicit.—But this, see.  
Much blurred again: ‘. . . *testimony,*  
. . . . *grown fat and gray,*  
*The lion down, and—full of honey,*  
*The bears shall rummage—him—in—May.*’  
Yes, bears like honey.—Yon gap there  
Well lights the grotto; and this air  
Is dry and sweet; nice citadel  
For study.” (3.27.119-141)

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<sup>94</sup> *Arranging Grief*, 182.

<sup>95</sup> *Leviathan* 13, no. 3 (October 2011): 98-114.

This reader of *Clarel* would be hard-pressed to find another passage of such dense metrical deformation. Intensifying the singularity of this passage further is the most explicit, if effaced, allusion to the American Centennial (the “hundred summers run” since 1776) to be found in the poem. This passage constitutes a “prophecy in fragments,” according to Marrs, one that is of a piece with what he variously describes as Melville’s “poetics of declension,” “vision of historical regression,” and “negative historical eschatology” (99,106,110). Regression, however, constitutes mere inversion—progress through a glass darkly seen. The terms of contestation themselves remain uncontested. Rather, the complexity of the scene compels us to ask, as does Derwent’s guide, an irreverent Lesbian “Holding to *now*, swearing by *here*,” “What is it all?” (3.25.23; 3.27.119). On the one hand, this question seems something of a joke at the expense of the less than perspicacious Derwent, a creature of sweetness and light. Further complicating the exegesis is the mysterious admonishment inscribed above the entry, which had gone unnoticed when Derwent and the Lesbian first entered the grotto:

“ ‘*Ye here who enter Habbi’s den,  
Beware what hence ye take!*’ ” “Amen!  
Why didn’t he say that before?  
But what’s to take? all’s fixture here.” (3.27.149-52)

Furthermore, a suggestion lingers in the prior description of Habbibi (a variation on the Arabic *habib* meaning “beloved”) as a Melvillian self-portrait of the author as vanishing point:

“How you like it—Habbibi’s home?  
You see these writings on the wall?  
His craze was this: he heard a call

Ever from heaven: O scribe, write, write!  
Write this—that write—to these indite—  
To them! Forever it was—write!  
Well, write he did, as here you see.  
What is it all?” (3.27.111-118)

To say that this scene of narcissistic repulsion, whose structure is anticipated by anonymous “JUDÆA” discussed in the next paragraph, is incredibly complex (who is the referent of these? of them?) may seem obvious. However, my lingering “here” takes the admonition to heart. Beware what ye take from this passage, lest we dispel vexing obscurity with the apotropaic of a telos grounded precisely in a monumentalized authorial vision that its metrical *dis*-integration belies. It’s a comforting story, in some respects. Yet, it bears repeating: historical regression is no less mythic, which is to say, no less modern, than progression. Rather, we would do well to view this as instance of counter-monumental allegory whose effect “is not to rewrite history by substituting one story for another but to make known the partiality of the substitutions that pass as official history.”<sup>96</sup>

Despite the implacable melancholy with which the poem eschewed the “official history” fervently evangelized at the Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia, “a sort of tremendous Vanity Fair” for the Gilded Age in Melville’s words, *Clarel’s* scathing critique of providential nationalism is

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<sup>96</sup> *Arranging Grief*, 202.

curiously absent from the litany of reviewers' complaints.<sup>97</sup> The Abolition War veteran Ungar, born to a white Catholic father and a Native American mother—"An Anglo brain, but Indian heart" (4.5.140)—is glaringly omitted by those reviews that detail the poem's major characters.<sup>98</sup> With the publication of Walter Bezanson's first scholarly edition of *Clarel* in 1960 (the year in which Woodward's volume first appeared), Ungar had acquired a new prominence (the "dominant dark figure of Part 4"), appropriate given the repercussive force of his words leave the nonplussed pilgrims with "some misgivings of their own" (4.21.150).<sup>99</sup>

Unswayed by the meliorist narratives of progress offered by his fellow pilgrims, Ungar's "*As cruel as a Turk?*" speech repulses the kind of ethnological typology ("What are they?") deployed to baleful effect in the racial taxonomies on display at the Philadelphia Centennial. According to Robert Rydell,

The central conception underlying the Indian exhibit at the Centennial, in short, was that Native American cultures and people belonged to the interminable wasteland of humanity's dark and stormy beginnings. The Indians' worth as human beings was

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<sup>97</sup> Melville had visited the Centennial Exposition on October 11. The entirety of his impressions, as recorded in a brief letter to his cousin Catherine Lansing, reads thusly: "By the way, I was there yesterday — went & returned same day; you will be much impressed with it; it is immense — a sort of tremendous Vanity Fair." *Correspondence*, 447.

<sup>98</sup> Bernard Rosenthal has argued that Ungar finally sways the despondent Clarel toward the hope of redemption more sensual and terrestrial than spiritual. See Bernard Rosenthal, "Herman Melville's Wandering Jews," in *Puritan Influences in American Literature*, ed. Emory Elliott, vol. 65, Illinois Studies in Language and Literature ; (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979).

determined by their usefulness as counterpoint to the unfolding progress of the ages.<sup>100</sup>

The Philadelphia Centennial also marked the first occasion in which the United States functioned as host of the World's Fair; the word "fair," as Robert W. Rydell reminds us, "derives from the Latin *feria*, 'holy day.'"<sup>101</sup> In the case of the Philadelphia Centennial, the desire to yoke secular spectacle and sacred time interred within this etymology found explicit expression, whether in the orientalist pilgrimage rhetoric of one *Philadelphia Inquirer* journalist — an "American Mecca" — or its organizers' analogical annexation of teleological universality by occidental white supremacy. For one principal commentator, proper observance of this 'holy day' called for an urgent and Manichean bloodletting. William Dean Howells, writing in *The Atlantic*, rendered explicit the lawful savagery of manifest destiny glossed over by ethnologist Charles Rau, the exhibit's organizer.

We passed on to the interesting exhibition of Indian costumes and architecture, and to those curiously instructive photographs and plaster models of the ancient and modern towns of the Moquis. These rehabilitate to the fancy the material aspect of the old Aztec civilization in a wonderful manner, and throw a vivid light upon whatever one has read of the race whose empire the Spaniards overthrew, but which still lingers, a feeble remnant, in the Pueblos of New Mexico. If the extermination of the red savages of the plains should take place soon enough to save this peaceful and industrious people whom they have harassed for hundreds of years, one could hardly regret the loss of any number of Apaches and Comanches. The red man, as he appears in effigy and photograph in this collection, is a hideous demon, whose malign traits can hardly inspire any emotion softer than abhorrence. In blaming our Indian agents for malfeasance in office, perhaps we do not

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<sup>100</sup> *All the World's A Fair*, 24-25.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

sufficiently account for the demoralizing influence of merely beholding those false and pitiless savage faces; moldy flour and corrupt beef must seem altogether too good for them.<sup>102</sup>

As Bruno Giberti has noted, the Centennial evinced totalizing aspirations, akin to other projects of modernity like Diderot's encyclopedia or Linnaeus' floral and faunal taxonomies. While both Giberti and Rydell make note of the Centennial Commission's plan to organize the Main Building as an "installation by races," Giberti draws rather different conclusions in an attempt to minimize any racist intentionality on the part of designers, notwithstanding the reception of an commentator like Howells.<sup>103</sup> Setting aside "the conspicuous exception of the so-called installation by races," Giberti claims that race was "simply not an explicit issue for the organizers, at least as demonstrated by the official literature [.]" As such, "the installation by races had little to do with what we might think of as racism, and more to do with linked issues of nationalism and imperialism."<sup>104</sup> That the Centennial Committee did not invoke race in a scientific, biological sense (as Giberti claims) however, does not mitigate the racist underpinnings assumed by those nationalist and imperialist enterprises. Rau, the Smithsonian's first curator of antiquities, briefly entertained the inclusion of living representatives of Native American tribes before abandoning the plan, further

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<sup>102</sup> William Dean Howells, "A Sennight at the Centennial," *The Atlantic Monthly* (July 1876): 103.

<sup>103</sup> USCC, *Centennial Exhibition*, 9: 51-52. Qtd. in Giberti, 92.

<sup>104</sup> Bruno Giberti, *Designing the Centennial: A History of the 1876 International Exhibition in Philadelphia* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press: 2002), 93.

marking indigenous populations as atavistic remnants whose removal testified to the law of progress so rapturously proclaimed by the Centennial. In “The Happy Age,” a talk given to the New York Liberal Club, Rau articulated the exhibit’s moral lesson: “the extreme lowness of our remote ancestors cannot be a source of humiliation; on the contrary, we should glory in our having advanced so far above them, and recognize the great truth that *progress* is the law that governs the development of mankind.”<sup>105</sup> In the heat of the Centennial Summer, however, a different and decidedly less remote source of humiliation would trouble Rau’s bloodless and abstracted notion of progress, namely the victory of Sioux, Cheyenne, and Lakota forces over General Custer’s cavalry regiment at the Battle of the Greasy Grass (or Little Bighorn). The U.S. Government’s ongoing hostilities with Plains tribes belied the vanished presence of Native Americans from the exhibit’s displays. It is in this fraught and bloody context that Ungar’s critique of the Anglo-Saxon—“Who in the name of Christ and Trade/ (Oh, bucklered forehead)/ Deflower the world’s last sylvan glade!” (4.9.123-25)—failed to register with contemporary notices, thereby echoing the constitutive expulsion of Native Americans from modernity’s present and recasting their legibility in the terms of a racialized superannuation.

What this chapter has, no doubt, made clear, is its investment in the ongoing relevance of the appraisals of Melville’s contemporaries, not simply in their recapitulation of Clarel’s agon between allegorical and symbolic modalities,

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<sup>105</sup> Qtd. in Rydell, 24.

but that recapitulation's reverberations in the lineage of Melville criticism, including Dryden's. My approach, as an intervention in the question of *Clarel's* genre, refuses monumentalism's deracination of what is productively conceived as a Centennial, or rather Counter-Centennial, occasional poem, a genre so bereft of literary respect as to, of this writing, have only commanded one book-length study, John Dolan's 2000 *Poetic Occasion from Milton to Wordsworth*.<sup>106</sup>

Nonetheless, Dolan provides a deeply problematic and underdetermined formulation of occasional verse that essentializes a *socially sanctioned* epideictic function, wherein elegiac verse serves as the emblematic form. Relying on "a verifiable event as its genesis," occasional poems are "ostensibly produced by *community-approved* speakers who *celebrate* community values at a time when these values require commemoration."<sup>107</sup> The extent of attention to Dolan's work, whatever it merits, is one brief appraisal in *The Review of English Studies*, especially notable for its damning cynicism: "What Dolan is interested in seems to be occasionality as a site of bad faith. He is less interested in the occasional poem as an aesthetic object than as a cunning career move." Any ambiguity as to whether the reviewer includes Dolan's study itself as a career move is dispelled when we read, "One [a trope of disciplinary synecdoche] cannot but reflect that there are times when the occasionality of academic works betokens bad faith—on

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<sup>106</sup> John Dolan, *Poetic Occasion from Milton to Wordsworth* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). One cannot, however, gainsay the immense critical interest that "subgenres" of occasional verse have attracted, most notably the elegy.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

the part of those [institutional metonymy] who require of academics a rapid and regular succession of small books.”<sup>108</sup> The dilemma here speaks to one of the most entrenched principles by which the discipline responds to the pressures of self-articulation, that is the chronological. While ‘aesthetic’ criteria can augment chronotypical domains, sounding their heterogeneous recesses and abrading their lapidary exteriors, the critical marginalization of occasional texts as ephemera of dubious aesthetic provenance itself relies upon a act of bad faith. The self-aggrandizing embowerment of contemporary aesthetic norms ideologically mystifies our own exquisite discernment to sort out objects of lasting, monumental value from the obsolescent and disposable. What provokes the question of occasional aesthetics is their commemorative situation; That is, in their formal arrangement and conferral of sensibility (*aesthesis*), they register the imbricated historicity of ‘persons’ and ‘things’ as a socio-theologic dispensation (Dolan’s verified event) that permits or denies entry into the *matter* of record.

In the introduction to *Necro Citizenship: Death, Eroticism, and the Public Sphere in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, Russ Castronovo begins with a series of questions that, once inverted, enable us potentially to apprehend the mechanisms by which “official history” extrudes, sanctions, and disavows death within the distribution of the sensible: “How does death structure political life? . .

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<sup>108</sup> Howard Erskine-Hill, *The Review of English Studies* 52, no. 208 (November 2001): 578-79. In the case of Dolan’s “small” 220-page monograph, Erskine-Hill employs an invidious distinction that tacitly opposes the occasional (understood as ephemeral, trivial) against the aesthetic (understood as transhistorical, enduring) when chastising Dolan for his archive.

. How does the ultimate privacy and incommunicability of death? . . . Why is the universal fact of mortality indispensable to specific constructions of citizenship in the United States? *And what is exactly killed off by the experience of citizenship?*” (1, emphasis mine). We now begin to approach *Clarel* as a testing-ground for the possibility of how an ineradicable, material remainder might bear witness without re-deploying the monumentalizing, atemporal rhetoric of immortality that pathologizes those for whom “The World accosts—” (1.2.109). However, we must first recalibrate the lens of Castronovo’s provocative questions at two levels. First, we must dilate his Americanist lens in order to properly place *Clarel* within Wai-Chee Dimock’s transnational *deep* time. If providential millennialism makes anything clear, the origin of America, and American literature, is predicated by a constitutively excluded elsewhere, which leaves the “nation, as segmenting device, [...] vulnerable” to constant “stretch[ing], punctur[ing], and infiltrat[ion].”<sup>109</sup> Secondly, Castronovo troublingly echoes Michael Paul Rogin’s immurement of the spiritual from the political when he writes, “But at a more transcendent level, the afterlife emancipates souls from passionate debates, everyday engagements, and earthly affairs that animate the political” (4).

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<sup>109</sup> “Dates such as 1776 are misleading for just reason, for the temporal duration, for American literature surely did not begin at just that point, that upper limit. Nor did it begin at 1620, when the Plymouth Colony was settled. The putative beginnings, monumentalized, and held up like so many bulwarks against the long histories of other continents and the long history of America as a Native American habitat, cannot in fact fulfill their insulating function. . . . Territorial sovereignty is poor prophylactic.” *Through Other Continents*, 4.

Inversely, what is here argued is that the political both animates and is animated by the spiritual. ‘Emancipation,’ as such, masks the disavowed but constitutive binding that enchains anima to animus, which is to say, there is *nothing more purely political* than the arrogation or usurpation of unincorporated melancholy by the solemn observances of a chronopolitics whose investiture is grounded in the exclusive authority of suspending ‘politics.’ The temporality of mourning—with its refrain of ‘This is not the time for politics’—reminds us that politics is always and at every moment a chronopolitics. And with every beat, “The World accosts—.” With this intransitive construction begins a “faded denizen” entitled “JUDÆA” hidden within the lining of Clarel’s trunk. The world demands of “The Palmer” offerings and gifts:

“The world accosts—

“Last one out of Holy Land,  
What gift bring’st thou? Sychem grapes?  
Tabor, which the Eden drapes,  
Yieldeth garlands. I demand  
Something cheery at thy hand.  
Come, if Solomon’s Song thou singest,  
Haply Sharon’s Rose thou bringest.”

“The Palmer replies:

“Nay, naught thou nam’st thy servant brings,  
Only Judæa my feet did roam;  
And mainly there the pilgrim clings  
About the precincts of Christ’s tomb.  
These palms I bring—from dust not free,  
Since dust and ashes both were trod by me.” (1.2.108-122)

There are two formal elements that demand our attention. First, we *hear* in the world’s speech a noticeable departure from the poem’s octosyllabics. We are

missing something. With the exception of the final two lines: the first in trochaic pentameter; the second marks a return to the poem's octosyllabic pattern but, again, the tetrameter is trochaic. The previous lines vacillate between trochaic trimeter, with a hanging syllable, or trochaic tetrameter with a heavy caesura that shifts position from line to line. In the ambiguity of "palms" in the fifth line, we encounter the materiality of the palmer's body which, in its excess of the world, is also a gesture of empty-handedness: The Palmer has responded with naught but the materiality of his body and its journey, rather than the symbol of that would signify the journey as pilgrimage. The octosyllabic regularity of the palmer's reply, in its refusal to come back bearing the edenic symbols of an originary, atemporal *locus amoenus* establishes a crucial thematics of meter that will emerge repeatedly once the pilgrimage is underway. Which brings us to the second point. The materiality of the letter constitutes an ineradicable element that forswears any transcendent renunciation in the name of spirit. While in his journals Melville refers to Judea, here we encounter the archaism of Judæa. In one passage, later versified in *The Wilderness* canto "A Halt," Melville plunges into a hypnotized incantation, a propulsive and paratactic astonishment:

Stones of Judea. We read a good deal about stones in Scriptures. Monuments & stumps of the memorials are set up of stones; men are stoned to death; the figurative seed falls in stony places; and no wonder that stones should so largely figure in the Bible. Judea is one accumulation of stones — Stony mountains & stony plains; stony torrents & stony roads; stony walls & stony fields [sic], stony houses & stony tombs; stony eyes & stony hearts. *Before you, & behind you are stones.* (90, emphasis mine)

Interred with Judæa is the typographical “æ,” known in English as the ash sound, the glyph of mortality inscribed upon tombstones “at the age.” And the death of God is the birth of the God of death, cradled and reared within that most monumental of Piles:

It was in these pyramids that was conceived the idea of Jehovah.  
Terrible mixture of the cunning and awful. Moses learned in all the  
lore of the Egyptians. The idea of Jehovah born here. (75)

The Palmer, dusted with the ashes that scandalously testify to [the] ineradicable materiality, remains faithful to the death that is the world’s and the word’s origin. To be pummeled without mercy by the stony God of death — this will be, for Clarel, the pedagogical hermeneutic. It is modeled by those characters of Bezanson’s monomaniac sequence, in which, drawing on the allegory of the Wandering Jew, the “sin of man would therefore be not to accept exile, nomadism and perpetual migration,” a melancholic astonishment that forms the ineradicable remainder of all that is this constitutively excluded by the monumental.<sup>110</sup> While Rosenthal reads “JUDÆA” as “unabashedly allegorical,” the metrical discrepancies signal, in fact, a hermeneutical conflict of convictions expressive of two modes of reading: the symbolic and the allegorical, neither of which has yet been committed to by Clarel. The journal’s stony account of Judea would seem to suggest what Rosenthal describes as “the wasteland of Jerusalem, *symbol* for the world we all live in, [in which] the redeeming force of Christianity lay in ruins”

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<sup>110</sup> Vincenzo Vitiello, “Desert, Ethos, Abandonment: Towards a Topology of the Religious,” in *Religion*, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 144.

(170). Yet, the ruination of Jerusalem unsettles the landscape by returning it to time as an inhabited, ongoing contestation. In the loss of a “world” *as loss*, that world which is dually predicated upon a prior and subsequent Parousia, the beguiling spell of the symbolic is lifted, leaving only a Benjaminian world of shifting, nomadic referentiality.

In divers ways which vary it  
Stones mention find in hallowed Writ:  
Stones rolled from well-mouths, altar stones,  
Idols of stone, memorial ones,  
Sling-stones, stone tables; Bethel high  
Saw Jacob, under starry sky,  
On stones his head lay—desert bones;  
Heaved there in bulk; death too by stones  
The law decreed for crime; in spite  
As well, for taunt, or type of ban,  
The same at place were cast, or man;  
Or piled upon the pits of fight  
Reproached or even denounced the slain:  
So in the wood of Ephraim, some  
Laid the great heap over Absalom.  
    Convenient too at willful need,  
Stones prompted many a ruffian deed  
And ending oft in parting groans;  
By stones died Naboth; stoned to death  
Was Stephen meek: and Scripture saith,  
Against even Christ they took up stones.  
    Moreover, as a thing profuse,  
Suggestive still in every use,  
On stones, still stones, the gospels dwell  
In lesson meet or happier parables. (2.10.1-26)

From this counter-monumental perspective, we find buried beneath this heaping accumulation of stones a counter-monumental profusion of the stone; cast and recast, its profuse matter (“the action of pouring out; spilling, shedding, esp. of blood”) of injury and bloodshed belies the decree of a law whose very premise

is that meaning is not made, but received. To make meaning is to draw blood from a stone: this is the allegorical truth of the law that would banish allegory. This idiom's conjunction of impossibility and callousness, a conjunction of immortality and induration, mention finds in the Wandering Jew, that apocryphal denizen "of the perilous outpost of the sane" (3.19.99), whose hard-heartedness begets immortality. According to Rosenthal,

Melville has not given his Wandering Jews [Celio, Mortmain, Agath, Ungar] immortality. The great horror in the myth of the Wandering Jew had been the sentence of immortality. Concomitantly, however, the myth guaranteed a God. Melville turned the horror to mortality. (176)

Yet, this claim misses Melville's counter-monumental reading of the myth, as I will demonstrate. *Clarel's* treatment of the 'Wandering Jew' preserves and intensifies the horror of immortality. Yet, in doing so, *Clarel* rewrites that horror not as divine damnation, but as the constitutive basis of a melancholic ethics of renunciation: renouncing futurity's transcendent redemption for the recognition *in time* of Ungar's astonished "Calvary-faces," those defaced as inclement and inhuman by a mythic and mystic (inclement and inhuman) birth. The absolute renunciation of promised absolution (to be born again)—a horror at the past rendered immaterial—need not of necessity be reckoned nihilistically.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Simone de Beauvoir elucidates the profound ethical stakes raised by absolute renunciation: "far from God's absence authorizing all license, the contrary is the case, because man is abandoned on the earth, because his acts are definitive, absolute engagements. He bears the responsibility for a world, which is not the work of a strange power, but of himself, where his defeats are inscribed, and his victories, as well. A God can pardon, efface, and

Denouncing the wicked “tampering/ With wickedness the word” (4.22.22-23),  
Ungar scorns that promise as the very etiology of wickedness, “That Saxon term  
and Scriptural” (4.22.27)

—This wickedness  
(Might it retake true import well)  
Means not default, nor vulgar vice,  
Nor Adam’s lapse in Paradise;  
But worse: ‘twas this evoked the hell—  
Gave in the conscious soul’s recess  
Credence to Calvin. What’s implied  
In that deep utterance decried  
Which Christians labially confess—  
*Be born anew?*”(4.22.31-40)

This piercingly mocking jeremiad concluded, Ungar will speak no more.<sup>112</sup> Yet in  
deriding the insincerity of that wicked promise (an imp lie) recessed within a  
*mere labial* confession, we are returned to his first, disquieting words in *Clarel*:  
“A gun:/ A gun’s man’s voice—sincerest one” (4.2.160-161). If, as the narrator  
claims, Ungar’s conviction “stands/ The adage old, that one’s own lips/ Proclaim  
the character” (4.2.58-59), then the character of that sincerity (a clean, pure  
sound) reveals the benediction of purified rebirth as murderous, befouled

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compensate. But if God does not exist, man’s faults are inexpiable. If it is  
claimed that, whatever the case may be, this earthly stake has no importance,  
it is precisely because one invokes that inhuman objectivity which we  
declined at the start.” de Beauvoir, “The Ethics of Ambiguity.”

<sup>112</sup> This passage is from “Of Wickedness the Word,” which immediately  
follows that canto blackest commentary, “Ungar and Rolfe.” Confirmed by the  
grievously and asynchronously allegory of the ‘wandering Jew,’ the punctual  
continuity between Old World and New World is thus calendared: “Years,  
three score years, seem much to men;/ ; Three hundred—five—eight  
hundred, then; And add a thousand, these I know!/ [...] *To me now seems  
yesterday*” (emphasis mine, 3.19.116-121)

malediction. The character of his experience has abided in the death sentence eclipsed by America's covenantal birthright: "Though birthright he renounced in hope/ Their *sanguine* country's wonted claim" (4.21.147-148; emphasis mine). Despite the extrusion of the upbraiding "man of scars [...] for sad fight/ Upon some desperate dark shore," its narratorial voicing confirms the New World's claim to the Old World's constitutive enshrinement of exclusionary violence, which claim is articulated at length in the Mar Saban "wandering Jew" which concludes with the masqued performer, "as swept by sand/ In fierce Sahara hurricaned, [...] and vanished down the glen" (3.19.164-166).<sup>113</sup> "Christ's convict grim" (3.19.140) begins with an apostrophic imprecation whose millennial terminus anticipates the strange narratorial exhortation of "America!" that follows Ungar's black commentary on the "Dark Ages of Democracy." (4.21.138-139).

Only thou know'st, for thou dost share,  
 As round my heart the phantoms throng  
 Of tribe and era perished long,  
 So *thou* art haunted, sister in wrong.  
 [...]  
 Specters of thirty sieges old  
 You outer lines of trenches hold:  
 Egyptian, Mede, Greek, Arab, Turk,  
 Roman, and Frank, beleaguering lurk.—  
 "Jerusalem! (3.19.24-34)

Stonewalling the uneven course of tetrameter within a monumental "stilled estate" (4.21.139), the abrupt truncation of these commemorative exclamations marks an eternalizing severance that can only appear to the self-fulfilled by this self-

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<sup>113</sup> This performance is an anti-Semitic entertainment arranged by the monks of Mar Saba monastery in section three of *Clarel*.

fulfilling prophecy as the insensible (unfeeling, unfelt) astonishment of a melancholic specter.<sup>114</sup> In yet another passage allegorizing the monomaniacal excitation of Hadean lore, the masque laments its asynchronous, heaping disfiguration: “the mystery/ He [man redeemed] guesses of that dreadful lore/ Which Eld accumulates in me:/ He fleeth me” (3.19.64-67). The narratorial conscription of wounded mythos (utterance, speech)—“Jerusalem!”—renders fabular a forsaken enunciation for the sake of an ordained, monumental annunciation—America!—and thereby emplots anew the genial birthright of a perpetual severance. The repulsing and repulsed Self takes flight precisely at the monumentalized moment of the annunciatory call to commemoration; the kinship of alterity, of being-with, is abjectly masqued and sacrificed on the altar of Being. With monomaniacal fear and trembling, incite the man.

Clarel’s first encounter with the monomaniac sequence occurs in book one, “Jerusalem.” Here, a melancholic Italian hunchback Celio, whose name transposed suggests an unbridgeable allegorical gap—sky? Heaven?—reflects at the arch of *Ecce Homo*:

Upbraider! We upbraid again;  
*Thee* [Christ] we upbraid; our pangs constrain  
 Ere yet thy day no pledge was given  
 Of homes and mansions in the heaven—  
 Paternal homes reserved for us;  
 Heart hoped it not, but lived content—  
 Content with life’s own discontent,

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<sup>114</sup> “America!/ In stilled estate, / On him [Ungar], half-brother and co-mate—  
 / In silence, and with vision dim/ Rolfe Vine and Clarel gazed on him”  
 (4.21.140-143)

Nor deemed that fate ere swerved for us:  
[...]  
But thou—ah, see, in rack how pale  
Who did the world with throes convulse;  
Behold him—yea—behold the Man  
Who warranted if not began  
The dream that drags out its repulse. (1.13.48-64)

Disturbing Celio's meditations, a monk and layman enter the scene, the former directing attention to the spot "At pause before a wayside stone" where "that bad Jew / His churlish taunt at Jesus threw" (1.13.111-113). The effect of these apocryphal words, drawn from a stone, in turn give unsuspected injury to Celio, who then wonders "Am *I* the Jew?" (1.13.118). The grammar of the question, which would elicit "I am" or "I am not," masks the monomaniacal law that would "stone" him: the creation of his inhuman singularity, itself a masque, is simultaneously the petrific after-image of a monumental erasure, that the divinity of Christ himself was itself a mask, the *prosopon* of God. The scandal of Incarnation (as substance, as Parousia) is that its conception constitutes a rhetorical masking of *human making* (prosopopoeia). Christ petrifies the Jew:

"For this thou bleedest, Anguished Face;  
Yea, thou through ages to accrue,  
*Shalt the Medusa shield replace* (1.42.93-95)

The symbol of the Wandering Jew is the astonishment of allegory. That symbol "(the favored trope of the monumental) [...]" masks temporality in its alleged transcendence of time," wherein temporality is extruded as a calculus of stonings

unrecorded.<sup>115</sup> As allegory, Christ becomes human so that Jew may remain inhuman. In his body, because it is body (that which is incarcerated by the spirit), counter-monumental time (“damaged time”)<sup>116</sup> appears:

Yea, *now* the Jew, inhuman *erst*,  
With penal sympathy is cursed—  
The burden shares of every crime,  
And throttled miseries undirged,  
Unchronicled, and guilt submerged  
Each moment in the flood of time.  
Go mad I can not: I maintain  
The perilous outpost of the sane.  
Memory could I mitigate.  
Or would the long years vary any!  
But no, ‘tis fate repeating fate[.] (3.19.91-96, emphasis mine)

So that the long years may vary, so that fate should not repeat fate, Clarel will vanish from the typological temporality of pilgrimage in which the pilgrim can apprehend everywhere only the symbolic confirmation of himself. Yet paradoxically, in the piercing act of renunciation vanished symbolic Being reconstitutes as an allegorical trace embedded in the matter of recording. In the displacement of the pristine, becoming futurity of Parousia by a corrupted, unbecoming not-now of Palipsnosia, the “I” is beholden to an asynchronic sense of insensibility. Reeling in the wake of Ungar’s final torrent of words, Clarel initially symbolically misapprehends the allegorical truth of his own thought. If

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<sup>115</sup> *Arranging Grief*, 187.

<sup>116</sup> “The subject of the countermonument is less the truth content of a given event than the formal arrangement of time around the event; in response to the sacralizing appeal of the monumental, the deliberately untimely countermonument marks out spaces in which damaged time becomes visible” *Ibid.*, 170.

all that's "left us is the senses sway," then, he concludes, "We are not worth the saving." (4.63-64). Oscillating backward and forward, this swaying inclination will swerve Clarel away and out from the linear temporality recollected by pilgrimage, whose elective telos encloses futurity within the dualistic dispensation of redemption or damnation. Melancholically stayed and freighted with inexorable responsibility, an overdetermined and inevitable Presence gives way so that the not-now of an underdetermined eventuality may come to be. Attending to *Clarel's* portentous 'metrical affair' requires that we observe how Clarel's estrangement from Ruth melancholically allegorizes a parenthetical, narratorial interruption of the masque's performance.<sup>117</sup>

"Just let him live, just let him rove,  
(Pronounced the voice estranged from love)  
[...]  
For he forbid is, he is banned;  
His brain shall tingle, but his hand  
Shall palsied be in power:  
Ruthless, he meriteth no ruth,  
On him I imprecate the truth.'" (3.19.49-58)

What attribution or assignation can be made of this doubly passive voice, both pronounced and estranged? Whose voice *is* this? For a literal reading, the answer is easily arrived at: These are scripted lines spoken by a performer speaking in the voice of "wandering Jew." However, the line as scripted, is itself estranged by the impress of an altered and altaring that vertiginously discloses the immeasurable distance of a mise-en-abyme. Symbolically effaced as an unfeeling,

unfelt thing to which the “I” bears no relation or responsibility, the myth recursively voices the immutable conditions of its own astonished estrangement from enunciation. Ever since its origins in 13<sup>th</sup>-century Europe, the fabled speech of “wandering Jew” has been received its anti-Semitic scriptural standing by Matthew 16:28: “Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (KJV). The genial enclosure of the narratorial voice mis-takes the mask at face value: a thing, inhuman *erst*, that which cannot be killed, cannot die, because it could never live. The voice estranged from love is that of Christ. Dimly viewed at an immeasurable and, therefore, incommemorable, pure distance, this altared alter goes on unchronicled, undirged.

Stay, Death. Not mine the Christus-wand  
 Wherewith to charge thee and command:  
 I plead. Most gently hold the hand  
 Of her thou ledest far away. (“Dirge,” 4.31.1-4)

Singular amongst *Clarel*'s cantos for its brevity, ignominiously distinguished by its critical occlusion, here the “absent center” that is Clarel flickers incandescently, like a coruscated gleam over the moonlit surface of sublunary depths upon which the narratorial “Epilogue” buoyantly floats.<sup>118</sup> The canto immediately follows the rebuke of Clarel's intrusion upon the funerary rites of Agar and Ruth, felled by “The fever—grief: / 'There hard to tell; was no relief” (4.30.88-89). Eluding legible employment, grief asynchronously devours and

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<sup>118</sup> “Desert Storm”, 40.

thwarts any escape, expiation, or consolation afforded by narrative futurity. When Clarel outlandishly responds that “ye—your tribe—’twas ye denied/ Me access to this virgin’s side” (90-91) one of the assembled menacingly lays into the profanity of Clarel’s conceit: “Give way, quit thou our dead!/ [...] Art thou of us? turn thee about!” (4.30.111-113). Finally faced with the death warranted by the circumstance of a faith that would lay claim to Ruth, Clarel must then in turn renounce that faith, left with only the conviction that “that which shall not be/ It *ought* to be” (116-117). According to Short, in the “Dirge” “Melville’s narrative voice takes its new direction [...] establishing an organic symbol of hope comparable to the adored symbols of Christianity,” such that the “*true* artist, lover, or worshipper” creatively imbues the “Southern Cross, the low lamps, Ruth” with imaginative life “*or* [replaces] them with *equally compelling* phenomena” (emphasis mine, 566-67).<sup>119</sup> In the aftermath, he continues, “Melville dissociates his viewpoint from that of his less imaginative protagonist” with distanced descriptions of Clarel’s Easter Week wanderings.<sup>120</sup> In these comments lie a number of unexamined suppositions. First and foremost is his ascription of the pleading “I” to the narratorial voice, rather than to a complexly haunted and Hadean precinct beyond dominion of the “Christus-wand” resurrected in the Epilogue. Without resurrection, death sustains in the shadow of life cast by the “palm” with which the dirge concludes. True art need not be

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<sup>119</sup> Short’s “Form and Vision in Herman Melville’s *Clarel*” provides one of the very few readings of this canto.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

measured by its ability to comfort and console. Nor should art be confused with the sweet by and by of an epilogue invoking the “Old Crusader’s Cry” —*Denique Coelum*—so that “death may prove unreal at the last,/ And stoics be astounded into heaven” (4.35.25-26).<sup>121</sup>

a certain space	From within
—however small—	
(Pensive, a shade, but all her own)	
lies in wait all worth	
saving from the symbol	without

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<sup>121</sup> Bezanson, 839.

Coda:

“Ah, tread not, sweet, my father’s way”: Susan Howe, Emily  
Dickinson, and Antinomian Renunciation

disc(H)oria – a misshaped pupil  
transferred use of *pūpilla* female child, also doll (feminine form corresponding  
to *pūpillus* : see pupil *n.*<sup>1</sup>), so called on account of the small reflected image seen  
when looking into someone's pupil. (OED)

When do we look to begin? Where do we begin to look? How am I to look to you?

because, in [ ], Howe's poems are easily seen through postmodern critical lenses and assimilated into avant-garde positions, because her forms don't shock, because we can comfortably call her hybrid experiments "violent collisions" (Lennon), we have ceased really asking, "What is this book?"<sup>1</sup>

a student was, a student late<sup>2</sup>

Not justify

what is this book? What THEN? What book are we after?

Progenitor: b. the original of which something is a copy, or from which it is derived

Forgoer, we cannot, can we, forgo transposition: *Can we not justify disobedience or ingratitude to our Maker. Can we not justify insult or incivility to our fellow men.*<sup>3</sup>

IN NO CASE

TO BE JUSTIFIED

IN PRINTING,

TO AGREE

TO JUDGE  
RIGHTLY of

W

Is

juStified

BY HER

chilDren

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Matth.xi<sup>4</sup>

widow or©his

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<sup>1</sup> Stefania Heim, "Dark Matter: Susan Howe, Muriel Rukeyser, and the Scholar's Art" (City University of New York, 2015), 18, [https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc\\_etds/574](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/574).

<sup>2</sup> *Clarel*, 4.26.206

<sup>3</sup> Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1844). Unless otherwise noted, the order of words in italicized phrases have been transposed.

(Come, look at straight things more in line, **mother**<sup>5</sup>  
Blue eyes or black, which like you best)<sup>6</sup>

*Poetry thought is transference.*<sup>7</sup>

Justify, man to man. We begin as do so many men begin: “*Have I this chosen material*

because the Bible

constitutes a conventionally circumscribed corpus of integrated prescriptive and narrative material than can serve as an artificially simplified model.”<sup>8</sup>

Knowing you persuades me more than the Bible<sup>9</sup>

that the “creation of legal meaning can’t not take place in silence. But neither can’t it take place without the committed action that distinguishes law from literature.”<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps, here will be where we were begun. This serious commission, this taking of liberties **by mischief superimposed on wild**<sup>11</sup>

To speak of nomos and antinomianism, as Robert C. Cover did in his landmark 1983 essay “Nomos & Narrative,” is to pose the question of jurisdiction and enclosure. The differential histories by which the borders of Law, Religion, and Literature come to be constituted bespeak an agonistic and excessive nomic, or narrative, order inseparable from the rise of nation-state formations. As such,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Howe, *Melville’s Marginalia* (New York: New Directions, 1993), 99.

<sup>6</sup> The Prodigal to Clarel, rejecting the “Bonzes” allegoric construal of Hafiz. (4.26.200-201)

<sup>7</sup> *Melville’s Marginalia*, 114.

<sup>8</sup> Robert M. Cover, “The Supreme Court, 1982 Term - - Foreword: Nomos and Narrative.,” *Harvard Law Review* 97, no. 4 (1983): 9.

<sup>9</sup> Herman Melville to Nathaniel Hawthorne, November 1851. Qtd. in *Melville’s Marginalia*, 100

<sup>10</sup> Cover, 49

<sup>11</sup> *Melville’s Marginalia*, 128

the diffuse processes by which textual productions are welcomed into or exiled from each of these domains embed the question of “what kind of book is this?” within hegemonic logics of imperialism and settler-colonialism. As such, the terms and scope of textual engagement, the imbrication of citizenship with readership, and the modes of circulation, citation, and reproduction must needs become (il)legible within the shadow of jurispathic violence.<sup>12</sup> Insofar, then, as we are led by language, which is to say educated, any staging of the scene of pedagogical encounter obliges us to ask for whom and with whom we read and write. With these concerns in mind, I find myself in sympathy with the reservations expressed above by Stefania Heim with regard to the state of Howe criticism: domestication and justification through the formulaic litany of a post-structuralist lexicon has, lamentably, particularized the singularity of Howe’s impossibly personal mode of voicing, that which **belongs to no one else**.<sup>13</sup> This is not so much to say that the now-standardized critical vocabulary deployed by her interlocutors is without value or merit. Indeed, Howe’s own interviews testify to her immersion within the pages of Cixous, Irigaray, Deleuze, and Derrida. Time and again we are told that “Howe’s work offers important possibilities for

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<sup>12</sup> As Cover notes, “the jurisgenerative principle by which legal meaning proliferates in all communities never exists in isolation from violence. Interpretation always takes place in the shadow of coercion” (40). As such, “Judges are people of violence. Because of the violence they command, judges characteristically do not create law, but kill it. Theirs is the jurispathic office. *Confronting the luxuriant growth of a hundred legal traditions, they assert this one is law and destroy or try to destroy the rest*” (53, emphasis mine).

<sup>13</sup> *My Emily Dickinson*, 13.

rethinking the legibility of history,” as Krzytok Ziarek writes.<sup>14</sup> Yet, those possibilities “for a different articulation of experience” dissolve into a tantalizing *manqué*, for as Ziarek concedes at the conclusion of his ‘reading’ (one in which, for example, *The Non-Conformist’s Memorial* is dispatched within three sentences), “it still remains much harder to read them [Howe’s *poietic* spaces] historically [opposed here to formally], against the conformity of thought and experience worked out discursively and politically within the patriarchal framework of culture.” What Ziarek confesses to, finally, is the immense difficulty of registering the historical reverberations of Howe’s formal deformations of an historiographic enterprise premised upon the deformations and disfigurements of women<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless, to read *with* Howe we must read historically, that is to say, read ourselves reading historically – a practice intended in my denomination of the occasional. As Heim stresses,

Howe roots her texts first and foremost in time and space. She gives us years, months, locations, proper nouns. Sometimes it is herself that she situates, mid-action, sometimes a ruler, a thinker, most frequently a forgotten or elided historical or literary figure. These characters will go on to encounter, or at least to abut each other in the terrain of her texts – meeting across the fact-fiction divide, across historical gaps, in books or papers that sit beside each other on library shelves, in the theater of her mind. . . . Howe’s introductions share a fundamental commitment to human lives as the place from which meanings, ideas, and possibilities are conceived, tested, and developed. Each poet underscores how

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<sup>14</sup> Krzytok Ziarek, *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 293.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge – about ourselves, about each other, about the world, about history, about the universe – is rooted in the contours, events, accidents, and urgencies of particular lives conducted and undergone in particular places and times. This may seem obvious but I think that it is not.

Likewise, Kameelah Rasheed reflects on the singular confluence between Howe’s “*stutter*, or the unmanageable bits of history that refuse convenient narrative arcs” and her own work: “My personal challenge in this moment is historical rigor in my articulation of what is happening, nuance in my futurist imaginings of what can develop, as well as the intentional investment in radical listening and research.”<sup>16</sup> Informed by such commitments, this coda cohabits the margins of Howe’s *Melville’s Marginalia*. As responsive sites through which scenes of both trespass and hospitality unfold, the margins of Howe’s project traverse the proprietary framings of paratext and text through a painstaking delirium of multiple temporalities realized simultaneously, thereby gifting readers with

A NEW WAY TO PAY OLD DEBTS.  
IS THE FEMININE                      Young America                      in Literature<sup>17</sup>  
IN MELVILLE<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jason Parham, “On the Importance of Creating Black Art in the Time of Trump,” *The Fader* (February 10, 2017) <http://www.thefader.com/2017/02/10/creating-black-art-in-the-time-of-trump>. Elsewhere, Rasheed also invokes Howe, the stutter, and archival research in the formation of an artistic practice that makes possible a “pedagogical experience.” Of footnotes she writes, “Maybe they focus on a particular neighborhood or a particular personal life experience. I spend a lot of time researching and thinking about the macro-narratives that exist around specific moments in history.” “Kameelah Rasheed on Black Women Artists for Black Lives Matter, History, Strategic Opacity, & Susan Howe” (March 9, 2017)

<sup>17</sup> *Melville’s Marginalia*, 114.

Reading Melville's reading of the nineteenth-century Irish poet James Clarence and his reading of readings of Mangan, Howe arrives at an epiphanic moment: "I saw the penciled trace of Herman Melville's passage through John Mitchel's introduction and knew by shock of poetry telepathy that the real James Clarence Mangan is the progenitor of fictional Bartleby" (*MM* 115). Yet simultaneously, this moment of plenitude, an involution of space and time, founders upon the recognition of loss and absence: "I have traced what books I can find by or about you in America. I hope to return to Ireland someday but will always be a foreigner with the illusions of a tourist" (117). At the threshold of the present absence traced here by Howe appear the colonialist entanglements of national identity, matrilineal (dis)inheritance, and the fraught historicity of a millennial whiteness (Anglo-Saxonism) whose massifying trajectory enframes the paideia as scene of coercive re-education, that is, a logic of education built upon acculturation, assimilation, and, ultimately, linguicide: In my own excursions through the libraries of *Clarel*, I too, stumble across and nearly over the figure of Mangan:

His reading of at least nine secondary poets in a single year—Collins, Churchill, Shenstone, Fergusson, Hood, Moore, Heine, Henry Kirke White, James Clarence Mangan—plus Arnold, suggests also that in 1862 he was studying recent verse models of craftsmanship. Many of these volumes Melville marked and annotated in ways that confirm this. For example, in the poems of Mangan—for the most part *translations* from darker ballads of Schiller, Uhlan, Tieck, Richter, Goethe, and Herder—he noted on

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<sup>18</sup> "Talisman Interview," in *The Birth-Mark: unsettling the wilderness in American literary history* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1993), 180.

the back flyleaves some poetic archaism that interested him, such as “at whites” and “aneath,” and jotted rhyme-words such as “e’ening—meaning,” “sternest—earnest,” and “lonely—only.”<sup>19</sup>

~~Strike through the mask~~<sup>20</sup>

o

me

thin

gfurt

hermay

followof

thisMasq

uerade.<sup>21</sup>

Then he wrote

P()etry,

in the sense of verse,

for years<sup>22</sup>

This exile of verse descends;<sup>23</sup>

The Europeanism of Bezanson’s “translations” doubly bury, however, Mangan’s openly counterfeit “translations” of Eastern verse, which along with his “Literae Orientales” essays, renounced the orientalist craze for “monstrous fictions” in the early Victorian era.<sup>24</sup> These “originals masquerading as translations,” writes Fegan, “demonstrate the growth of an anti-imperialist – if not postcolonial – feeling in his work long before the tragedy of the Great Famine forced him into more direct confrontation with colonial authority.

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<sup>19</sup> Walter Benzanson, “Critical Note II: Composition and Publication,” in *Clarel* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 526.

<sup>20</sup> *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 178.

<sup>21</sup> Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerade* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1984), 251.

<sup>22</sup> *The Birth-mark*, 179.

<sup>23</sup> *Clarel*, (4.5.129).

<sup>24</sup> “Faust and the Minor Poems of Goethe.” in *Prose (1832-1839)*, v. I, ed. Jacques Chuto (Dublin 2002), 94. in Melissa Fegan, “Every Irishman is an Arab’: James Clarence Mangan’s Eastern ‘Translations’” *Translation and Literature* 22 (2013) 196.



*Beware what hence ye take!* “ *Amen!*  
**western dress becomes essentially**

if there are *Affghans* abroad  
 Himself and honest servants three  
 in the punishment of whose  
 Armed husbandmen became **unrecgonizable, forfeits**  
 barbarous treachery we have **its identity**  
 as erst, **ceases to be**  
 reason to exult, *there are Affghans* **an intelligible object**  
 His sires in Pequod wilds immersed  
*at home*, for whose distresses at  
 Hittites – foes pestilent to God  
 the mischances of their defeated kindred  
 His fathers old those Indians deemed:  
 as well they may be called  
 Nathan the Arabs here esteemed  
 we are bound, in common humanity,  
 The same—slaves meriting the rod:  
 to feel a due commiseration<sup>33</sup>  
 And out he spake it; which bred hate of **apprehension**  
 The more imperiling his state.<sup>34</sup> **to the understanding**<sup>35</sup>

“But what’s to take? All’s fixture here.”<sup>36</sup>

fore we proceed to ransack the coffers and carry off the ponderous golden vases  
 that lie piled around us “*Literae Orientales*”

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<sup>33</sup> O’ Sullivan, Samuel. “Successes in the East – Afghanistan – China” *Dublin University Magazine* 21 (1843): 131. qtd in Fegan, 208

<sup>34</sup> *Clarel* (1.17.304-311)

<sup>35</sup> “*Literae Orientales*, No. IV. Arabian, Persian and Turkish Poetry,” *The Dublin University Magazine*, 15 (January-June 1840), 377.

<sup>36</sup> *Clarel*, (3.27.149-152)

**Stuff happens.**<sup>37</sup>

*Thus writeth Meer Djafrith*— Nine twentieths of those:  
 I hate thee, Djaun Bool, *A* “As cruel as Turk: Whence came  
 Worse than Márid or Afrit, allusions to wine and wine  
 Or corpse-eating Ghool *piece* That proverb old as the crusades?  
 I hate thee like Sin, bibbing which startle us in  
 For thy mop-head of hair, *of* From Anglo-Saxons. What are they?  
 Thy snub nose and bald chin, writings of Mohammedan poets  
 And thy turkeycock air. *wood* Let the horse answer, and blockades  
 Thou vile Ferindjee! are regarded by Sir William  
 That thou thus should disturb an *obsolete* Of medicine in civil fray!  
 Old Moslim like me, Jones and other competent  
 With my Khizzilbash turban, *an* The Anglo-Saxons—lacking grace  
 Old foggy like me, authorities as susceptible of  
 With Khizzilbash turban. *instrument* To win the love of any race;  
 dimly descried *a figural interpretation*<sup>38</sup> *the gang of cain in the red dusk*<sup>39</sup>  
 I spit on thy clothing, *of* Hated by myriads dispossessed  
 That garb for baboons “To Hafiz in grape-arbor comes,  
 I eye with deep loathing *torture* Of rights—the Indians East and West  
 Thy tight pantaloons! Didymus, with book he thumbs:  
 I curse the cravat *Chiefly* These pirates of the sphere! grave looters—  
 That encircles thy throat, My lord Hafiz, priest of bowers—  
 And thy cooking-pot hat, *Christian* Grave, canting, Mammonite freebooters,  
 And thy swallow-tailed coat! Flowers in such a world as ours?  
 Go, hide thy thick sconce *Church* Who in the name of Christ and Trade  
 In some hovel suburban; Who is the god of all these flowers?—<sup>40</sup>  
 Or else don at once (Oh, bucklered forehead of the brass!)  
 The red Moosleman turban. Evening outruns Cain  
 Thou dog, don at once Deflower the world’s last sylvan glade!”<sup>41</sup>  
 The grand Khizzilbash turban!<sup>42</sup> as far as the author  
 A very Indian here<sup>43</sup> with his banishment<sup>44</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Donald Rumsfeld, April 12, 2003

<sup>38</sup> *Melville’s Marginalia*, 145.

<sup>39</sup> *The Confidence-Man*, 153.

<sup>40</sup> *Clarel*, (3.13.72-75)

<sup>41</sup> *Clarel*, (4.9.23)

<sup>42</sup> James Mangan “To the Ingleeze Khafir, Calling Himself Djaun Bool Djenkinzun,” in *An Irish Literature Reader: Poetry, Prose, Drama*, ed. Maureen O’Rourke Murphy, James Mackillop (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 119.

is how

Melville held on<sup>45</sup> ( battles alone? According to

[the power or capacity to combine with or displace a greater or smaller number] every Irishman is

an Arab yet what Irishman has

come forward to second our

exertions” ) and overrode

the genial part<sup>46</sup>

Both Mangan, in the “Literae Orientales,” and Melville, in his journals and in *Clarel* (as my previous chapter argues) look not so much to the East but looked askance at the extractive erotics of Anglo-Saxonism that proliferated in the desires of its dominion. Beyond the thinly veiled “translations” in which **he s waging political babble**, his theories of translations themselves provided occasion by which to critique the Orientalist imaginary: He must for a season renounce his country, divest himself of his educational preferences, forgo his individuality, and become, like Alfred Tennyson, ‘a Musselman true and sworn.’ In the citation of Tennyson’s “Recollections of the Arabian Nights,” Mangan is, as Fegan notes, “of course being ironic. Tennyson’s speaker [...] self-consciously dons the turban as obvious fantasy” (199). To follow Howe following **what trails he follows through the words of others**, is to expatriate, to follow in matrilineal

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<sup>43</sup> *Clarel*, (4.19.73)

<sup>44</sup> *Melville’s Marginalia*, 149.

<sup>45</sup> *The Birth-mark*, 179.

<sup>46</sup> *Clarel*, (4.5.139)

descent her own unManning. To start with English and return American. To start with American and return Irish. To start with Irish and return Arabs. To start with Arab and return with Indian:

If you follow the word to a certain extent you may never come back.

The poem is unmanning the pilgrimage.

To start: who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by grace<sup>47</sup>

To start: Whose voice paternal called her—"Ruth!"<sup>48</sup>

At that dear name in Bethlehem heard,  
How Clarel starts.<sup>49</sup>

I am bound by a definition  
of criticism<sup>50</sup>

As so to realize the place,  
Or fact from fable

*Am I not(:)* articulating an ethic for enthusiasts.<sup>51</sup> to divide<sup>52</sup>

We should have ("Ah, tread not, sweet, my father's way begun  
by listening to them<sup>53</sup> In whom this evil spirit wrought  
And dragged us hither where we die!")<sup>54</sup>

TAKE COVER

Toward the conclusion of her sustained 2006 response to "Nomos & Narrative" Marie Ashe identifies as the occasion for her engagement with this

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<sup>47</sup> Galatians 1:15 [KJV]

<sup>48</sup> *Clarel*, (1.17.194)

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, (4.16.94-95)

<sup>50</sup> *Melville's Marginalia*, 134.

<sup>51</sup> "Nomos and Narrative," 45.

<sup>52</sup> *Clarel*, (4.14.8-9)

<sup>53</sup> Jacques. Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil. Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 7. Qtd. in Marie Ashe, "Beyond Nomos and Narrative. Unconverted Antinomianism in the Work of Susan Howe," *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* 18, no. 1 (2006): 58.

<sup>54</sup> *Clarel*, (4.29.67-69)

now canonical text of liberal-legal theory “the reality that, in the United States, the national government is increasing its financial subsidization of patriarchal religious groups . . . . that disparage and suppress women” (57). The decade since, and particularly with the administration of the 45<sup>th</sup> presidency, has seen the crusades of primarily evangelical, Judeo-Christian religious institutions find an increasingly receptive audience with the courts (see *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.*, *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*, *Trump v. Hawaii*), thereby further blurring the boundaries between civil society and Judeo-Christian ecclesiastical institutions, while at the same time church doctrine encroaches upon the beleaguered paideia of public education (see *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer*), a trajectory made possible in large part through the proliferation of charter schools.

In short, the governmental interests in the protections afforded by “religious liberty” have only exacerbated the exigencies identified by Ashe. In a highly compelling reading, Ashe identifies how the narratives (and violations thereof) of patriarchal primogeniture narrated in the Pentateuch, these from which Cover articulates a model of sovereign paideaic communities poised against the jurispathic limits of state violence, ignore “the reality of injustices committed by such religious groups against their own members” (27). In confronting an “uncritical narrative about the value of insular and patriarchal religious groups” that contributes to the normalization and valorization of ecclesiastical privilege, Ashe articulates what is, I argue, the most properly improper (which is to say

antinomian) reading of Susan Howe’s work—by welcoming her across that threshold which would otherwise deny the literary entry into the jurisdiction of the law. While the voices of Howe that Ashe invites, “in the form of forceful interruption and of insistent and sometimes peremptory challenge” into her own text are from interviews, *My Emily Dickinson*, and *The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the wilderness in American literary history*, Ashe’s contribution to the pages of the *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* audaciously reads Howe “against the conformity of thought and experience worked out discursively and politically within the patriarchal framework of culture.”<sup>55</sup> Responding to Judith Resnick’s claim that Cover’s call to “to stop circumscribing the *nomos*” gives license to “different writings” and “different readings” in the field of Law & Literature, Ashe juxtaposes his intellectual patrilineality of rever<sup>ance</sup> s try end theology<sup>56</sup> a student was, a student late with Howe’s gendered antinomianism.<sup>57</sup>

Beyond introducing Susan Howe’s work as ‘*different writing*,’ I want to identify it as embodying and enabling deeply ‘*different readings*’ of a kind that holds promise for legal theory in general

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<sup>55</sup> *The Historicity of Experience*, see n. 8.

<sup>56</sup> *Clarel* (4.26.207)

<sup>57</sup> “Nomos and Narrative,” 68. Resnick’s argument may be found in Carolyn Heilbraun and Judith Resnick, “Convergences: Law, Literature, and Feminism” in Jacqueline St. Joan and Annette Bennington McElhiney, eds., *Beyond Portia: Women, Law, and Literature in the United States* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997); Judith Resnick, “Living Their Legal Commitments: Paideaic Communities, Courts, and Robert Cover (An Essay on Racial Segregation at Bob Jones University, Patrilineal Membership Rules, and Jurisgenerative Practices)” *Yale Journal of Law & Humanities* 17 (2005).

and for Law and Literature in particular at the present moment, in which urgency and crisis surround issues of law and religion. . . . Like Robert Cover's work, Susan Howe's writing addresses American religious history as well as literature and law. Unlike *N&N*, [her] work explicitly concerns itself with the treatment of gender and with gendered antinomianism in American religious history and American literature—something that Cover, in spite of his focus on the antinomian narratives of religious groups, ignored. . . . The *content* (what she reads/writes) of Susan Howe's is more encompassing and more relevant than that of *N&N*. Beyond that, the *method* of Susan Howe's reading/writing *is very different from that of N&N*. That method, [...] more theoretically relevant for current legal theory, involves [her] brave venture into an historicized location—one not readily characterized as modern or post-modern, and one unquestionably not pre-modern. (4-5)

I cannot share in the surety of this “unquestionably not pre-modern” Howe, particularly in light of the manner by which her textual productions incessantly are called and calling back incessantly to the intransigent idiosyncrasies of her archives wayward materialities. Ashe's comments, however, productively gesture at the multiple temporalities summoned forth when reading with Howe. Neither can I, in this reading, align myself with her conviction that “antinomianism is the mark of an individual” (15). While sympathetic to her critique of the manner in which Cover's essay privileges group antinomianism at the expense of individuals oppressed within those groups, my reading construes antinomianism as the articulation of solidarities and alliances rendered illegible or unthinkable within the dispensation of millennial whiteness, that is, forms of sociality yet to be. Nonetheless, the hospitality Ashe extends to Howe moves beyond and displaces that initial question of “What kind of book is this?” by asking, what kind of book could this be?

Instead of classifying  
he browsed and dreamed  
he didn't even browse  
regularly (*Melville's Marginalia*, 136)

Visualizing and materializing the allegorical reading of the sign, the counter-monumental work of reading with Howe creates for her readers a predicament akin to what Joanne Feit Diehl, in conversation with Barbara Packer, observed about reading Dickinson's poem 782 "Renunciation – is a piercing Virtue –" (and Dickinson in general). What Dickinson does with syntax, Diehl remarks,

is to create sentences or poems in which there are multiple ways of recreating the sentence and what you do in reading the poem is recreate the sentence in multiple ways. . . . Although as a reader, to trace through the poem, you'll pick one, then you have to go back and take another one and go through it again and then go through it again; and the poem itself is all those balls in the air at one time. So the act of reading at any one moment is hierarchical in the sense that you're making the choice and you're pulling this one forward, but ultimately you've got to keep them all there.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> *Emily Dickinson: A Celebration for Readers, Proceedings of the Conference held on September 19-21, 1986 at the Claremont Colleges Claremont California*, eds. Suzanne Juhasz and Christanne Miller (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1989), 110.

<sup>59</sup>Each One of us is entirely  
 free to find his history in other places  
 than the pages ~~damaged by inter~~  
~~of~~ ~~course with poetry~~  
 my recollection ~~contains a large~~  
~~.~~ ~~amount of poe~~  
 try ~~on two grounds~~ ~~we leave to the~~  
 the a ~~purser fountain even for that~~ ~~other side~~  
~~evidence in these matters~~  
~~we do not know~~  
~~evidence in an authentic shape~~  
 but owing to the extreme difficulty ~~indeed~~  
 I may say the impossibility  
 as I understand the offer  
 We do not offer  
 I do not understand the offer ~~in that way~~  
 We only offer ~~the book~~<sup>60</sup>

Free association isn't free.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Mark DeWolfe Howe, *The Garden and the Wilderness: Religion and Government in American Constitutional History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 5. qtd in Ashe, 1.

<sup>60</sup> *The War of the Rebellion*, 3:102-3.

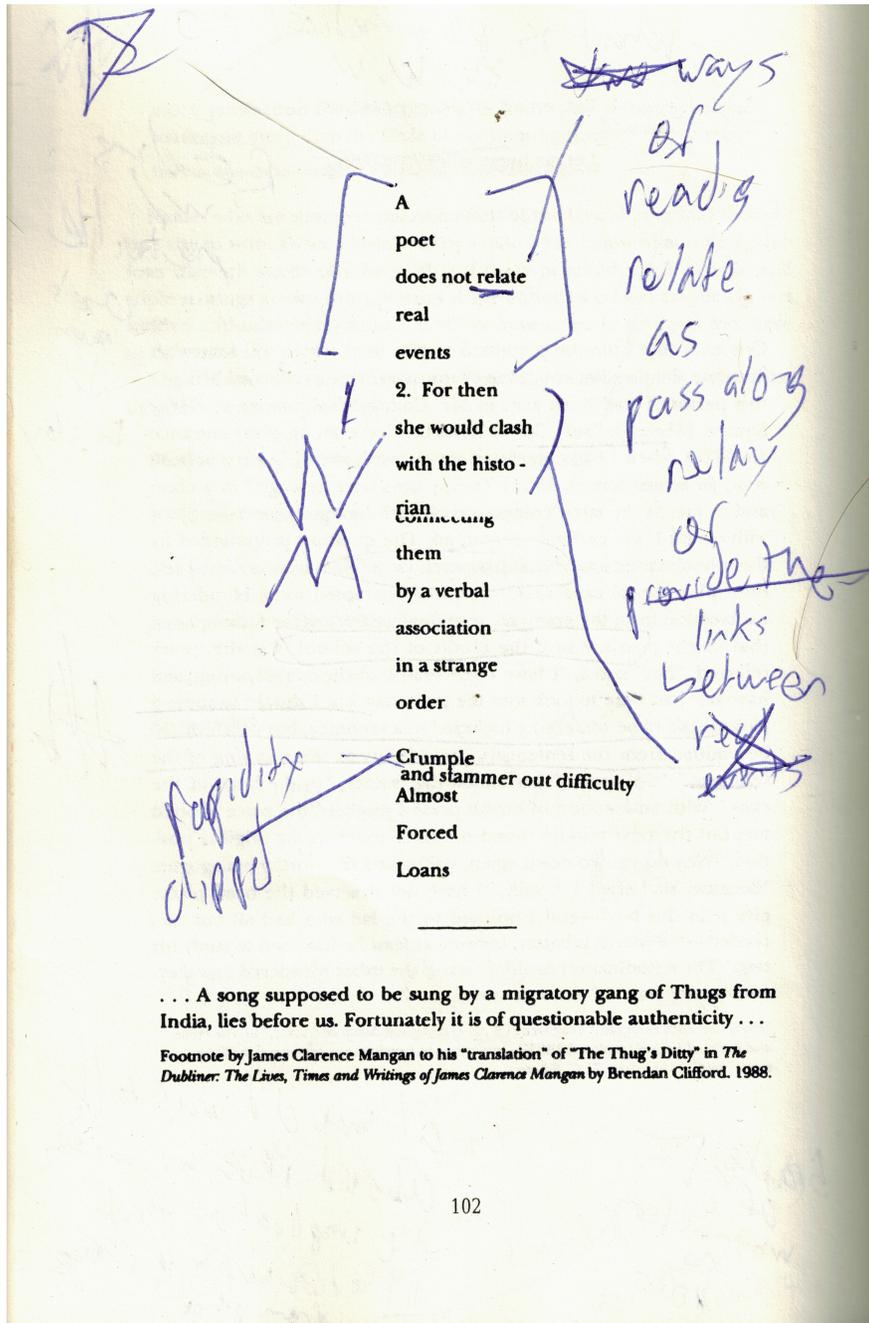


Figure 2, from *Melville's Marginalia*, 102.

<sup>61</sup> *Melville's Marginalia*, 114

Precisely in the midst of an onomatopoetic skirmish, the sounding of clash, a agonistic moment of proleptic recursion goes (not entirely) unvoiced, though not unseen. At the intercalated stratigraphy of the ninth lines, we encounter what appears to be the suppression of an insurrection “connecting / them[.]” Yet, in witnessing this conflict, we must ask ourselves to what, or to whom, this third-person, objective pronoun refers. The referential ambiguity permits at least two readings. According to one reading, “them,” which it must be noted itself marks a principle of connection or association, references those “real/ events” that “A/ poet/ does not relate[.]” According to a second reading, “them” points us back toward “A [indefinite] /*gendered feminine*] poet” and “the [definite] [default masculine] histo-/ rian.” The eruption, precisely within the “historian,” as an enjambment in suspension, brings the line break into apprehension as “a verbal/ association/ in a strange order.” If we submit to the (connecting) enjambment, leap across the *hyphen* [etymologically *together*] and stay not for the pause, then we read in the name of the historian, violating the integrity of the poem’s lineation. At best, we might then read this “historian” as suppressing connection. However sympathetic we may be to this counter-hegemonic reading, it seems not only a bit too facile, but too facile because it remains too dehistoricized—which would, again, be a reading in the name of the historian, one that gives affirmation to that expatriation of “A/ poet” from the domain of real events. Succinctly, what

does this dehistoricized, post-structuralist commonplace get us? It remains silent on the question of reading, of how “A/ poet” might read and write history *differently*.

Yet, if we begin to associate (aurally and visually) the granular elements of character and phoneme, for example, the clashing irruption of poetry upon the real becomes heard. The temporal deferment of the hyphen opens up the voicing of “histo,” which may now as “hist o,” an apostrophic call to listen, or “his to,” wherein the difference heard is the unvoiced/voiced S/Z of susan. Furthermore, from within the proprietary claim of “his to” the muted linguistic and cultural exile of Howe’s matrilineal disinheritance is enunciated through the historical and linguistic dispossession critically masqued by Mangan’s translation of Anglo-English and European translations of Eastern texts. That is, the exile, which is *his to*, for which “there is no stopping place in city or country” so long as an “unrelenting doom condemns me to the incessant exercise of my pedestrian capabilities” (MM 113). To meet, then, with Howe meeting with Melville meeting with Mangan, is to stray, within the figurations of endless traversal, down pathways into the wilderness we have been **walking the whole time**. Voiced from within the histo-/rian/them, that monumental, commemorative occasioning of Anglo-Saxon empire, Howe hears in the

translated crumple of an almost forced loan of subaltern extraction—what Mangan, a linguistic exile, could not yet write: the historicity, or *rian* (Irish for “path”), of Anglo-American whiteness’ jurispthic massification of ethnic and linguistic difference. Before the Irish became American, (s)he was an Arab, though not in the sense claimed by General Charles Vallency, an Eton-schooled antiquarian and quack philologist, who in 1776 began a military mapping survey, a forerunner of the Ordnance Survey, tasked with publishing “English forms for Gaelic place names” (*MM* 94). Behind the masque of translation, Mangan’s renunciation of an orientalized identification (as an erasure of difference) permitted the impermissible freedom of a subaltern association, one formed through an antiphonal reading of Anglo-English historianthems:

Over and over, like a tune—  
The Recollections plays—  
Drums off the phantom battlements  
Cornets of Paradise—

Snatches, from Baptized Generations—  
Cadences too grand  
But for the Justified Processions  
At the Lord’s Right hand. (Emily Dickinson, #406)

Mobilizing along the very conduits and trade routes of empire, Mangan’s “translations” translated the historianthemic language of racialized, imperialistic nationalism (language in collusion with the state) into an antinomian language of solidarity, a political babble “Half-his,” as Mangan

punned.<sup>62</sup> Beneath the masque of its “questionable authenticity” “The Thugs’ Ditty” reads as an indictment of those Anglo-English thugs of the empire who would, like Matthew Arnold, wish to authenticate their own racialized supremacy in the language of sweetness and light.

Such political babble finds little space within the paideiac scene that interpellates Mangan into being. “What is a parenthesis?” his new schoolmaster asks him (*Melville’s Marginalia*, 101). The answer provided by the young pupil, that “which may be omitted from the sentence without injury to the meaning,” leaves unspoken the injury done by the colonialist deployments of classical education as extolled in Arnold’s 1879 “A Speech at Eton,” extracts of which appear on the following page via Howe’s irregular browsing of which appear below. Ostensibly a defense of the value of the humanities in education by way of claiming for his audience, “we English,” their rightful inheritance of the “Græco-Roman world, which is so mighty a factor in our own world, or own life, [...] which we can trace the sequence and the sense and the connection with our ourselves,” Arnold’s discursive diversion from “the diameter of sun and moon” so explicitly digresses into colonialist ethnology as to jurispathically install the provincial margins of the British empire at the very heart of English

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<sup>62</sup> Fegan, 197.

education.<sup>63</sup> Bemoaning the conversion of *eutrapelia* from a Hellenistic virtue denoting a “happy and gracious flexibility” of sociality and intercourse to St. Paul’s proscribed sense of “jesting” in Ephesians 5:4, Arnold’s philological speculations unfold in the pursuit of how this principle may be deployed in the disciplined reproduction of the tractable, thankful British colonial subject. The necessity for cultivating *eutrapelia*, he writes, is proven by the “state of Ireland” and, quoting from the Austrian “geographer” Herr Von Hellwald, by Russia’s success in “adapting to make the Asiatic more tractable.” *Eutrapelia*, it would seem, functions not so much as a virtue, but the coercive, paternalistic cultivation of obeisance. As seen in figure three, Howe’s riotous emplotments intractably re-render the tractable.

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<sup>63</sup> Matthew Arnold, “A Speech at Eton” in *The Eclectic Magazine of Foreign Literature, Science, and Art* v. 30 (New York: E.R. Pelton, 1879), 15; 14.

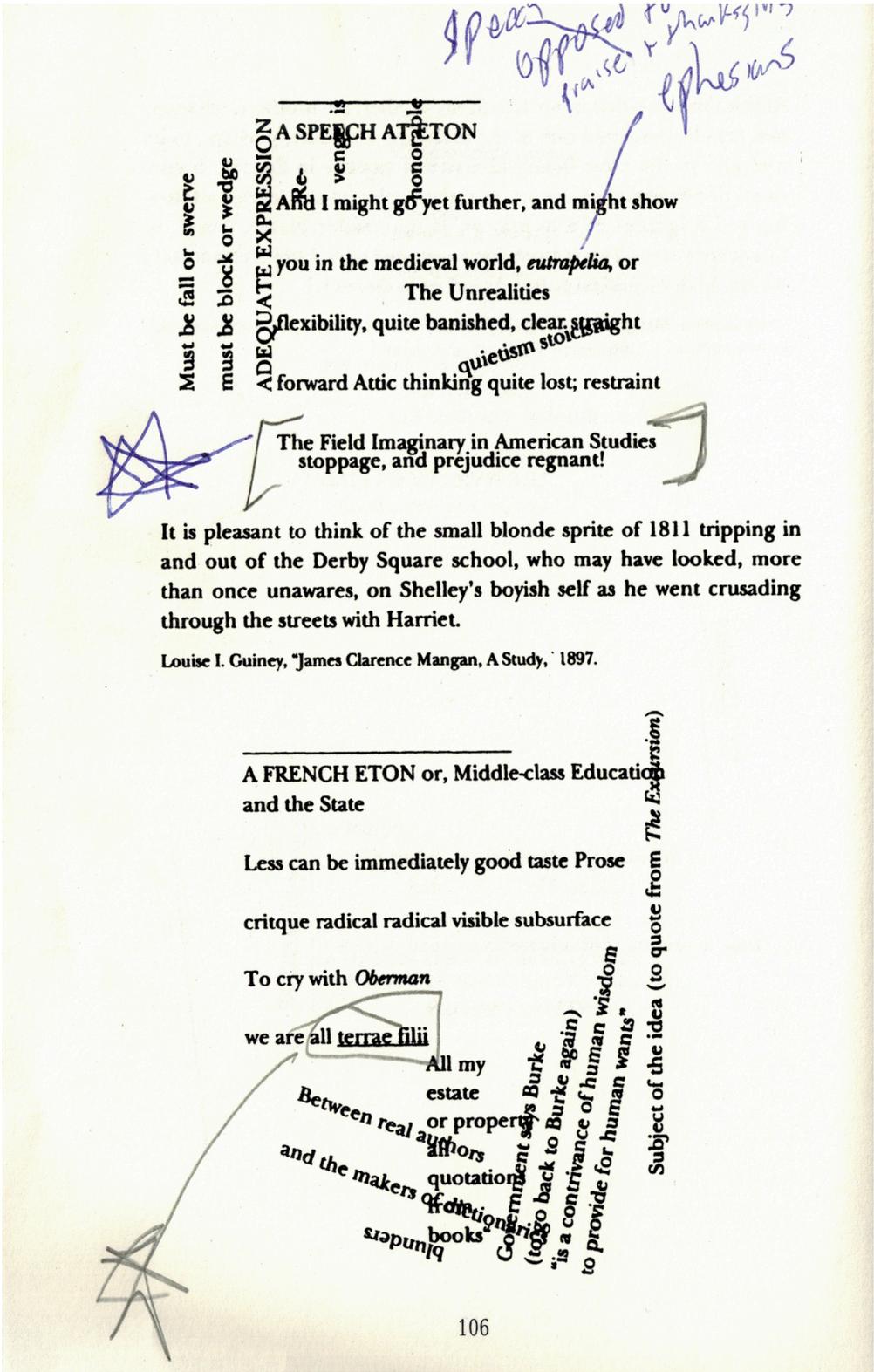


Figure 3, from *Melville's Marginalia*, 106.

Immensely assured with the hubris of *noblesse oblige*, Arnold declares

There can be no dispute which of the two, England or Russia, is the more civilized nation. But it is just as certain that the highly civilized English understand but indifferently how to raise their Asiatic subjects to their own standard of civilization, whilst the Russians attain [...] far greater results amongst the amongst the Asiatic tribes, whom they know how to assimilate in the most remarkable manner [...] much more than the great boons which the English do not know how to impart. (16)

But we digress. In this reading of Melville's *Clarel* with Howe's reading of Melville reading Mangan's reading of his colonialist dispossession, we have alighted upon an antinomian's renunciation of Anglo-English empire. In closing, we again ask with Howe, where might we look for the feminine in Melville's renunciation of Anglo-American millennialism? And, what is a parenthesis? In two renunciatory acts, one following from the other, the feminine indefinite comes to exceed the pilgrimage set upon the feminine's annihilation. Divested of that "birthright he renounced in hope," and signified in the preferment of his "forest name" to the patronymic of his Anglo-Catholic father, Ungar's matrilineal inheritance of dispossession marks his renunciation as both the melancholic obligation to the past and the generative expectation of an indefinite, underdetermined eventuality. We read against the "lyrical" deviations from iambic tetrameter variously noted by Bryan Short, including the "curious abandonment of tetrameter in the *Clarel* epilogue"—variously described as a "flight into emotional and stylistic exuberance" and the consummation of the

“promise of escape”—or the metrical deviations of song by the Lyonese Prodigal as an accentuation of “freedom from dogma.” For Short, the subterranean murmurs of Ungar’s indefinite, inexhaustible obligation mark but “a swansong of Melville’s identification with Civil War heroism [... that] express a philosophy of resignation and a secret hope for revenge” (564). Read once again as monomaniacal negation, Short’s own aesthetic dogmatism (the ‘objective’ habit of his mind) but serves to read in the name of narratorial geniality:

The habit of his mind, and tone  
Tenacious touching issues gone,  
Expression found, not all a miss,  
In thing he’d murmur: it was this:

“Who abideth by the dead,  
Which ye hung before your Lord?  
Steadfast who, when all have fled  
Tree and corse abhorred?  
Who drives off the wolf, the kite—  
Bird by day, and beast by night,  
And keeps the hill through all?  
It is Rizpah: true is one  
Unto death; nor then will shun  
The seven throttled and undone,  
To glut the foes of Saul.”

That for the past; and for the surge  
Reactionary, which years urge:

“Elying and elate,  
Do they mount them in their pride?  
Let them wait a little, wait,  
For the brimming of the flood  
Brings the turning of the tide.” (4.6.167-188)

Apart from wildly overstating the metrical rigidity (564), Short’s misreading of Ungar’s murmur as “Lost Cause” ideology inexplicably misses his disavowal of

the “Anglo brain.” In the allusion to Rizpah then, what Ungar seeks is not revenge but justice in the form of emancipation from the patriarchal order of property relations which gendereth to bondage the concubine Rizpah and her murdered children. Thus, Short’s staging of the opposition between Ungar and the Prodigal Lyonese as the conflict between order and freedom fails at last to perceive the source of gravity exerted in that tidal shift, a gravitational source around which Clarel’s dirge gathers to repose in silence.

“What is a parenthesis?” *Melville’s Marginalia* asks. In order to answer this question, we must disambiguate two conflated senses, the rhetorical figure defined by the young pupil of Saul’s Court and the typographical mark for which Erasmus coined the term “lunula” or “little moon.”<sup>64</sup> There, in the Dirge, we “behold the Man” Clarel, “Who warranted if not began/ The dream that drags out its repulse” mute, unspoken, unspeaking Ruth whose father “dragged us hither where we die!” (1.13.62-64; 4.29.69). Confronted with the genial millennialism of patriarchal authority that sentences Ruth to eternal damnation at the pain of conversion, Clarel renounces and forsakes that road trodden by pilgrimage. With a finality placing her beyond the hope of resurrection, the meaning of Ruth’s death must be juxtaposed against the narrator’s concluding exhortation to Clarel, “Even death may prove unreal at the last” (4.35.25). This is an allusion both to the “old Crusader’s cry” *Denique Coelum* which appears in *White-Jacket* and was the

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<sup>64</sup> John Lennard, *But I Digress: The Exploitation of Parentheses in English Verse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1-2.

motto of the Melville family. We arrive at the Valley of Decision. At the non-site of temporal suspension where *Clarel's* pilgrimage ends, the poem begins. In the Dirge, we encounter an indefinite, underdetermined Trinity: Clarel beholding Ruth beholding with expectation her lover, a lover who cannot be Clarel, who is first described in the opening canto as “*all but feminine/* But for the eye and serious brow—“ (1.1.16-17). Reposed (Pensive, a shade, but all her own), Ruth awaits translation:

Wearied human language  
take me so that I no longer  
am perpetually dispersed  
and appear not to know (*Melville's Marginalia*, 123)

When Howe does write of the feminine in Melville, she points to a moment recorded in his journal of Palestine. “I just found this the other day,”

Howe says,

[Armenian funerals winding through the streets. Coffin covered with flowers on a bier. Wax candles borne on each side in daylight. Boys & men chanting alternately. Striking effect, winding through the narrow lanes. Saw a burial. Armenian. Juggling & incantations of the priests—making signs &c.]—Nearby, saw a woman over a new grave—no grass on it yet. Such abandonment of misery! Called to the dead, put her head down as close as possible to it; as if calling down a hatchway or cellar; besought—“Why don't you speak to me? My God! —It is I!” . . . —all deaf. So much for consolation. —This woman and her cries haunt me horribly.”

The woman is wailing, “My God, it is I,” but Melville is saying, “My God, it is I.” He is the woman. There is everything in that to me. She calling to the dead. Who has been buried? . . . He doesn't name her. There is no naming and no answer. She is herself, and he

sees himself in her. I think that detail holds everything. (“Talisman Interview,” 179)

If we read *Clarel* with Howe, we find this scene of Melville and the nameless woman translated into the last of what we will hear from Clarel, immediately before he “Vanishes in the obscurer town” (4.34.4-56).

From slopes whence even Echo’s gone,  
Wending, he murmurs in low tone:  
“They wire the world—far under the sea  
They talk; but never comes to me  
A message from beneath the stone.” (4.34.49-53)

Are we called back to the dead? Will they speak with us? What lies buried beneath the final stone? When the “all but feminine” vanishes into renunciation, what remains behind, if not the feminine, is a shade all her own. Renunciation: “a mode of being who makes himself a lack of being in order that there might be being.” Yet renunciation, as an ethical gesture of disclosure, also grounds and connects the poet to her historical situation. That is, renunciation cannot be metaphysically abstracted from the conflicts of history as a refusal of the world or self. Rather, renunciation makes possible the recording of that self’s estrangement from the world and the reader who would return her to it. I close now with two poems (#411, 1862; #782, 1863) composed respectively during the Abolition War years of 1862-1863, two of the three most prolific years in which “A/ Poet” clashed with the historian.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, ed. R.W. Franklin (Cambridge: Harvard Belknap Press, 1999). According to R.W. Franklin’s chronological distribution, Emily Dickinson composed 227 poems in 1862, just under three

Mine – By the Right of the White Election!	Renunciation – is a piercing Virtue
Mine – by the Royal Seal!	The letting go
Mine – by the sign in the Scarlet prison –	A Presence – for an Expectation
Bars – cannot conceal!	Not now –
	The putting out of Eyes –
Mine – here – in Vision – and In Veto!	Just Sunrise –
Mine – by the Grave’s Repeal	Lest Day –
Titled – Confirmed –	Day’s Great Progenitor –
Delirious Charter!	Outvie
Mine – Long as Ages steal!	
	Renunciation – is the Choosing
	Against Itself –
	Itself to justify
	Unto itself
	When larger function –
	Make that appear –
	Smaller – that Covered Vision – Here

Nearly forty years ago, Shira Wolosky would write that while “Dickinson is without doubt the most private of poets; and her metaphysical crisis certainly has its source in her personal sensibility,” the coincidence of the Civil War with the composition of more than half her total output “has never been fully assessed.”<sup>66</sup> This state of affairs, with some notable exception, has proven resistant to change.. At the beginning of this century, Leigh-Anne Urbanowicz Marcellin forcefully declared, “Emily Dickinson was a war poet, and it is time for

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hundred (295) in 1863, and 229 in 1865. Together, the years 1861-1865 witness Dickinson’s most sustained and generative period (639-640).  
<sup>66</sup> Shira Wolosky, “Emily Dickinson’s War Poetry: The Problem of Theodicy” *The Massachusetts Review* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1984): 22-3.

us to discover what kind of war poet she was.”<sup>67</sup> Though I disagree with her contention that the “position of Emily Dickinson herself is precisely that she held every position,” Marcellin’s claim productively suggests a refractory and counter-occasional mode that resists the commemorative and reactionary *univocity* of public declamation that marks the occasional text (73).<sup>68</sup> If, as Russ Castronovo has argued, “Democratic fantasies of commonality and equality have hinged on the disappearance of material differences,” then the counter-occasional text insists upon the primacy of those material differences by renouncing their sublimation in the occasioned moment.<sup>69</sup> Renée Bergland, for example, contrasts Dickinson’s poetics of war to those poems lauded by Oliver Wendell Holmes that “lift the world and the life of today into the spaceless and timeless ideal.”<sup>70</sup> “[S]uspicious of patriotic songs” like Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn”, which “could be the

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<sup>67</sup> ‘Singing off the Charnel Steps’: Soldiers and Mourners in Emily Dickinson’s War Poetry” *The Emily Dickinson Journal* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 64.

<sup>68</sup> Benjamin Friedlander made a similar claim in 2012 when he wrote “Scholars must begin to take account of the fact that Dickinson’s wartime writing encompasses multiple, contradictory forms of response, a diversity of representational strategies and of attitudes expressed that strongly suggests a project of coming to terms with war.” Strangely though, Friedlander contrasts Dickinson’s response to that of Melville by invoking Stanton Garner’s summation in *The Civil War World of Herman Melville* of the ‘events’ in *Battle-Pieces* as “increments of a larger, unified experience of the nation” and “its impulse toward grand synthesis.” “Emily Dickinson and the Battle of Ball’s Bluff.” *PMLA* 124, no. 5 (October 2009): 1583, 1594.

<sup>69</sup> Russ Castronovo, “Souls that Matter: Social Death and the Pedagogy of Democratic Citizenship,” in *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalized Cultural Politics*. eds., Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 118.

<sup>70</sup> Renée Bergland, “The Eagle’s Eye View: Dickinson’s View of Battle” in *A Companion to Emily Dickinson* eds. Martha Nell Smith and Mary Loeffelholz. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishers, 2014), 134.

theme song for the disavowal of embodiment, particularity and memory,” Dickinson’s speaks both from within and without a language that does not speak to her (Bergland, 136).<sup>71</sup> Benjamin Friedlander made a similar claim in 2012 when he wrote “Scholars must begin to take account of the fact that Dickinson’s wartime writing encompasses multiple, contradictory forms of response, a diversity of representational strategies and of attitudes expressed that strongly suggests a project of coming to terms with war.”<sup>72</sup> Strangely though, Friedlander contrasts Dickinson’s response to that of Melville by invoking Stanton Garner’s summation of the ‘events’ in *Battle-Pieces* as “increments of a larger, unified experience of the nation” and “its impulse toward grand synthesis.”<sup>73</sup> Still, we listen for the clash of the poet amidst the clash and alarums of war. Though

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<sup>71</sup> Faith Barrett’s reading of “Over and over, like a Tune –”, on the other hand, enlists Dickinson in Julia Ward Howe’s spiritual army when she writes “Dickinson echoes wartime ideologies that represent Christian soldier’s deaths as a triumphant reunion with God. . . .She makes sense of the death by endorsing the ideology that fallen soldiers were martyrs in a Holy War.” “‘Drums off the Phantom Battlements’: Dickinson’s War Poems in Discursive Context.” in *A Companion to Emily Dickinson* eds. Martha Nell Smith and Mary Loeffelholz. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishers, 2014), 114. While Barrett recognizes that the “mingling of theological commitments was, of course, central to Civil War ideologies on both sides of the conflict,” the context she has in mind here is biographical, tied to the eulogy of family friend and Union soldier Frazer Stearns, whose eulogy had been reprinted in the *Hampshire and Franklin Express (To Fight Aloud*, 113). Like Friedlander, who also balks at the “common claim that [Dickinson’s] imagination was resistant to patriotism” (1583), Barrett identifies a multiplicity of positions “tested out” (112) across poems rather than a heteroglossic struggle for position within individual poems.

<sup>72</sup> “Emily Dickinson and the Battle of Ball’s Bluff.” *PMLA* 124:5 (October, 2009), 1583.

<sup>73</sup> *The Civil War World of Herman Melville* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 33. Qtd. in Friedlander, 1594

seemingly unaware of Susan Howe's own *My Emily Dickinson*, published in the previous year, which had already begun to answer the call, Wolosky's description of Dickinson's interlocutors, nonetheless, yet remains a formidable challenge for twenty-first century readers. As Howe wrote in *My Emily Dickinson*,

Emily Dickinson, who is so often accused of avoiding political issues in her work, certainly did not avoid them here [My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun – ].<sup>74</sup> As she well knew, the original American conflict between [Have I not everything to gain and nothing to lose by the change?]<sup>75</sup> was being acted out again. [Hidden in the cap] was another [Emperor of few words, and his speech was singularly broken]<sup>76</sup> invoking

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<sup>74</sup> It should be noted that Howe's reading of Dickinson as a political poet or war poet constitutes a significant outlier from the approach overwhelmingly taken by those critics who have read Dickinson in concert with the war (and rarely, if ever, cite Howe). Whereas, Howe considers Dickinson an antinomian voice distanced from the historianthems of American millennialism extending back to the Puritans, the latter set tend to depend upon familial ties or personal relationships with men in order to "read" the war into her work. Eliza Richard's "How News Must Feel When Traveling': Dickinson and Civil War Media" is one noteworthy exception to this trend. After noting that until "recently, scholars had determined that the Civil War provided Dickinson . . . with little more than metaphors of her own mental disposition" (163), Dickinson, she argues, "Like Melville, . . . explores the effects of print mediation on those who read about the conflict from a distance" (164). In *A Companion to Emily Dickinson* eds. Martha Nell Smith and Mary Loeffelholz. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishers, 2014).

<sup>75</sup> This line is taken from a December 16 letter sent by John Anthony Copeland, Jr. to his family in Ohio. See especially chapter 2, "The Blood of Black Men: Rethinking Racial Science" in Franny Nudelman's *John Brown's Body: Slavery, Violence, & the Culture of War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004). See also, Eugene L. Meyer's *Five for Freedom: The African American Soldiers in John Brown's Army* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2018).

<sup>76</sup> Shields Green, as described by Frederick Douglass. qtd. in William S. McFeely, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), 197.

[America was never America to me]<sup>77</sup>, set out to fight the  
[battles alone?]. Liberators and the righteous were, as always,  
[a voice from Harper’s Ferry]<sup>78</sup> (*My Emily Dickinson*, 18)<sup>79</sup>

But no Man heard him cry –<sup>80</sup>

While I am uninterested in the particular glosses of Wolosky’s reading, and her obligatory concession to Dickinson’s opaque interiority, I would like to briefly pursue the matter of renunciation, millennial whiteness, and the feminine. Her contention that Dickinson dissented from both the “vision of the war as part of a millennial pattern” shared by Union and Confederacy alike, and the “affirmation of grace as suffering’s compensation [or redemption]” open up an antinomian path for reading an antinomian poet. The impasse at which the question of Dickinson’s renunciation, a recurring critical preoccupation extending back as far

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<sup>77</sup> Lewis Sheridan Leary, whose widow would remarry and become the maternal grandmother of Langston Hughes. This line is taken from Hughes’ “Let America Be America Again.” in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed., Arnold Rampersad (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 189.

<sup>78</sup> Osborne Perry Anderson, *A Voice from Harper’s Ferry* (New York: World View Forum, 2000).

<sup>79</sup> As Franny Nudelman writes, “If [John Brown’s] martyrdom entailed the gradual abstraction of the dead body as it came to signify shared emotion and experience, penal dissection undermined the rituals and beliefs that gave death its spiritual and social significance. Denied a grave from which to be resurrected, John Copeland and Shields Green were shut out of religious narratives of regeneration that imagined the body, buried in soil, rising again, as well as secular narratives that took the corpse’s decay as a figure for collective renewal” (40). The anatomical dismemberment of black [and indigenous] insurrectionists such as Copeland and Green continued a well-established nineteenth-century tradition, Nudelman continues, of “suppressing the spectacle of black martyrdom; more broadly, ethnologists scrutinized the remains of the dead in an effort to invent a black subject incapable of intelligent, sustained resistance” (42).

<sup>80</sup> *Poems of Emily Dickinson*, 248.

as Richard Wilbur in the 1960s, might best be captured in a gloss provided by Helen Vendler as recently as 2010: “ ‘Renunciation’ belongs to the group of poems in which Dickinson takes it upon herself to define something—often, as here, *an abstraction*, and often, as here, *a word so much in common use that everybody knows what it means*.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed, most everyone does, in fact, seem to know what renunciation means, and that metaphysical meaning would seem to have no path of relation to the Abolition War. Invariably, renunciation is defined in terms of a radical privation, the self-abnegating denials of the hermetic, mystic initiate. Akin to the pathologization of Ungar’s renunciatory hope as ‘monomania,’ Dickinson’s renunciation has been read, in its most pathologized extremes, as an anorexic wasting and withering away into nothingness.

Such a connotation is indeed common enough in our contemporary lexicon. Yet nothing in Dickinson’s dictionary, Noah Webster’s 1844 *American Dictionary of the English Language* suggests the ecstatic abjection written about by Vendler, Wilbur, Beth Doriani, or Suzanne Juhasz, among others. Renounce, we first learn, denotes an action at cards: “1. to declare a renunciation; [*obs.*] —2. In *cards*, not to follow suit.” Remaining entries run the gamut from “disown,” “disclaim,” to the refusal “to acknowledge as belonging to” (690). Let us not follow suit, and further explore this refusal of belonging. The remaining instances occur in the entries for other words: “Abjure 1. To renounce upon oath; to

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<sup>81</sup> *Dickinson: Selected Poems and Commentaries* (Cambridge: Harvard Belknap Press, 2010), 330.

abandon” (3); “Rebellion 1. An open and avowed renunciation of the authority of the government to which one owes allegiance” (674); “Expatriation 1. Banishment; *More generally*, the forsaking of one’s own country, with a renunciation of allegiance” (318). We should here note that upon leaving this latter entry, the reader then arrives at “Expect.” In her last remarks on *Clarel* from the Talisman interview, Howe suggests the elaborate metaphysical structures of Melville’s youth had “collaps[ed] into something simpler” (*BM* 180). Just as the implacable impenetrability of whiteness had given way to a withering critique of Anglo-Saxon settler-colonialist typologies, Dickinson’s renunciation themselves seems less like reified abstractions than a counter-monumental reading of a moment overdetermined by and suffused with the portents of theological conviction. Reading Dickinson reading her lexicon, an expectation lingers.

What allegiance Renunciation disowns and repudiates, that is self-possession, which is the expressive legibility of self through an externalized property relation of ownership may best grounded in the antiphonal repudiation of a sacralized investiture in whiteness as the dispensated transmission of property

which gendereth to bondage<sup>82</sup>

A Brief Malediction on the Theodicy of Proprietary Geniality

And, mindful of heavens gracious Queen  
And Britain’s princess, name it Mary-land.<sup>83</sup>

My Maryland!

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<sup>82</sup> Galatians 4:24

<sup>83</sup> *Clarel*, (4.5.126-27)

Her too

Conquest gives a title from which the courts of the conquerors cannot deny.<sup>84</sup>

We shall see that there is no such thing as natural property, and that it is entirely the work of law. Property is nothing but a basis of expectation; the expectation of deriving certain advantages from a thing which we are said to possess, in consequence of the relation in which we stand towards it. There is no image, no painting, no visible trait, which can express the relation that constitutes property. It is not material, it is metaphysical; it is a mere conception of the mind.<sup>85</sup>

But whether, on this, or any point, the Indians should be permitted to testify for themselves, to the exclusion of other testimony, is a question that may be left to the Supreme Court<sup>86</sup>

It is impossible to destroy men with more respect for the laws of humanity<sup>87</sup>

THE JUDGE ALWAYS BEGAN in these words<sup>88</sup>

The fundamental principle, that the Indians had no right, by virtue of their ancient possession, either of soil or sovereignty, has never been abandoned by expression or implication<sup>89</sup>

**We – tell a Hurt – to cool it –  
This mourner – to the Sky -**

**(long as ages steal!)**

**A little further reaches – instead –  
Brave Black Berry –<sup>90</sup>**

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<sup>84</sup> *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. M'Intosh*; see Chapter Three, footnote 63.

<sup>85</sup> Jeremy Bentham, *Theory of Legislation*. Qtd in Harris, "Whiteness as Property" *Harvard Law Review* 106, no. 8 (June 1993): 1729.

<sup>86</sup> *The Confidence-Man*, 147.

<sup>87</sup> Alexis De Tocqueville *Democracy in America*, 336.

<sup>88</sup> *The Confidence-Man*, 144.

<sup>89</sup> Report, *Committee for Indian Affairs* (February 24, 1830). Qtd. in De Tocqueville, 397-398.

<sup>90</sup> *Poems of Emily Dickinson*, 248.

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