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Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction

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by

Samantha Marie Sommers

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction

by

Samantha Marie Sommers

Doctor of Philosophy in English

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Christopher J. Looby, Chair

Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction proceeds from the claim that when we read nineteenth-century American literature, we read about reading. From characters depicted with books in hand, to citations of newspapers within novels, nineteenth-century texts teem with depictions of overt and implied reading. While diverse scenes of reading are everywhere in nineteenth-century American literature, the stories Americanist critics tell about reading in this period are surprisingly limited. Though literature does not depict reading solely (or even usually) as a means to cultivate subjectivity, Americanist criticism seems unable to resist framing all modes of reading as a mechanism for cultivating liberal subjects and spurring participation in the public sphere. The question that drives *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-*

Century American Fiction is: what else could we say about reading if we suspended our belief that to read is always to participate in an enlightenment project?

This dissertation mines scenes of reading from five key texts to articulate multiple and competing theories of reading that are not bound up with discussions of liberal subject formation or debates about the public sphere. I define a "scene of reading" as a tableau in which there is a prior, potential, or present relationship between a witness and a text. This capacious definition collects an array of representations that imply, reference, or contain the possibility for reading under a single heading. Across four chapters and an epilogue, I explicate theories of reading as an activity that affects one's perception of the world in *The Sketch-Book* (1820); registers in the feeling body in *Wieland* (1798); intervenes in social relations in *Hope Leslie* (1827); is irreducibly material and ideologically changeable in *Clotel* (1853); and proves the limits of our ability to textualize bodies of knowledge in *Moby-Dick* (1851). I examine interpolated letters, reprinted poems, moments of newspaper sharing, debates about gift books, and other scenes from fiction in order to multiply our descriptions for the uses of reading.

The dissertation of Samantha Marie Sommers is approved.

Michael C. Cohen

Joan Waugh

Richard A. Yarborough

Christopher J. Looby, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2018

for Charles Baraw, and others like him,

who have produced brilliant scholarship & inspired their students

while living with the precarity of contingent employment

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VITA

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"'She was brought to bed': The Queer Temporality of Early American Childbirth and the Holyoke Women's Diaries (1760-1856)"
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Fellow's Talk, American Antiquarian Society, July 2017

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18th-Century/Romantics Working Group, UCLA, April 2017

"Revelations of Reading in *Wieland; or, The Transformation*"
Americanist Research Colloquium, UCLA, March 2017

"Memory Held in Common: The Rhetorical Campaigns of Early Historical Societies"
Society of Early Americanists Biennial Conference, Tulsa, Oklahoma, March 2017

"The Queer Temporality of Nineteenth-Century Childbirth"
Untimely Erotics Seminar, C19 Biennial Conference, Penn State University, March 2016

"Harriet Jacobs and the Recirculation of Print Culture in Early African American Literature"
African American Expression in Digital and Print Culture Conference, Center for Print and Digital Culture, UW-Madison, September 2014

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Introduction

When we read nineteenth-century American literature, we read about reading. From characters depicted with books in hand, to citations of newspapers within novels; from scenes of thwarted or interrupted reading, to references to prior reading, nineteenth-century texts teem with depictions of overt and implied reading. Familiar examples of reading in fiction might include: Mrs. Bird's repeated interruptions to Senator Bird's newspaper reading on behalf of Eliza in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852); the opening scene of *The Morgesons* (1862) where Cassandra climbs to the top of a dresser to read her favorite volume of "unprofitable stories;" or in "The Gold Bug," when the characters decode a substitution cipher, written in invisible ink on a scrap of parchment, that leads them to a buried pirate treasure; or Huck Finn's direct address to readers on the first page of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), in which he declares they may know him from previously reading "a mostly true book," *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), "made by Mr. Mark Twain."[1] While scenes of reading are everywhere in nineteenth-century American literature, the stories critics tell about reading in this period are surprisingly limited. Though literature does not depict reading solely (or even usually) as a means to cultivate subjectivity, Americanist criticism seems unable to resist framing all modes of reading as a mechanism for cultivating liberal subjects and spurring participation in the public sphere. Much of this emphasis stems from the field's considerations (and reconsiderations) of the work of

[1] Elizabeth Stoddard, *The Morgesons* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 1; Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, ed. Stephen Railton (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Editions, 2011) 55.

reading in Jürgen Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) [2]. In her salient explication of the tautologies that underpin Habermas's public sphere theory, Lara Langer Cohen makes the point that "Americanists have avidly imported his model to the point that it has become the standard reading of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century United States print culture."[3]By analyzing depictions of reading in literature we can restore our sense of what we already know to be true: reading is not always slow, engaged, or to a purpose.

Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction turns to scenes of reading to reshape our expectations of how and what reading can produce. My project theorizes reading as a means to know the world rather than form ourselves. Through their depiction and remediation of texts, scenes of reading ask readers to evaluate the relationship between representation and reality, which is freshly articulated in every text. Scenes from the internal world of fiction thus teach readers to evaluate the dynamic coexistence of representation and reality in the external world. Central to this work is my conceit that the collected intertexts,

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[2] See Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America*, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990) and *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002); Michael Millner, *Fever Reading: Affect and Reading Badly in the Early American Public Sphere*, (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012); Elizabeth Maddock Dillion, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere*, (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004); Anna Brickhouse, *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2004); and David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

For a discussion of the ways reading remains undertheorized in debates about the public sphere see Jordan Alexander Stein, "The Whig Interpretation of Media: *Sheppard Lee* and Jacksonian Paperwork," *History of the Present* 3, no. 1 (2013): 29–56, esp. 29–30.

[3] Lara Langer Cohen, "Democratic Representations: Puffery and the Antebellum Print Explosion," *American Literature* 79, no. 4 (2007): 643–672, esp. 650–653.

citations, and depictions of reading on display in works of nineteenth-century American literature are a set of raw materials from which we can derive multiple and competing theories of reading. In the chapters that follow I closely read interpolated letters, reprinted poems, moments of newspaper sharing, debates about gift books, and other scenes from fiction in order to multiply our descriptions for the uses of reading.

With this effort I am not aiming to disprove claims that reading contributes to the formation of a self, nor do I dispute the importance of reading as a tool for developing an informed and engaged public. The question that drives *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* is: what else could we say about reading if we suspended our belief that to read is always to participate in an enlightenment project? Notice that *participation* leaves open the possibility for both positive and negative engagements. Dozens of historical treatises on "bad" reading, developing concurrently with the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century, caution that people might be carried away by flights of fancy or fall victim to traps of seduction if they pursued the wrong content or style of reading. In 2007, the National Endowment for the Arts report "To Read or Not to Read" remarks that "good readers" have increased empathy for others which may account for their tendency to volunteer and contribute to civic life.[4] These lines of thinking, spanning close to 300 years, maintain the assumption that all reading has the potential to take effect in society.

[4] To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence," Research Report 47 (National Endowment of the Arts, Washington D.C., 2007), 86–91, PDF. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/ToRead.pdf

In the interest of galvanizing additional work on reading apart from its role in liberal subject formation, it may be helpful to briefly evidence Americanists' critical preoccupation with this particular thesis. In an essay that aims to rehabilitate practices of "uncritical reading" Michael Warner posits that we may have been wrong to think that critical reading is the only mode of self-conscious reading. His essay works to undo the "invisible norm" of critical reading by recognizing "rival modes of reading and reflection on reading as something other than pretheorically uncritical."[5] Yet, amidst these efforts, Warner holds constant the belief that reading (whether critical or uncritical) is always bound up with "ethical projects for cultivating one kind of person or another." As the essay proceeds, critical and uncritical reading become "contrasting ways in which various techniques and forms can be embedded in an ethical problematic of subject-formation…."[6] In a similar vein, Michael Millner's *Fever Reading: Affect and Reading Badly in the Early American Public Sphere* (2012) investigates a set of "bad reading" practices and their associated genres in an effort to demonstrate how such reading "produce[s] powerful kinds of knowledge that are critical, reflective, and essential to the workings of the modern public sphere and society."[7]

Millner presents his project as a recuperative effort that responds to the "overwhelming prevalence" of bad reading in Early America, yet the study continues to view reading as a tool for

[5] Michael Warner, "Uncritical Reading," in *Polemic: Critical or Uncritical*, ed. Jane Gallop (New York: Routledge, 2004), 16.

[6] Ibid., 19.

[7] Michael Millner, *Fever Reading: Affect and Reading Badly in the Early American Public Sphere* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2012), xv.

effecting rational participation in the public sphere. Outlining the stakes for his historical investigation, Millner asks:

> How do [forms of bad reading] too allow for knowledge, communication, notions of the self, and agency in the public sphere?…How does embodied, emotion-based reading provide public-sphere participants with the means of critical reflection, evaluation, and judgment?...What if it's true that *uncritical* reading—reading that is embodied, affect-generating, emotion-ridden—can suture textual practice with reflection, reason, and criticality?[8]

Though Millner successfully expands the range of Early American reading styles traditionally considered, his study reauthorizes the prevailing terms by which literary critics frame the effects of reading. Rather than embrace affective or embodied reading as about something other than rational debate, Millner argues that "fever reading" should have a place in discussions previously reserved for critical reading. While the book productively reconsiders scenes of "bad reading" and carefully elucidates the pathologizing discourse that surrounded reading during the early years of the U.S. republic, Millner's investment in binaries of good vs. bad, productive vs. unproductive, rational vs. emotional, cuts against his efforts to restructure analysis of embodied, affective, immersive reading.

By situating itself as a counter-narrative, Gillian Silverman's *Bodies and Books: Reading and the Fantasy of Communion* (2012) attests to Americanists' focus on subject formation when it comes to studies of reading. Silverman's work seeks to demonstrate how "reading has been historically valued, in certain contexts, precisely for the way it *inhibits* identity formation and coherent selfhood."[9] Her book compiles and examines a collection of nineteenth-century

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[8] Ibid., xiv–xv, 6, 12–13.

[9] Gillian Silverman, *Bodies and Books: Reading and the Fantasy of Communion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 151.

accounts of reading (drawn from fiction, conduct books, and personal writing) that recover a contemporaneous fascination with reading's power to engender "self-forgetting" and "author-reader communion."[10] Taken together these works amount to a small but indexical sample of recent Americanist criticism that seeks to theorize all modes of reading in terms of the liberal subject and the public sphere.

Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction conceives of reading as a way of knowing. Throughout the dissertation, I show how nineteenth-century writers use scenes of reading for a variety of purposes, a fact that confirms the lack of an intrinsic politics or ideology for reading. The activity of reading is not always liberatory, informative, devotional, or even conscious though it can be each and all of these things at certain times. Across four chapters and an epilogue, I explicate theories of reading as an activity that affects one's perception of the world in *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon* (1820); registers in the feeling body in *Wieland* (1798); contributes to the formation of a sociality in *Hope Leslie* (1827); is irreducibly material and ideologically changeable in *Clotel* (1853); and proves the limits of our ability to textualize certain kinds of knowledge in *Moby-Dick* (1851). I purposely choose canonical texts to anchor this project in order to highlight the pervasiveness of reading, even in texts we know well, and to foreground the method of this study. Yet, to be clear, my strategy of "reading for reading" does not produce universal claims related to the texts under consideration, nor does it imply that all of nineteenth-century literature is *about* reading. Instead, the method asserts that literature offers an appropriate and generative archive for expanding our conceptualizations of reading as a critical category.

[10] Ibid., 50.

My phrase "scenes of reading" echoes Richard Brodhead's *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (1993). Yet Brodhead's title also highlights the divergence in our interests. Rather than focus on the historical and cultural contexts that help comprise literature's "working conditions" (in Brodhead's terms), my analysis prioritizes fictional representation, and specifically nineteenth-century writers' representations of reading.[11] The boundaries that circumscribe the scenes I consider are purposefully sprawling since it is precisely the diversity in uses and depictions of reading in literature that motivates this project.

I define a "scene of reading" as a tableau in which there is a prior, potential, or present relationship between a witness and a text. My capacious use of this phrase is an attempt to collect under a single heading an array of textual representations that imply, reference, or contain the possibility for reading. "Scene of reading" invokes an easily imagined picture of a reader with a text, and from that stable center, I explore the many and varied relations between texts and readers on display within nineteenth-century American literature.[12] My aim in doing this is to

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[11] See Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 8.

[12] While this introduction makes claims regarding the role of reading in nineteenth-century American literature writ large, I will admit here that the core texts for this study are five longform prose works that are either novels or, in the case of *The Sketch-Book*, a blend of genres including fiction. In part, I have narrowed the field of my examples for generic consistency; and though it will be beyond the scope of this dissertation to address adequately the role of reading in other genres, I maintain that there is evidence of a preoccupation with reading across American literature (including autobiography, poetry, short stories, newspaper sketches, editorials, and reviews) in this period. See for example Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1791); David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829); Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (1845) and *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1868); Edgar Allan Poe, "The Mystery of Marie Roget" (1842), and "The Purloined Letter" (1844); Walt Whitman "Song of Myself" (1855), and Lydia Maria Child "Slavery's Pleasant Homes: A Faithful Sketch" (1843).

elaborate a spectrum of representation in which a scene of reading includes a text or textual object that receives a degree of visual or descriptive illustration as well as a witness to that text or object. In certain cases, the reader occupies the position of witness to an imagined text. This strategy allows me to reckon with the expansive range of representations of reading in nineteenth-century fiction along with the ways we, as readers, are pulled into overt and subtle relationships with the acts of reading referenced and implied by fictional worlds.

Even when a narrative does not expressly declare a scene of reading, the presence of a poem, newspaper extract, book spine, or other text imagined within the fiction meets the conditions I've set for a scene of reading: a text has been visually or linguistically rendered within the frame of the diegesis and the reader, or a character, or both bear witness to that text. The chapter epigraphs for Mark Twain's late nineteenth-century novel, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), provide just one example of how imagined material texts can help constitute scenes of reading. Twain attributes all of the chapter epigraphs to Pudd'nhead Wilson's calendar, which is described in the novel as a "whimsical almanac" that includes "a little dab of ostensible philosophy, usually in ironical form, appended to each date."[13] As we read the chapter epigraphs, we gain access to the text of Wilson's calendar—a text that exists within the world of the novel but is never read or quoted from as part of the narration. In Chapter 5 readers learn that one of the characters, Judge Driscoll, so enjoyed the passages from Wilson's calendar that "he carried a handful of them around, one day, and read them to some of the chief citizens."[14] The text from

[13] Mark Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury (London: Penguin Books, 1986), 86.

[14] Ibid.

the calendar is present here in material form—Driscoll carries the papers containing Wilson's "quips and fancies" with him—but the reader has no access to the precise words the characters are encountering within the narrative. Much later, the calendar is again referenced as the focal point in a scene of reading when Wilson entertains the twins Luigi and Angelo with passages from his calendar. Once more, despite learning that the twins "praised [the calendar] quite cordially" and took a copy home with them, the reader of the novel has no access to the content of the calendar referenced in this scene.[15] This inconsistency of access to the calendar highlights the various levels of textual disclosure that can exist within a scene of reading and similarly reveals one author's careful control over which texts the reader will have access to within a fictional world.

By asking what literature can tell us about reading—rather than readers—*Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* responds to the emergent field of the history of reading and the prevalence of book history as a methodology for literary criticism. My focus on representation and fictionality breaks with earlier studies dedicated to reconstructing historical practices of reading, charting the rise of literacy and the expansion of fiction reading, or analyzing the role of reading pedagogy in the formation of American culture.[16] Insisting upon

[15] Ibid., 123.

[16] On historical reading practices see David D. Hall, "The Uses of Literacy in New England 1600–1850," in *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 36–78; William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); on the expansion of fiction reading see Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993); on the rise of literacy and the history of reading pedagogy see Patricia Crain, *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from* The New England Primer *to* The Scarlet Letter

the distance between reality and representation, this dissertation additionally departs from a growing critical tendency to use fictional representations of reading to leverage historical claims. The project's method of "reading for reading" is an outgrowth of history of the book methodologies and applies the skills of visual and material analysis of textual objects to scenes of reading in fiction. Critics including Meredith McGill, Robert Darnton, Frances Smith Foster, Leah Price, and Trish Loughran have laid the groundwork for such a method by demonstrating the value of studying print histories, production processes, distribution networks, reception histories, and what McGill terms "the matter of the text," together with the content of literary works.[17] In the introduction to *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting* (2003), McGill offers a capsule definition of the history of the book as "a cross-pollination of the methods of bibliography, social history, and cultural history" that "takes as its subject the material grounds of discourse, the mediation of culture by historically specific practices of textual production, distribution, and reception."[18] McGill's study, and also Loughran's *The Republic in Print* (2007), are important intellectual models for *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American*

(Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000) and Karen Sánchez-Eppler, *Dependent States: The Child's Part in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[17] Meredith McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting 1834–1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 7. See Robert Darnton, "What is the history of books?" *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982): 65–83; Frances Smith Foster, "A Narrative of the Interesting Origins and (Somewhat) Surprising Developments of African-American Print Culture," *American Literary History* 17, no. 4 (2005): 714–740; Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building 1770–1870* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007); Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012).

[18] Ibid., 5.

Fiction with their combination of rigorous attention to the material conditions of texts paired with incisive critiques and analyses of content.

Both works succeed in relating historical findings to the ongoing interpretation of the literary texts under consideration, and this dual emphasis reveals the dynamic interplay among form, content, production, and interpretation. My project extends the concerns of book history to the material features of imagined and reprinted texts within fiction to elucidate their role in conjuring scenes of reading. *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth Century American Fiction* explores the potential for a book history approach to theorize more fully the category of reading and its associated materials in nineteenth-century American fiction. To date there has been no extended study of literature's representation of reading or its associated materials in the American context. Leah Price's *How to Do Things with Books* recovers the material and social histories of books in Victorian England as well as the "uses" of book objects in Victorian fiction.[19] Price's work has been invaluable to my project, which shares her interest in characters' various and dissonant encounters with texts. But *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* shifts the stakes from making claims about books as material objects, or specific qualities of nineteenth-century American fiction, to re-thinking the critical category of reading. I turn to scenes of reading, and the imagined material texts within them, to recover a set of uses and outcomes for reading that have been lost in the wake of overdetermining reading's role in the formation of the liberal subject.

[19] See Leah Price, *How to Do Things with Books in Victorian Britain* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012).

Pursuing something akin to the inverse of this project, Andrew Piper's *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (2009) uses literature to recover the centrality of the book as an object in Romantic-era society. Piper argues that in accordance with the contributions book history has made to our understanding of literature and literary history, works of literature have equally "important things to offer the expanding fields of history of the book and communication studies." Piper's interpretative strategy highlights Romantic literature's "deep attention to mobility" to ask "how such circulatory energy" probed the "new conditions of communications in books."[20] *Dreaming in Books* looks beyond scenes of book circulation and reading to interpret literature's reaction to and record of the changing social conditions that surrounded the expansion of the book market. While it seems impossible to minimize Romantic literature's preoccupation with a rapidly changing environment for the production and circulation of books, my own project attempts to align more closely the ground of interpretation—the representation of reading—with the interpretative frame—an inquiry into the ways nineteenth-century authors conceptualize reading in their fiction. My hope is that the project's capacious definition of reading will prevent this closer alignment of subject and object of analysis from feeling too hermetic.

Christina Lupton's *Knowing Books: The Consciousness of Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (2011) is a further influential antecedent to this project. Lupton's close consideration of the material text and interlocking rhetorical gestures exposes the mechanisms by which literary works project theories of reading and textuality out to their readers. She uses

[20] Andrew Piper, *Dreaming in Books: The Making of the Bibliographic Imagination in the Romantic Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 10–11.

the term "self-conscious" to describe the way a text can appear to be "aware of itself in the present." A common strategy for creating this sense of "self-consciousness" is for a text to refer "to its own mediation" as a way to "exceed the moments in which [it was] written and published."[21] Through these references, texts elide the temporal distance between the time of reading, the time of composition, and the time of publication, by syncing the "now" of reading with the "now" of narration. Lupton's claim that "once writing [is] understood as ink and paper and print, it can appear and behave as part of the world we once imagined it only represented" has been especially formative.[22] This conceit, and the examples of "self-consciousness" that her study pursues, trace a legacy of authors explicitly engaging the material conditions of textual production in order to comment on the experience of reading and our sense of ourselves in the world. Yet, whereas Lupton explains that eighteenth-century texts do this work by aligning the time of reading with the time of narration, the nineteenth-century texts I consider require a different contract between reader and text. Nineteenth-century literature consistently entreats readers to imagine scenes of reading at the same time that they are engaged in the activity of reading: we see the page we hold in our hand even as we are asked to imagine a different one.

Summary of Chapters

The five key fictions anchoring this study were chosen either for the plentitude of scenes of reading offered within their pages (*The Sketch-Book, Clotel, Hope Leslie*), the extremity of their

[21] Christina Lupton, *Knowing Books: The Consciousness of Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 5.

[22] Ibid., 74.

examples (*Moby-Dick*), or the unexpected role of reading in the text (*Wieland*). Taken together these novels begin to demonstrate the efficacy of "reading for reading" through the diverse collection of scenes within their pages or the representations of reading that might go unnoticed if not for this method. By emphasizing the heterogeneity and diversity of engagements with texts that are on display in fiction, I resist a consolidating approach intended to ratify a singular value for reading.[23]

Rather than attempt a discursive catalog of textual examples, each chapter uses a single text to explicate a particular theory of reading. Narrowing the number of texts under consideration allows me to consider a greater number of scenes from each, which in turn helps to document the variety and proliferation of such representations. The individual chapters offer strong claims, while preserving (as much as possible) an expansive, thorny, unruly sense of reading in nineteenth-century literature. I unite the project's disparate theories by consistently framing reading as an epistemology, one that trains readers in the procedures of world-making. By this I mean that scenes of reading teach us to titrate the relationship between reality and representation that is differently defined by every text we read. In this way, the effects of reading are outwardly realized and not beholden to the work of liberal self-integration. My project argues that the imaginative work of distinguishing among levels of mediation, prompted by the intense intertextuality of nineteenth-century American fiction, requires readers continually to negotiate the distance between the world a text constructs and the world outside that text. For certain genres, the gap between textual representation and reality is even supposed to disappear—news reports, contracts, and court transcripts, for example, are meant to bear a one-to-one relationship

[23] My thanks to Michael Cohen for helping to clarify this ambition for the project.

to reality. Taken together, the chapters of *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* theorize reading as a process that reveals how texts not only represent, but partially reveal, readers' reality.

Chapter One

Reading as Perceiving in *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon*

The scenes of reading in Washington Irving's *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon* are, like the text itself, various and dissonant. Moving through the collection we find the narrator, Crayon, engaged in various states of reading—distracted, intensive, skeptical, and immersive among them. The book offers a veritable encyclopedia of scenes. Taken as a whole, *The Sketch-Book* has obvious investments in reading: part of the conceit of the text is that Crayon is documenting English oral histories and folklore for a reading audience. Details of the text's formal organization additionally imply that it is meant to be experienced as coherent material text. This is especially true when Crayon makes references to earlier sketches or reflects on the differences between his original notes from the journey to England and the finished writing he presents to readers. His numerous asides underscore the labor of writing and revising the manuscript, and the finished product, with its many footnotes and addenda, invites, indeed requires, a sophisticated reading practice. At a more literal register, the act of reading is essential to the inclusion of both "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," since in the preface to "Rip" we learn that the proceeding tale was "found among the papers of the late

Diedrich Knickerbocker"[24] By exposing "Rip Van Winkle" as a found manuscript, Crayon identifies himself as a reader of papers in addition to being a composer of sketches. The lack of previous critical attention to the ways *The Sketch-Book* describes itself as an reading to be read indexes a greater gap in scholarship on the effects of reading within the text.

The Sketch-Book's scenes of reading reveal Irving's interrogation of the effects of reading on perception and his caution that the boundary between the world a text constructs and the world perceived outside the text is less clearly defined than we might think. Irving develops this theory of reading by showing how Crayon's misperception of the world around him is shaped by his reading. The result is a text that purports to record details of the landscape and character of rural England via a narratorial persona who consistently demonstrates the pitfalls of relying on textual representations to make sense of the world. In this first chapter I begin by specifying Irving's concerted efforts to represent his text as a reading object and then examine the effect of reading on Crayon's ability to perceive and describe the world around him in "The Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap," "The Art of Book-Making," and "The Royal Poet." I conclude with a brief discussion of literary tourism to Irving's Hudson Valley home, Sunnyside, in which I describe Irving's architectural choices and landscape design as connected to his larger project of destabilizing the boundary between the fictional worlds he constructs and the world his readers engage with outside his texts.

[24] Washington Irving, *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, ed. Susan Manning (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996), 33.

Chapter Two

Revelations of Reading in *Wieland; or, The Transformation*

Within the first five pages of Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* readers encounter a scene of conversion in which the elder Wieland shifts from "[entertaining] no relish for books, and [being] wholly unconscious of any power they possessed to delight or instruct" to finding that "the further he read, the more inducement he found to continue…."[25] The elder Wieland's conversion to reading precipitates his conversion to religious fanaticism, both of which take effect in his body. Eventually, the elder Wieland's intense religious practice leads to the mysterious circumstances of his death; it seems he dies as a result of spontaneous combustion while worshiping in a personal temple on the family's Pennsylvania estate.

In her retrospective account of her father's conversion to reading—a scene that took place more than a decade before her birth—Clara Wieland initially specifies that books possess the power to "delight or instruct," but she quickly reverses this subject and object relation between books and readers to frame her father's religious fanaticism as a consequence of his mind being "peculiarly fitted for the reception of devotional sentiments." The book that first "induces" the elder Wieland to read was a radical Protestant text that becomes the basis for his self-designed religious beliefs. Clara describes this text as an "object" for "the craving which had haunted him[.]"[26] By mentioning this "craving" Clara implies there was a hunger (metaphorical or otherwise) inside her father, which was sated by reading this religious text. This description is an

[25] Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, ed. Bryan Waterman (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 10.

[26] Ibid.

early declaration of the novel's theory of reading as an activity that takes hold of and moves through the feeling body.

This chapter uses the relationship of reading to embodiment as a through-line for charting a constellation of reading scenes that punctuate the drama of the novel. For the elder Wieland, and later Clara—who experiences two separate fainting spells as a result of her reading—textual objects induce physiological effects. Henry Pleyel also experiences the effects of reading in his body when he learns in the course of re-reading a newspaper that the enigmatic Francis Carwin is an escaped convict. Pleyel exclaims to Clara, "every fibre of my frame tingled when I proceeded to read that the name of the criminal was Francis Carwin!"[27] The process of attempting to track down further information leads Pleyel into physical proximity with several people and workspaces involved in the printing and distribution of the newspaper. At every turn in this investigation, Charles Brockden Brown—through Pleyel—reminds us of how bodies are essential to the production and circulation of textual media. Far from describing a frictionless transmission of news and information, *Wieland* takes time to note the materials, processes, contingencies, and human actors that convey the story of Francis Carwin from one site of textual production to the next.

The experience of reading *Wieland* is one that refuses closure and capitalizes on ambiguity, and yet, within the novel, reading is portrayed as embodied, affective, and revelatory. Within the world of the fiction, texts take hold of their readers and redirect them; they overwhelm the senses and disable bodies**.** Yet through these depictions, Brown contrasts the immediate, revelatory capacity of reading *in Wieland* with the speculative thinking and

[27] Ibid., 99.

irresolvable quandaries provoked by the act of reading *Wieland*. The dissonance between the uses for reading the novel and the uses for reading in the novel prompt a reconsideration of literary critics' persistent theorizations of reading as axiomatically tied to deliberative thinking and evaluative judgment.

Chapter Three

Reading for Social Connection in *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in Massachusetts*

In her novel *Hope Leslie,* Catharine Maria Sedgwick primarily depicts characters reading as a component of their correspondence. Through interpolated letters, readers of the novel track the nascent romance between the eponymous Hope and her cousin Everell as other characters include letters to Everell within Hope's correspondence in a bid to maintain their own social ties to him. This layered correspondence—represented through typographical cues on the page—asks readers of the novel to move deeper into the world of the fiction via textual mediation. Reading a letter from one character to another, which is tacked on (and makes reference) to the end of a letter by a different character, all of which is framed by a narrator's direct address to an imagined group of external readers, involves a process of distinguishing among several diegetic levels that illustrates the kind of world-making that fictional scenes of reading ask readers to practice and maintain.

My chapter elaborates how characters' engagement with texts and reading mediate the social and familial relationships central to the drama of *Hope Leslie*. I pair my discussion of the novel with excerpts from Sedgwick's didactic writings, which promote a practice of reading driven by intellectual exploration and a desire for knowledge expansion. In her conduct book,

Means and Ends, or Self-Training (1839), Sedgwick advises readers to "pause in your reading, reflect, [and] compare what the writer tells you with what you have learned from other sources…."[28] She describes her ideal scene of reading as one in which a reader frequently pauses to consult a dictionary, research biographical information, or track down additional sources related to the primary text. Sedgwick's model imagines readers as the center of a network of texts and references that extends out from the original scene of reading. By connecting the uses for reading in *Hope Leslie* with the author's advice to readers, particularly young female readers, I recover a theory of reading focused on the activity's potential to place readers into relations with other readers, sources, contexts, and allusive elements that help constitute a literary tradition. This networked theory of reading emphasizes outward-facing connections, exemplified by reading's relationship to social ties in *Hope Leslie*, rather than the self-reflexivity of coming to know one's own mind. Sedgwick envisions the efficacy of reading as creating social relations, and in her novel, she routinely illustrates this project through the device of interpolated letters.

When Martha Fletcher writes to her husband early in the novel we see how Sedgwick uses correspondence as a strategy of character development and a means to convey attachments. A key section of Martha's letter is devoted to the emerging bond between her son, Everell, and the young native woman, Magawisca, who is living with the Fletcher family as their servant. To convey the pair's connection Martha describes a scene of Everell reading to Magawisca. For *Hope Leslie*'s readers, and for Mr. Fletcher, in the context of Martha's letter, the role of this scene is not to report on what or how the two are reading, but to relay the friendship they are forming.

[28] Catherine Maria Sedgwick, *Means and Ends, or Self-Training* (Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, & Webb, 1839), 249.

Sedgwick's commitment to the idea that reading facilitates social formation means that in the midst of reading, about reading, about reading, the most important information to take in is that Everell and Magawisca have become quite close.

Moreover, in the novel's formulation, reading doesn't just forge relationships among people as a consequence of their social reading practices—the act of reading itself trains readers to imagine they are part of a group of previous and potential readers. Sedgwick reinforces this notion through her narrator's habitual references to "our young readers." By rhetorically addressing a collective, *Hope Leslie*'s narrator invites individual readers to imagine themselves as one of many readers who are engaging the novel in real time.

Chapter Four

Reading Materially in *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*

The array of texts that William Wells Brown incorporates into his novel, *Clotel*, offers a rich case for theorizing the role of the material page in representations of reading. Every few pages the reader finds a visually distinct document or poem that Brown sources from contemporary print culture, jumbling the categories of original, fictional, plagiarized, and documentary in the process. This chapter argues for a re-conception of such recirculated texts as implied scenes of reading that connect readers of *Clotel* with textual material, drawn from separate nineteenth-century publications, and mediated by the pages of the novel. I argue that the texts Brown inserts, often extradiegetically, are not just visually distinctive interruptions to the plot or evidence of the brutality of slavery, but testaments to Brown's theory of reading as irreducibly material and ideologically changeable.

I organize the chapter around scenes of reading that place recirculated texts at the center of the action to reveal Brown's repeated assertion that the act of reading determines the politics of a text. In these examples, Brown recirculates selections from nineteenth-century newspapers by having his characters pull snippets of print out of their pockets. The stories and advertisements Brown includes are represented to characters, and to readers of the novel, through material texts that operate as props within the fiction. These scenes densely remediate excerpts from nineteenth-century print culture, demonstrating the many acts of reading that one instance of remediation can signify. Through this elaborate method of recirculation, Brown challenges us to acknowledge the fact that a piece of text cannot hold a stable politics. He attributes any political effect of reading to the inclinations of the reader, and in doing so, he contests critical narratives that privilege reading as a mechanism for the formation of a liberal subject.

Epilogue

Books Beyond Reading

If the four chapters of the dissertation schematize characteristics of reading in literature that challenge the assumption that reading is always about the production of a liberal subject, the epilogue explores the possibility for reading and its associated materials (books, broadsides, letters, etc.) to function as a system for organizing separate, existing bodies of knowledge without regard for textual content. This proposition is on display and pointedly theorized throughout Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*. Meticulous readers of *Moby-Dick* will note that, beginning with the first American edition, the novel does not actually open with the iconic

imperative "Call me Ishmael." Instead, Melville presents readers with the first of two sections entitled "Etymology," which captures a tender scene of nonreading. The vignette portrays books as objects for care and contemplation as the speaker describes "The pale Usher…ever dusting his old lexicons and grammars…" and recalls how this act of conservation "somehow mildly reminded him of his mortality."[29] The scene grounds the reader in a world of book-objects and positions humans as, in some ways, subordinate to the realm of books and information with the suggestion that the Usher knows his grammars and lexicons will outlast him. With this, a theory emerges wherein books, while a distinctly human innovation, exceed their inventors since they are programmed with a different rate of decomposition. This first "Etymology" section presents a daring meditation on the permanency and utility of books without regard for whatever content they may contain.

Much later in the novel, we find an exploration of the ways the materials of reading can encompass and organize bodies of knowledge that are unrelated to textual content. Supplanting the existing science of Cetology with "some sort of popular comprehensive classification,"[30] Ishmael marshals the materials of reading to categorize metaphorically several species of whales based on the size and shape of books. Melville's use of categories and divisions native to book production (folio, octavo, duodecimo) and textual form (individual whale species are listed as chapters within books) posits a potentially limitless redeployment of these book-centric terms in the service of other bodies of knowledge. In *Moby-Dick*, Melville pushes nineteenth-century

[29] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, eds. Hershel Parker and Harrison Hayford (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), 7.

[30] Ibid., 116.

writers' affection for using books as vehicles for metaphor (people described as volumes of black-letter; hearts that can be read one leaf at a time) to a provocative end point in which books—previously conceived of as containers for recorded knowledge—represent a portable system for the organization and categorization of non-textual information. In a novel that is rich with scenes of reading and intertexts, readers are invited to reckon with a set of books that exceed the activity of reading and challenge us to consider the limits of our perception.

Chapter 1

Reading as Perceiving in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*

The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent. (1820) knows you're reading it. With abundant details relating to its own composition, arrangement, editing, and revision, Irving's text does more than project a self-conscious awareness of an audience—it purposefully admits its "writtenness" and attends to the reader's progress through the text. Historically, critics have neglected the prominence of reading in *The Sketch Book* and, instead, have favored analyses that foreground the impressionistic quality of Crayon's sketches. Perhaps the most persistent way scholars overlook the role of reading in the text is by extolling a vision of *The Sketch Book* as a shaggy, provisional work that could not be a "self-conscious" text because it was not conceived of as a finished product.[1] In *The Development of the American Short Story* (1923), Fred Lewis Pattee writes that the "very title…has apology in it, for a sketch book is a random receptacle for first

[1] I am borrowing the term "self-conscious" from Christina Lupton who explains that a text is self-conscious when it appears to be "aware of itself in the present." According to Lupton, a common strategy for creating this sense of "self-consciousness" is for a text to refer "to its own mediation" as a way to "exceed the moments in which [it was] written and published." Through these references, a text elides the temporal distance between the time of reading, the moment of publication, and the time of composition by syncing the "now" of reading with the "now" of narration. Lupton explains that texts occasionally imagine future legacies or prolonged relevance for themselves through speculative rhetorical gestures. A prime example of this occurs when the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* (1759–1767) refers to later editions of the novel while the text is still in its first edition. Lupton argues that this kind of impossible knowing "can cause the page to quicken with the impression of sentience." See Christina Lupton, *Knowing Books: The Consciousness of Mediation in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) 5–6.

impressions, materials collected *for* work and not the work itself."[2] More than fifty years later, Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky agreed: "by calling his writings 'sketches' [Irving] could…evade the demands of a more venerable prose form…the word 'sketch' implies a preliminary study or a representation of a work of art intended for elaboration…it connotes hastiness and incompleteness."[3] In constructing this theory of the text, critics discount Crayon's numerous asides to the reader, in which he highlights the labor of writing and revision that went into the preparation of the literary work before them. The lack of critical attention to the ways *The Sketch Book* describes itself as a reading object indexes a greater gap in scholarship on the uses for reading in the text.

The central conceit of *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* is that the collected intertexts, citations, and depictions of reading on display in works of nineteenth-century fiction—what I call scenes of reading—are a set of raw materials from which we can derive multiple and competing theories of reading. In this chapter, I argue that the scenes of reading throughout *The Sketch* Book reveal Irving's theory of reading as an activity that trains readers in the procedures of world-making. He develops this theory by showing how Geoffrey Crayon's reading shapes his perception of the world around him, while at the same time, collapsing the distance between the world *The Sketch Book* constructs and the world outside the text. By passing every document, anecdote, or fact of history through the medium of his

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[2] Fred Lewis Pattee, *The Development of the American Short Story: An Historical Survey* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923), 6.

[3] Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, "Washington Irving: Sketches of Anxiety," *American Literature* 58, no. 4 (1986): 519.

personified narrator, Geoffrey Crayon, Irving creates the sense that there is nothing outside the scope of *The Sketch Book*'s fiction. The result is a text that asserts there is nothing beyond its representation while its narrator demonstrates the pitfalls of relying on textual representations to make sense of the world.

In what follows, I register Irving's concerted efforts to represent *The Sketch Book* as a carefully curated reading object before examining the effects of reading on Crayon's apprehension and descriptions of the world around him in the sketches "The Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap," "The Art of Book-Making," and "The Royal Poet." By detailing *The Sketch Book*'s deliberate self-fashioning as a reading object, this chapter demonstrates that reading, in addition to prior emphases on storytelling and the picturesque, is a productive hermeneutic for the text while illustrating how these subtle maneuvers signal the text's larger theory of reading.[4] I seek to amplify the moments in which the text acknowledges the contingent, iterative, and material reality of print publication. The notes and remarks appended to several sketches, as well as the references to an original manuscript and subsequent revisions, make the text's numerous layers of mediation apparent to the reader. Following this analysis, I consider more overt references to reading to argue that Irving uses these scenes to destabilize the boundary between the text and the perceived world outside the text. Through this inquiry I demonstrate that *The*

[4]On *The Sketch Book* and storytelling see Jeffrey Rubin-Dorsky, "The Value of Storytelling: 'Rip Van Winkle,' and 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' in the Context of *The Sketch Book*," *Modern Philology* 82, no. 4 (1985): 393–406. On Irving and the picturesque see Susan Manning, introduction to *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*., ed. Susan Manning (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), vii-xxix and Donald A. Ringe, *The Pictorial Mode: Space and Time in the Art of Bryant, Irving, and Cooper* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1971).

Sketch Book theorizes reading as an activity bound up with the problems of perception in order to reveal that "alienation from the real is a problem of *reading*."[5]

In the past decade, several scholars have addressed the question of world-making in fiction. Eric Hayot's recent book, *On Literary Worlds* (2012), works to address the mechanics of literary world-making on a grander historical scale than previous studies limited by their historical periodization. The nature of this study allows Hayot to meditate upon the terms of his engagement across a range of theoretical frameworks, which I hope will help illuminate the scaffolding behind my phrase "the perceived world outside the text." Hayot describes his key term "world" by first pointing to a distinction, briefly outlined, in Bakhtin's "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel." He writes:

> Bakhtin casually distinguishes *world* from *chronotope*. In so doing he comes closest to describing what I mean by an aesthetic world, a concept that describes the sum total of the activity of the diegetic work of art…*World* names a chronotope-containing discourse, one that applies equally well to the representational sphere as the actual one.[6]

Later, taking up the Heideggerian sense of the word "world" via Jean-Luc Nancy's *The Creation of the World; or, Globalization*, Hayot explains:

> A world encloses and worlds itself as the container that is identical with its contents and its containing, as a ground for itself that does not exceed or reach outside itself. World is thus (Nancy again) 'the common place of a totality of places, of presences and dispositions for possible events' (42–43). It makes, and is, in other words, and in the broadest possible philosophical sense, a physics.[7]

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[5] Jeffrey Scraba, "Quixotic History and Cultural Memory: Knickerbocker's 'History of New York,'" *Early American Studies* 7, no. 2 (2009): 401.

[6] Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 14.

[7] Ibid., 24.

Continuing to expand his definition, Hayot isolates Heidegger's edict from "The Origin of the Work of Art" that an artwork "'means: to set up a world.'" He elaborates the connection between world and work that Nancy and Heidegger identify as the way each term "[names] a self-enclosing, self-organizing, self-grounding process." Hayot continues:

> But: 'world' means also, for better or for worse, the world, this world, the natural, actual, living world of human history and geologic time. 'World' is thus both a philosophical concept and an example of that concept; a concept that is in the deepest possible way an instance of itself.[8]

What appears to be missing in this definition is how the world of a work of art relates, beyond tautologically, to the "natural, actual, living world of human history." Hayot's emphasis on the "self-enclosing, self-organizing" nature of the world of a work of art avoids the premise that the human world and the world of any artwork are interdependent, not least due to the fact that the human world is what *contains* the worlds that art "sets up." He does go on to address this relationship in the book's third chapter, "Literary Worlds," where he acknowledges: "[a]esthetic worlds, no matter how they form themselves, are…always a relation to and theory of the lived world."[9] This last point is foundational for *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* since it licenses analysis that connects the procedures for reading on display in *The Sketch Book* and other fictional works to theories of reading that have purchase in the lived world. Moreover, it opens the possibility that writers can be caught in the act of relaying information from the worlds their texts construct to the world outside their texts.

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[8] Ibid., 24–25.

[9] Ibid., 45.

A Self-Fashioned Object for Reading

Part of reading *The Sketch Book* is belatedly learning from the narrator that what you've just read was carefully reconstructed from his notes; that a certain story was handed to him by another person; or that the manuscript was getting too long, so you only have what's left after he made several cuts. As early as "The Author's Account of Himself" Crayon explains how he "look[ed] over the hints and memorandums [he had] taken down" during his travels with the plan to "get up" a few entertaining sketches[10] (9). These comments highlight the materials of research, reading, and composition that insist we recognize the text Crayon presents as a product of note taking, writing, revision, and publication. This self-conscious rendering reduces the distance between the reader and the world that *The Sketch Book* projects. This is not a text that gestures out—it pulls the reader into the history of its own making and addresses her in the present. Every footnote from Crayon, every bit of local commentary, every historical reference is made into a part of the fiction. Moreover, the transparency of these gestures obscures the very fictionality they support.

This effort to enmesh the reader in the world of the fiction is present even at a formal level. The text's use of elaborate frame tales for several sketches, and Crayon's role within them, helps to maintain the fictional conceit of *The Sketch Book* as a personal collection. They position Crayon as a mediator between the reader and these additional author-personae. One of the strongest examples of this comes immediately following the conclusion of "Rip Van Winkle"

[10] Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*., ed. Haskell Springer (New Haven: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 9. All further citations for *The Sketch Book* will refer to this edition and will be made in-text.

where the reader proceeds to a section labeled "Note" (41). Here, Crayon affirms the veracity of the preceding tale by including a "subjoined note" signed "D.K." in which the fictional author Diedrich Knickerbocker works to quell readers' doubts about his story of Rip. Knickerbocker's note, quoted in full under the heading provided by Crayon, explains first, that he has heard many more fantastical tales from the Dutch region than what he has recounted, all of which have been authenticated beyond any doubt. Second, he has spoken with Rip Van Winkle who seemed "a very venerable old man" and "perfectly rational and consistent on every other point" such that "no conscientious person could refuse to take this into the bargain" (41). Embedded here are three degrees of appeal to authority, each a means of vying for the reader's belief that the foregoing tale was a representation of true events and persons. First, more unbelievable tales have proven to be true, second, Knickerbocker can vouch for Rip along with the consistency (which amounts to veracity) of his tale, and finally, no one else would doubt this truth. If these appeals are not enough to convince readers, Knickerbocker concludes by explaining that he has "seen a certificate on the subject taken before a country justice, and signed with a cross, in the justice's own handwriting. The story, therefore, is beyond the possibility of doubt" (41). This turn to Knickerbocker's observation of a document before a judge makes a final attempt to authorize the tale by appealing to another text, one with apparent legal standing. With this move Irving tips his hand and catches us in a peculiar relationship to our own doubts about the sketch as a truthful representation of events. By gesturing to a legal document, Irving (through Knickerbocker) confronts us with the fact that we do endow certain texts with the power to represent a binding account of reality. These very texts, legal testimonies among them, work in tandem with the

written laws that record the standards of our society. In the midst of an appeal to believe in a fiction, we are unexpectedly faced with the role of texts that help make the world around us.

As is made clear by the inclusion of "Rip Van Winkle," part of conceit of *The Sketch Book* is that Crayon is documenting oral histories and folk customs for a reading audience. The presence of footnotes, addenda, and postscripts furnish the text with the markers of a reading object, which distinguishes it from a transcript of storytelling. This is especially true in the moments when Crayon references earlier sketches or reflects on the differences between his original notes and the finished product that is presented to the reader. Crayon includes a reflection on his writing process following the conclusion of the "Rural Funerals" sketch:

> In writing the preceding article, it was not intended to give a full detail of the funeral customs of the English peasantry, but merely to furnish a few hints and quotations illustrative of particular rites, to be appended, by way of note, to another paper, which has been withheld. The article swelled insensibly into its present form, and this is mentioned as an apology for so brief and casual a notice of these usages, after they have been amply and learnedly investigated in other works. (117)

From the start of the passage, it's apparent that the sketch is a textual object composed and prepared for a reader. Crayon reflects on "writing" and planning for the piece to be "appended" as a "note" to "another paper." All of these terms clarify the ways in which *The Sketch Book* projects an image of itself as reading material. Crayon's explanation that the sketch "swelled insensibly into its present form," and was therefore included as a separate piece rather than a footnote, breaks the fourth wall to welcome the reader into the writing and editing process. This gesture refutes the idea that *The Sketch Book* attempts to cultivate an unpolished or aural aesthetic.

In addition to his notes regarding the revision of various sketches, Crayon frequently describes the arrangement of writing within the book. He calls out pieces that come before or after others, explicitly cites his added commentary on certain tales, and indicates when later sketches will follow up on current scenes. At the end of "London Antiques" Crayon includes this note: "For the amusement of such as have been interested by the preceding sketch…I subjoin a modicum of local history, put into my hands by an odd looking old gentleman in a small brown wig and snuff colored coat…." (196).[11] These lines identify the spatial position of the appended text as "subjoin[ed]" to the "preceding" sketch and emphasize the materiality of the text by explaining how and by whom the manuscript was "put into [Crayon's] hands." The physical description of the "odd looking gentleman" identified as the author of the "local history" intensifies the material presence of the imagined text. The details of the "small brown wig" and "snuff colored coat" bring an image of the author and his associated manuscript more sharply into focus. The specificity of the scene helps to contain the reader within an extended fictional world, since even writing that is supposedly imported into *The Sketch Book* is a result of interventions made by our fictional narrator.

Crayon concludes his note on "London Antiques" by elaborating his efforts to authenticate the history he includes:

> On making proper inquiries, however, I have received the most satisfactory assurances of the author's probity; and, indeed, have been told that he is actually engaged in a full and particular account of the very interesting region in which he resides; *of which the following may be considered merely as a foretaste.* (196) (emphasis mine)

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[11] Here Irving reprises the trope of a found manuscript, echoing his famous frame tale for "Rip Van Winkle" in which the story is "found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker." Irving, *The Sketch Book*, 28.

These ending lines serve as the introduction for the next sketch, "Little Britain," attesting once more to Crayon's skilled assembly of the text. By referencing the preceding and ensuing sketches Crayon discloses his editorial position. He organizes the flow of information and sketches for the reader. Irving continues to place him in this role by utilizing footnotes in the following sketch. These footnotes function as a space for Crayon to deliver his commentary on the original text—a technique that successfully maintains the separation between our narrator and the "odd looking gentleman" who provided this "modicum of local history."

An asterisk at the end of the third paragraph cues readers to find Crayon's perspective at the bottom of the page. There he explains, "[i]t is evident that the author of this interesting communication has included in his title of Little Britain, many of those little lanes and courts that belong immediately to Cloth Fair" (198). Crayon distinguishes himself from the writer of the sketch both by calling out the author and subsequently clarifying the meaning of "his title." The second footnote similarly asserts Crayon's editorial position as he elects to include the lyrics to a bar song cited in the body of the prose. The reprinted lyrics considerably change the visual space of the page as Crayon's contribution reshapes the layout of the body text. His presence in the footnotes visually overwhelms the prose he's commenting on. Additionally, his clarification that the lyrics are "subjoin[ed] in [their] original orthography," and his final line, "I would observe that the whole club always joins in the chorus with a fearful thumping…and clattering of pewter pots" (202) situate Crayon in a position of authority equal to the sketch writer with regard to this scene. With this, the second footnote erodes the singularity of the sketch as a bit of expert history. "Little Britain" begins as a unique contribution to the volume but ultimately foregrounds Crayon's narrative intrusion through Irving's strategic use of footnotes.

Footnotes rely upon a skilled reading of the page as a visual text—readers must be trained to understand footnotes, and they are a feature of printed text not easily translated into or from oral storytelling. Irving transforms the role of the footnote from a means to offer supplementary commentary into a space that maintains our primary narrator's voice. In so doing he affirms his vision of the text as a reading object rather than "a series of sketches that one might come across as he casually flipped through the pages of an artist's sketch pad."[12] Such moments underscore the conceit of *The Sketch Book* as a work curated over time, after much reflection upon notes and experiences. Additionally, with Crayon's voice included in the footnotes, we see again how Irving skillfully contains any purportedly imported document within *The Sketch Book*'s fictional conceit. It is not enough to allow Crayon to introduce the text at the end of the previous section. Irving has our fictional narrator visually intrude upon the text to remind the reader that, in addition to meeting the writer of this sketch, Crayom has first-hand experience of the author's subject matter. This move creates the illusion of a world that is outside of Crayon's purview only to disrupt that notion by subordinating that world to the authority of our fictional narrator.

My attention to these visual and material texts within *The Sketch Book*—Knickerbocker's note, Irving's savvy footnotes, and Crayon's many references to his notes and descriptions of found manuscripts—signals this project's debt to history of the book methodologies. *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* explores the potential for a book history approach to guide interpretation of fictional scenes. Book history prioritizes the materiality of texts, and this focus has shaped my strategy of "reading for reading," which underwrites this

[12] Rubin-Dorsky, "The Value of Storytelling," 405.

project. By seeking out descriptions of material texts within fictional works, I find subtle and unexpected representations of characters engaging with textual objects in ways that more expansively theorize the category of reading. As we have just seen, the act of reading is essential to Crayon's inclusion of "Little Britain" as well as the more famous examples of "Rip Van Winkle" and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." By describing a set of papers passing through Crayon's hands, we can appreciate our narrator in the role of literary archivist and publisher as well as editor. We can imagine him reading, evaluating, and ultimately electing to publish these manuscript sketches. But what about the sketches Crayon writes himself? How does reading effect his perception and description of scenes from his travels?

Across *The Sketch Book* Crayon perceives the reality he moves through as an extension of the imagined scenes he reads about in literature. In truth, he is not the only character whose reading effects his experience of reality. We might think here of the way Ichabod Crane views his natural surroundings through the lens of Cotton Mather's *History of New England Witchcraft* (276); or the parson in "Christmas Day," referred to as a "black-letter hunter" (173), who "pored over" old volumes "so intensely that they seemed to have been reflected into his countenance" (174). In each case, reading and, at times, even the material features of a text establish the principles by which a character experiences and interprets the world around them.

Reading as Perceiving

Geoffrey Crayon openly questions the effect of reading in "The Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap." In response to being "completely lost in the madcap revelry of the Boar's Head Tavern" while re-reading *Henry IV*, he muses: "so vividly and naturally are these scenes of humor

depicted, and with such force and consistency are the characters sustained, that they become mingled up in the mind with the facts and personages of real life" (92). This description of imagined and real personae feeling equally alive in the mind of a reader will no doubt be familiar to anyone who has developed an empathic connection with a character. Yet, while the mingling of fiction and reality begins in the mind, for Crayon, the interspersions do not end there. He hedges for a moment, admitting that "few readers" understand that the characters they encounter are "all idol creations of a poet's brain, and that, in sober truth, no such knot of merry roysters ever enlivened the dull neighborhood of Eastcheap" (92). These characters did not roam the streets of Eastcheap, Crayon chides, but he immediately undercuts this point by confessing how he loves "to give [himself] up to the illusions of poetry" (92). The sketch then transitions to an account of his search for the storied Boar's Head Tavern wherein we see our narrator pursuing the very kind of relation to literature that he previously rebuked. He allows himself the pleasure of experiencing the world around him as an afterlife of Shakespeare's scenes. I say allow here because Crayon admits, "I love to *give myself up* to the illusions," (emphasis mine) acknowledging his agency in skewing his own perception. This resets his description of real and imagined personae "mingling" in one's mind by moving from an inadvertent confusion of real and represented scenes to an active declaration that he will enjoy the world through the impossible lens of fiction.

With his copy of *Henry IV* still open, the thought of a pilgrimage to the Boar's Head Tavern "suddenly [strikes] him" (92). Crayon elects to seek out opportunites for material connection with the world of his reading and hopes he "may light upon some legendary traces of Dame Quickly and her guests." He assures himself of the "kindred pleasure" that awaits as he

"[treads] the halls once vocal with [the merry roysters] mirth" (92). The willful rejection of truth on display here is equal parts playful, infuriating, and devastating as it reveals how Crayon's pursuit of pleasure licenses him to move through an imagined version of Eastcheap. Irving presents us with a narrator who does not fear the hypocrisy of choosing to believe he can engage with the relics of a literary world that "in sober truth" does not exist, even after reporting how few readers understand the difference between such representations and reality. Moreover, Crayon's description of moving through a space that once echoed the clamor of his beloved characters adds depth to his illusion by activating a sense of our bodies in the space of the halls as well as our sense of hearing, tuned to a supposed memory of mirthful sounds. As a result of his reading, Crayon perceives sights and sounds that never were.

The account of his arrival in Eastcheap portrays a traveler coming to grips with a neighborhood's change over time, rather than a reader trying to layer a fictional scene onto a real location. A feeling of wistfulness marks his language:

> Alas! how sadly is the scene changed since the roarings [sic] days of Falstaff and old Stowe! The madcap royster has given place to the plodding tradesman; the clattering of pots and the sounds of 'harpe and sawtrie,' to the din of carts and the accursed dinging of the dustman's bell[.] (93)

Here, again, he invokes space and sound to compare the real and imagined scenes. Crayon notes how the "madcap royster" has been displaced by the "plodding tradesman," describing trade, one feature of a modernized economy, as a change of bodies in space. The sounds of the street also index Eastcheap's modernization as the scene of "convivial doings" has transformed into a thoroughfare for travel and garbage collection. While the technique of sensory description repeats Crayon's earlier gesture, in this case it is nearly perverse since our narrator admits his

account of Falstaff's Eastcheap is sourced from "old Stowe"—the writer John Stow who published his first edition of *A Survey of London* in 1598. Immediately prior to Crayon's lament of the changes he observes, he includes a long quotation from that text, setting the terms of his evaluation for the scene that surrounds him. The layers of texts mediating Crayon's experience of the present-day Eastcheap is confounding. Our narrator appears uninterested in distinguishing the historical from the fictional when it comes to his reading and allows both to freely inform his perception as well as his verbal description of the scene.

As he searches in vain for the Boar's Head Tavern, Crayon acquaints himself with a few residents of Eastcheap who appear happy to abate his curiosity for neighborhood lore. Eventually he follows a sexton to "The Mason's Arms," a tavern near to the location of the imagined Boar's Head, wherein he enlists the landlady of the tavern to indulge his delusion. It is here that we see Crayon working to make his present reality conform to expectations shaped by his reading. Upon meeting the landlady Crayon explains, "Dame Honeyball was a likely, plump, bustling little woman, and no bad substitute for that paragon of hostesses, Dame Quickly" (97). Throughout the description of his journey through Eastcheap he refers to Dame Quickly in relation to the Boar's Head Tavern. He even asks one area resident if she can tell him anything about the hostess, so when he meets Dame Honeyball and judges her a sufficient "substitute," it is as if Crayon views her as a surrogate for the fictional character.

This willingness to perceive a new acquaintance as an imagined persona is amplified by Crayon's interaction with the objects Dame Honeyball retrieves from "the archives of her house." Included in the collection is a tobacco box with a picture of the band of revelers in front of the Boar's Head Tavern with Prince Hal and Falstaff identified by their names within the illustration.

As he delights in the image from the tobacco box cover, Dame Honeyball hands Crayon a "drinking-cup or goblet" (98) to look over. She apparently regales him with the cup's legacy as a drink receptacle for the band of clergy that used to meet in the tavern, though the only part of her speech Crayon reports to the reader is that she terms the cup "antyke" (98). Contemplating this new object, Crayon explains:

> The great importance attached to this memento of ancient revelry by modern churchwardens, at first puzzled me; but there is nothing sharpens the apprehension so much as antiquarian research; for I immediately perceived that this could be no other than the identical 'parcel-gilt goblet' on which Falstaff made his loving, but faithless vow to Dame Quickly; and which would, of course, be treasured up with care among the regalia of her domains, as a testimony of that solemn contract. (98)

Admitting he is first at a loss for what to make of this goblet, Crayon follows his usual procedure for making sense of the world around him: he searches for a literary referent that can explain the significance of the object before him. The time spent thinking and recalling scenes from his mental archive of literary texts is occluded by the anachronism "immediately." We know from the phrase "at first" that Crayon did *not* immediately apprehend the meaning of this goblet, and it is in this gap between befuddlement and certainty ("this could be no other") that our narrator's prior reading again influences his perception of reality. Faced with a new acquaintance, an unfamiliar object, or an unintelligible scene of activity Crayon's recourse is to make the world before him conform to the terms set by the texts he has read. By the end of the sketch Crayon abandons any trace of acknowledgement that he is willingly participating in a fantasy. He justifies his bad reading of Eastcheap by explaining that "the neighbors, one and all…believe that Falstaff and his merry crew actually lived and revelled there" (98). Having found a community that

shares his misperception Crayon is no longer "giving himself up" to an illusion but instead sits comfortably in his belief that fiction can explain reality.

The choice to move through the world following a set of terms acquired through reading—seeking imagined places and relics of fictional persons—is amusingly absurd when Crayon bumbles through a series of encounters with locals who seem happy to indulge his fandom. But if we linger over the implications of Crayon's lighthearted romp, the danger of being able to choose your own reality punctures the charm of the scene. Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (1605) is a clear referent for this sketch, and later, in "The Angler," Crayon recalls the character of Don Quixote. Literary critic Jeffrey Scraba has artfully traced Irving's debt to Cervantes in his analysis of the quixotic irony on display in *A History of New York* (1809). As small part of his larger framework Scraba provocatively claims that, "[l]ike Don Quixote, Knickerbocker…tries to interpret the world through the language and conventions of these texts, and thereby exposes problems with the world and with representation."[13] This is precisely what we see Crayon doing in "The Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap." In light of Scraba's claims about Knickerbocker, we can see how *The Sketch Book* extends Irving's interrogation of the limits and pitfalls of textual representation. Yet, in this case, the problems inherent in the disjuncture between reality and representation are multiplied by the narrator's stated preference for perceiving reality through the world of literature. Rather than being unable to discern where fictional representation begins and ends like Don Quixote or Diedreich Knickerbocker, Geoffrey Crayon actively chooses to blur the boundary between the two.

[13] Scraba, "Quixotic History and Cultural Memory," 401.

In my archival research on Washington Irving's life and works, I've found an inversely related conflation of fiction and reality across several accounts of the writer's Hudson Valley residence, Sunnyside.[14] In magazine accounts from visitors, reviews of the grounds and buildings in architecture publications, and descriptions of Sunnyside in collections of writing on nineteenth-century authors' homes, there is—over and over again—a similarly willful conflation of Irving's fiction with his real, observable home. In his preface to *The Classic Grounds of American Authors: Irving* (1864) a study that includes photographs of the structures and landscaping of Sunnyside, George Rockwood explains:

> Washington Irving, prized by the readers of almost every language in the world, whose works have immortalized him, and who is especially dear to every American heart, lived in a spot as dreamy, sunny, and poetical as were all the beautiful creations of his pen. […]
>
> All around him he made legendary and classic grounds of the young Western World, which must so remain until its history falls into forgetfulness, and even then the beauties bestowed by the bountiful hand of Nature must compel worship.
>
> "*Sleepy Hollow;"* the "Bridge over the Pocanteco;" "The Old Mill'" "The old Dutch Church;"—but why enumerate? They are mingled with the youth-inspired hours of all the younger ones. […]
>
> He drew Promethean fire with which to make pictures to please our hearts; then why should we apologize for finding pleasure in using the light of heaven to illustrate some of the spots which he has immortalized? (n.p.)

In the same way that Geoffrey Crayon moves through England, working to make the world around him conform to the fictional representations he's previously read, those who wrote about Sunnyside, including professional critics, frequently move from describing details of the landscaping and structures they observed to recalling scenes from Irving's fiction, and then, back again.

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[14] My thanks to Michael Cohen for the suggestion to look into Sunnyside and nineteenth-century author tourism.

Elaborating on this phenomenon, contemporary critic Andrew Sweeting argues in *Reading Houses and Building Books* (1996): "[l]ike a work of fiction, Sunnyside told a story, a narrative of a bygone era. More important, the house presented a picture of mystery, a window into an architectural past that was recounted with the same rhetorical strategies found in *The Sketch Book*."[15] Identifying Irving as the artful instigator of these conflations, Sweeting considers Sunnyside "a useable literary and historical past that existed outside the commercial present" and "when viewed in the context of Irving's literary output, […]the supreme artistic achievement of his later years."[16] Sweeting's analysis supports my reading of Irving as a canny manipulator of perception through the figure of Geoffrey Crayon, his own self-fashioning as a professional author, and perhaps, even in his homeownership. Yet, there are other ways in which Irving's residence and his fiction have been historically conflated that exist squarely outside Irving's sphere of control.

The Land of Sleepy Hollow and the Home of Washington Irving (1887) is a particular historical volume that crystalizes this melding of fiction and reality in both its content and material features. This work, published by the Knickerbocker Press imprint of G.P. Putnam's Sons combines an edition of Irving's "Legend of Sleepy Hollow" illustrated by F.O.C. Darley, selections from "Woolfert's Roost" (also illustrated by Darley), and a series of photogravure images of Sunnyside and the Hudson Valley produced by J.L. Williams for the purpose of

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[15] Andrew Sweeting, *Reading Houses and Building Books: Andrew Jackson Downing and the Architecture of Popular Antebellum Literature, 1835–1855* (Lebanon NH: University of New England Press, 1996), 88.

[16] Ibid., 135–138.

illustrating his original essay on Washington Irving. The page-text and Darley illustrations were printed on a letterpress and according Lauren Hewes, curator of graphic arts at the American Antiquarian Society, Williams's photogravure illustrations would have required a separate, intaglio printing process.[17] Looking at the book, one can see the plate marks that register this distinction. On some of the pages, it's clear that two plates have been printed together. The captions for Williams's illustrations (which are done in an antique, handwritten style) would have been engraved in the same photo-mechanical copper plates that contained the images. This fine press edition presents a mingling of printing processes—a mixture of old and new techniques—reflecting the vogue for experimentation and letterpress editions in the 1880s. Moreover, the photogravure illustrations are printed in a sepia tone, adding to a sense of their "antique" style, even though they were produced by the most technologically advanced processes of anything in the book.

[17] Lauren Hewes, Personal Interview, 25 July 2017.

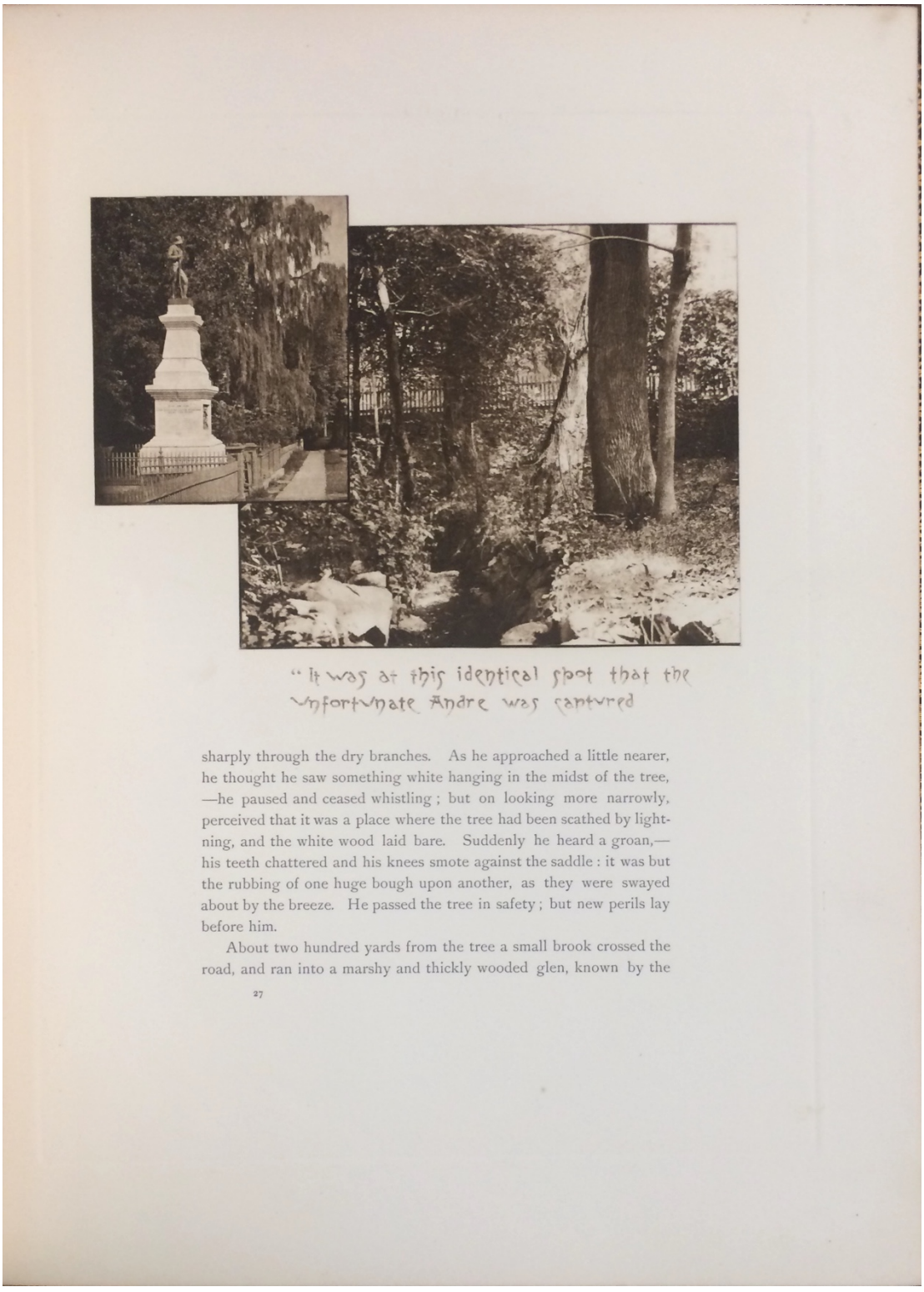

Figure 1.1 Detail of *The Land of Sleepy Hollow and the Home of Washington Irving* (1887) *Image courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.*

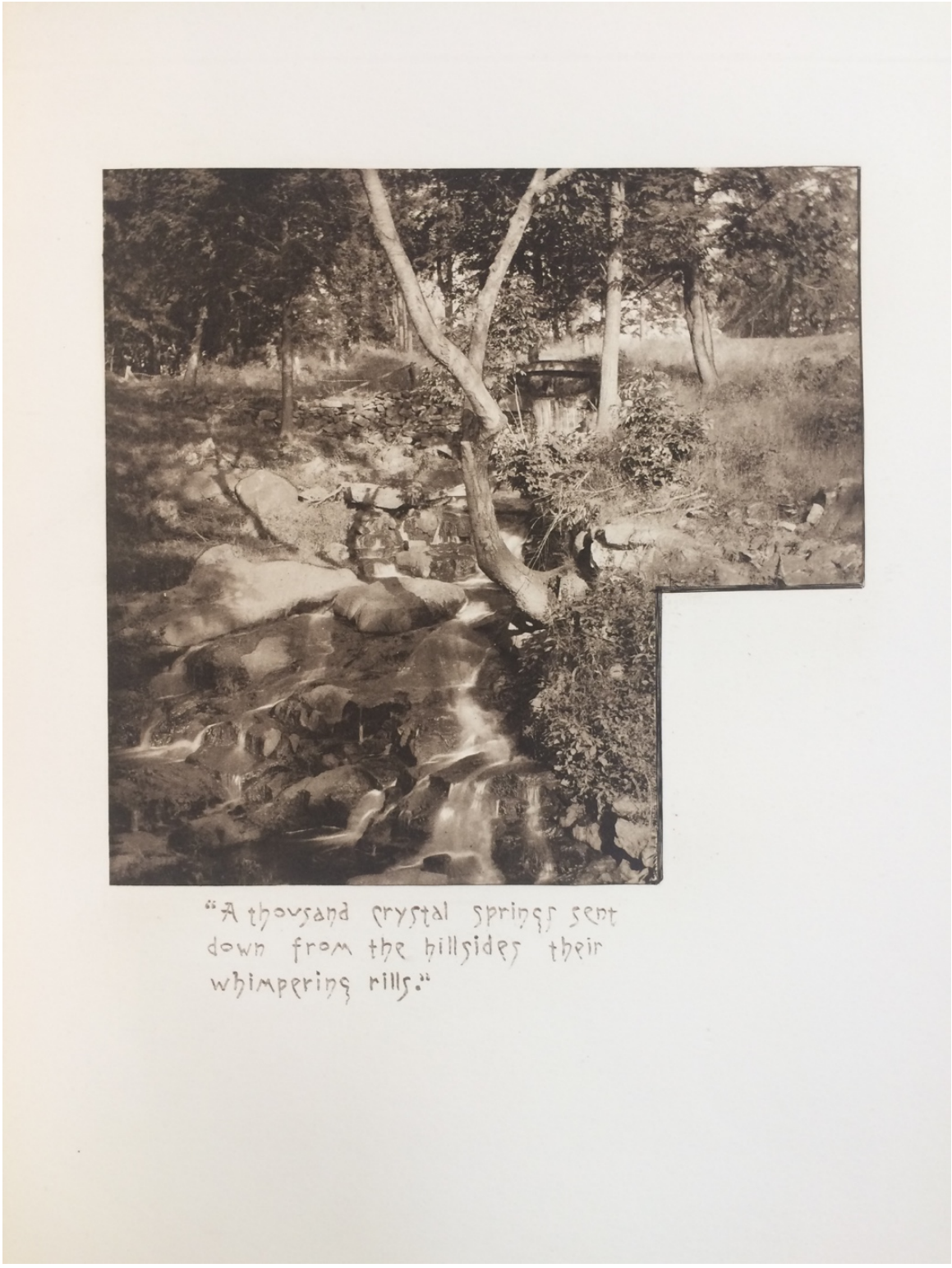

Figure 1.2 Detail of *The Land of Sleepy Hollow and the Home of Washington Irving* (1887)
Image courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

The material features of this late 1880s publication reflexively theorize Irving's own blending of real and imagined landscapes. The combination of printing techniques, the mingling of photorealistic and picturesque aesthetics, and the collected fictional and nonfictional writing create an assemblage of visual and textual information for readers of *The Land of Sleepy Hollow and the Home of Washington Irving*. The process of disentangling the various threads of this text mirrors the process readers participate in when they decipher Crayon's descriptions of real and imagined scenes throughout *The Sketch-Book*. This confusion of representation and reality is literalized in the photogravure captions that J. L. Williams includes, which are sometimes factual descriptions of the image on the page and sometimes unattributed lines from Irving's writing. This unique volume helpfully extends the chapter's consideration of Irving's theory of reading as an activity that alters perception to a wider array of nineteenth-century cultural productions by and in honor of him.

The Art of Remaking Books

Returning to the text of *The Sketch-Book*, "The Art of Book-Making" records Crayon's observations as he stumbles upon a group of "studious personages poring intently over dusty volumes" in the British Library (61). He comes to find out that these men are authors and then presents an extended meditation on the repurposing of previously forgotten works for the consumption of the reading public. Though initially skeptical, our narrator rehabilitates the work of these writers by concluding that the acts he observes mirror the passing on of positive traits in nature, not unlike the distribution of seeds by birds or the revitalization of forests after a fire. By

drawing a connection between the "art of book-making" and these natural growth processes, Crayon reconfigures the procedure of cribbing material from one's reading as organic rather than intellectual or mercenary. He builds an analogy that equates this method of writing from reading with an evolutionary imperative, projecting the production and reception of literature onto an almost planetary scale.

Prior to all of these conclusions, however, we see Crayon in the midst of interpreting the scene of reading he observes. He follows what we now know to be his usual procedure of allowing his reading to inform his perception of the world around him. Upon entering the British Library Crayon sets the terms of his fantasy as he recounts the way the door opened for him just as "the portals of enchanted castles yield to the adventurous knight-errant" (61). Our narrator translates his experience of wandering through a library into a fiction that raises the stakes of his interloping to a chivalric quest. He then extends this fiction beyond his self-perception and onto the scene he observes, where authors are reading, taking notes, and calling up books as part of their writing process. Crayon explains the scene to himself in this way, not yet knowing where he is: "I had no longer a doubt that I had happened upon a body of magi, deeply engaged in the study of occult sciences. The scene reminded me of an old Arabian tale…" (62). Ignoring the context of the British Museum and the unlikely possibility of encountering a full room of occult practitioners, Crayon justifies his assumption with recourse to literature recalling a story of a philosopher imprisoned in an "enchanted library" who acquires knowledge of dark magic that eventually allowed him to "control the powers of nature" as a result of his reading practice (62). While reading provides the fictional philosopher with the power to control his surroundings, Crayon uses his knowledge of fictional scenes to control his perception of the world around him.

Acquiescing to reality, our narrator admits he was mistaken after he learns that the men he perceived as magi were, in fact, authors "in the very act of manufacturing books." With his perception of the scene corrected, Crayon describes one of the writers working in the reading room, who he finds "made more stir and show of business than any of the others" (62). He explains that the author in question could be observed, "taking a morsel out of one [text], a morsel out of another, 'line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little'" while "the content of his book seemed to be as heterogeneous as those of the witches' caldron in Macbeth…here a finger and there a thumb, toe of frog and blind-worm's sting, with his own gossip poured in like 'baboon's blood,' to make the medley 'slab and good'" (62–63). These lines from Crayon are built almost entirely from other textual sources, specifically Isaiah 28:10 and Shakespeare's *Macbeth.* While the quotation marks cue the reader to these citations, there is an unmistakable irony in deploying other writers' words to describe the author engaged in the very act of copying down text toward the goal of publishing a new work. Yet, as Crayon adheres to the terms of the compositional practice he observes, he becomes a productive participant in the world he describes.

Crayon's Close Reading

Retreating from his role as a direct observer of scenes, Crayon spends the bulk of "A Royal Poet" performing a biographical analysis of James I's poem "The Kingis Quair", which was composed while he was imprisoned in, what Crayon calls, the "The Keep" of Windsor Castle. From the very beginning of this sketch our narrator eagerly mingles references to his own

reading with the literary activities of James I and the centuries of historical and folkloric accounts of the monarch. One of the reasons Crayon is so taken with the Royal Poet is because the accounts of him produced by Scottish historians are "highly captivating, and [seem] rather the description of a hero of romance, than of a character in real history" (74). The fact that James I is a figure who limns the boundary between romance and history fits well with Crayon's penchant for perceiving the world through the lens of fiction. Yet, it is difficult to find anything that might resemble a "reality" in this sketch since it is predominantly and overtly concerned with representation. Throughout "A Royal Poet" Crayon posits a theory of literary texts as a means for the reader to gain direct access to a poet's feelings and experiences—a theory that is made absurd by the multiple degrees of mediation that are openly referenced in the sketch. Despite this, Crayon presses on by giving his assessment of the King and his poetic production, explaining that the ability to translate a personal experience into poetry heightens the worth of the written work. In his discussion of "The Kingis Quair" (called "The King's Quair" in the sketch) he remarks, "[w]hat gives [the "King's Quair"] peculiar value, is that it may be considered a transcript of the royal bard's true feelings, and the story of his real loves and fortunes" (75). This fantasy of unmitigated connection to the past wherein reading allows one to perfectly experience another person's feelings of love or loss conveys the principles that govern Crayon's interpretation of the poem.

"A Royal Poet" serves as a useful counterpoint to the other sketches under consideration in this chapter since instead of depicting a scene in which Crayon writes about his own reading or the reading he observes in his travels; this sketch delivers Crayon's commentary on a writer who produces a piece of writing that is, at least partially, about reading. We learn from both

Crayon's description and "The King's Quair" that James I begins the piece by describing a sleepless night spent reading Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. Crayon discusses the ways this reading influenced James I, though he punctuates his analysis of the poet's source texts with comments on the role of reading more generally.

In Crayon's close reading of James I's poem he posits that the environment of a poem's composition can infiltrate the poem itself. This theory is quickly incorporated into Crayon's practice of biographical reading such that "The King's Quair" serves as a one-to-one account of James's experience of captivity at the same time that it testifies to the creative influence that the space of James's imprisonment exerted upon his writing. Crayon explains:

> I have been particularly interested by those parts of the poem which breathe his immediate thoughts concerning his situation, or which are connected with the apartment in the tower. They have thus a personal and local charm, and are given with such circumstantial truth as to make the reader present with the captive in his prison, and the companion of his meditations. (76)

The idea that a reader could be transported into a scene a poet describes by way of a text that "breathes" with life attests to Crayon's steadfast belief in the representational power of literature. In this example, the reader becomes a "companion" to James in his prison. Reading the "The King's Quair" not only connects the reader to James I's experience, it brings him into the room.

The sketch turns again when Crayon notes that a poet is well-suited to captivity since, "it is the nature of the poet to become tender and imaginative in the loneliness of confinement" (77). Elaborating this claim Crayon explains that the poet possesses an imagination that is so "irrepressible, unconfinable, that when the real world is shut out, it can create a world for itself, and…conjure up glorious shapes and forms, and…make solitude populous, [irradiating] the gloom of the dungeon" (77). Besides recuperating imprisonment as a boon for creativity, these

lines describe the acts of world-making that poets and fiction writers undertake in order to produce their work. In this moment Crayon muses that James I possesses the ability to populate his empty chamber or brighten the darkness of his prison solely on the strength of his creative powers. What is fascinating about this brief conjecture is that it translates a poet or writer's ability to make a world in text into an ability to re-make the lived world around them.

To conclude, in *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* Washington Irving theorizes reading as a process that trains readers in the procedures of world-making. By repeatedly depicting Geoffrey Crayon in the process of contorting reality to fit the terms of the literary worlds he's encountered, Irving posits the effects of reading as outwardly realized—our perception of the world, rather than our sense of ourselves, is what changes when we read. In addition, Irving demonstrates that reading teaches us how to apprehend and work within a set of shifting terms around issues of representation and mediation. The boundary for what is inside or outside the world of a text is always in flux; understanding the relationship between the world of the text you're reading and the world outside that text is a negotiation we make every time we read. The scenes of reading in *The Sketch Book* provide a window into one text's declaration of that dividing line. At a certain point the gap between the world a text imagines and the world outside the text is supposed to disappear—things like news reports, contracts, or interview transcripts are meant to be a one-to-one textual representation of reality. Yet it is just as necessary to evaluate the gap between reality and representation in these contexts as it is while reading fiction.

Chapter 2

Revelations of Reading in *Wieland; or, The Transformation*

Perhaps more than any other novel in this study, Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland; or, The Transformation* (1798) attests to the ubiquity of nineteenth-century American writers' attention to the effects of reading in their fictions. I say this because voice and aurality could not be more central to a novel than they are to *Wieland*. As Christopher Looby has demonstrated, "the narrative [of *Wieland*]is produced by nothing but acts of speech, a sequence of utterances."[1] Mark Seltzer offers the related claim that, "the act of speech emerges, not merely as the container of events and revealer of character in the novel, but as its dominant and central action…."[2] This chapter does not dispute the centrality of voice and listening to *Wieland*, but it does find that even in a novel propelled by vocalizations, scenes of reading proliferate. It is true that voice, and specifically vocal deception, cultivates much of the dramatic tension in *Wieland*: the novel's villain, Francis Carwin, turns out to be a biloquist who infiltrates the Wieland family homestead and terrorizes several characters. But just as one might track the novel's progression through a

[1] Christopher Looby, "'The Very Act of Utterance': Law, Language, and Legitimation in Brown's *Wieland*," in *Voicing America: Language, Literary Form, and the Origins of the United States*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 149.

[2] Mark Seltzer, "Saying Makes it So: Language and Event in Brown's *Wieland*," *Early American Literature* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 83. For one of several other accounts of voice and utterance in *Wieland* see Eric A. Wolfe, "Ventriloquizing Nation: Voice, Identity, and Radical Democracy in Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*," *American Literature* 78, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 431–457.

series of duplicitous speech acts, one might almost as easily describe the novel's plot as a series of encounters between characters and texts.[3]

To briefly sketch the novel's intricate and circuitous plot, *Wieland* is conceived as an epistolary novel in which Clara Wieland writes an over-long letter to a friend in an attempt to explain the uncanny series of events that led to the devastating demise of her family. She begins by recounting her father's youth in Europe and the religious conversion that precipitated his immigration to Pennsylvania. After discussing his initial efforts to convert Native Americans to his self-authored religion, Clara moves on to her memories of family life as a young child. In this portion of the narrative she discusses her father's fanatical religious practices and his eventual death as a result of spontaneous combustion, experienced during a time of religious worship. Clara's narration then transitions to the more immediate past, describing the idyllic life she shared with her brother Theodore, his wife Catherine, and their children, on the family's Mettingen estate, with frequent visits from Catherine's neighboring brother and Clara's courtier, Henry Pleyel. The foursome engages with enlightenment philosophy, classical literature, and much merry-making until Wieland, Pleyel, and Clara begin to hear (individually) voices around the family estate.

At about this time, the group meets the stranger Francis Carwin, who intrigues them with his charm and interest in the group. Yet, their kinship ties begin to unravel as the voices

[3] Seltzer briefly suggests this possibility in his discussion of the book as "the dominant figure within the novel" where he lists several incidences of book handing, reading, writing, and corresponding in *Wieland*. He concludes, "The major 'actions' of the novel involve reading, writing, and spoken narration, and actual events which do occur are always distanced through (written or spoken) discourse." Seltzer, "Saying Makes it So," 88.

intervene in their collective lives. Eventually, Clara finds her sister-in-law's murdered body in the house one evening. Her brother, Wieland, arrives and threatens her own life, making reference to the voices he hears. He flees, without harming Clara, who later learns by reading a transcript of Wieland's trial that he is the one who murdered Catherine and their children. Carwin reveals to Clara that he is a ventriloquist and bears responsibility for many of the voices the group was hearing around Mettingen, though he assures her that his voice was not the one her brother claims to have heard telling him to kill his family. This confession comes after Pleyel learns Carwin has a criminal past and fled from Europe on account of this. Wieland returns, escaped from prison, and set on killing Clara, but Carwin is able to save her by using his ventriloquism to convince Wieland to leave. Wieland then takes his own life. Clara suffers her second nervous breakdown and, eventually, leaves for Europe with her uncle. She later reconciles with Pleyel and marries him.

From the first few pages to the end of the novel, scenes of reading appear at moments of high tension and in the everyday descriptions of the life of the second-generation Wielands. In the first chapter, the elder Wieland's encounter with a Camisard text sets him down the path of religious conversion and evangelism in North America.[4] As the narrative moves forward to a description of the family's life in Pennsylvania we learn from Clara that her brother has a strong affection for Cicero and spends much of his time comparing translations with the aim of "restoring the purity of the text." Clara explains, "…he collected all the editions and

[4] Throughout the chapter I will refer to Clara and Theodore Wieland's father as "the elder Wieland." For clarity, "Wieland" will refer to Theodore.

commentaries that could be procured, and employed months of severe study in exploring and comparing them. He never betrayed more satisfaction than when he made a discovery of this kind."[5] In a later Ciceronian textual debate with Pleyel, the pair decides that the only way to settle their differences is by an "appeal to the volume" (27). Clara soon describes another item from her brother's book collection—a newly acquired volume of German plays that facilitates a failed meeting between Pleyel, Wieland, Clara, and Catherine. In addition to the German volume, there is a letter from Major Stuart, which interrupts Wieland's efforts to settle his debate with Pleyel, and when it is later mislaid leads to the first act of Carwin's ventriloquism. Later in the novel, Pleyel reads a newspaper story exposing Carwin as an escaped convict. In chapter XV there is a letter from Carwin to Clara that is reprinted for the reader, and finally, we have the court transcript that Clara reads to learn the truth about her brother. I rehearse this rather long list of examples to make the case that reading is central to the machinations of *Wieland.* While I enjoy the slight perversity of writing a chapter about reading focused on a novel so well known for its use of voice, my hope is that by drawing attention to the number of pivotal scenes that foreground the process of reading, I will assure readers that this exploration is not an aimless one.

[5] Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland and Memoirs of Carwin the Biloquist*, ed. Bryan Waterman (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011), 22. All further citations for *Wieland* will refer to this edition and will be made in-text.

Reading *Wieland*

Though the experience of reading *Wieland* is one that refuses closure and capitalizes on ambiguity, *within* the novel reading is frequently depicted as a process by which a text takes hold of a reader, redirects them, or registers in the feeling body. The novel sets an opposition between the immediate, revelatory capacity of reading and the vagaries of voice in order to theorize reading as a process with that activates the senses, resolves epistemological uncertainty, and repeatedly produces physiological effects in response to revelations of truth. As I will soon demonstrate, such a theory operates in contradistinction to experience of reading the novel itself. In a recent essay, Thomas Koenigs argues that Charles Brockden Brown uses the explicit fictionality of *Wieland* to help "educate not by example, but through the reader's participation in the suppositional exercises inherent in reading fiction."[6] Koenigs finds that Brown believes in the potential for fiction to instruct by encouraging readers to simultaneously hold "various hypotheses about the action" and "speculate about but [be] unable to know motives, or how characters will behave in future scenes." Koenigs surmises that such intellectual exercises "would be supremely exportable to the decisions of republican political life."[7] I am quite convinced by Koenigs's discussion of the didactic project that Brown sets up for readers of the novel. Instead of contesting those claims, this chapter inquires why it may be that the uses for reading *Wieland* seem to differ so strikingly from the uses for reading *in Wieland*.

[6] Thomas Koenigs, "'Whatever May Be the Merit of my Book as a Fiction': *Wieland*'s Instructional Fictionality," *ELH* 79, no. 3 (Fall 2012): 716.

[7] Ibid., 738.

By reflecting on the value of Brown's didactic project for enfranchised citizens, Koenigs joins an influential cohort of Americanist critics who frame the study of reading in terms of its potential to affect political engagement. I find this to be a fascinating and seductive move, but the more I consider the reading on display in fiction in relation to our theorizations of how reading works in this period, the less convinced I am that theories of reading in the American context should be beholden to the project of participatory democracy.[8] Brown's novel offers several fruitful counternarratives for the modes and uses for reading; for one, his characters seem unable to engage in the kind of possibilitisic thinking that Koenigs argues the novel itself invites. Whereas *Wieland* the novel confronts readers with their "ultimate inability to determine motives or causes with certainty," asking them to suspend the content of the novel in their minds—holding on to it for deliberative purposes. Within the fiction, texts take hold of and move through bodies; they overwhelm the senses and disable their readers. I see the disjuncture between the mode of possibilistic thinking that reading *Wieland* invites and the embodied,

[8] Debates about the role of reading in a participatory democracy remain charged in light of our current media and political climate. For a recent article that links the problem of "fake news" to its 18th- and 19th-century antecedents see: Nina Agrawal, "Where fake news came from—and why some readers believe it," *LA Times*, Dec. 20, 2016. http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-fake-news-guide-2016-story.html. For additional studies on the immutability of belief in relation to reading see: Adam J. Berinsky, "Rumors and Health Care Reform: Experiments in Political Misinformation," *British Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 2 (2017): 241–62. http://web.mit.edu/berinsky/www/files/healthrumors.pdf and Daniel T. Gilber, Romin W. Tafarodi, and Patrick S. Malone, "You can't not believe everything you read," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 65, no. 2 (August 1993): 221–233.

affective, and revelatory experience that results from reading *in Wieland* as a mandate to investigate Brown's theorization of reading in the novel.

Objects of Chance Reading

In several of the novel's scenes characters ascribe a peculiar quality to the circumstances of their reading. It is as if some combination of happenstance and providential intervention has led them to notice and read a text that then impresses a new understanding of divinity, personal history, or series of events upon their minds. This pattern of chance reading begins early in the novel with the story of the elder Wieland's religious radicalization, which results from an accidental reading encounter. Clara tells the story of her father's conversion by emphasizing his unlikely engagement with the Camisard book that eventually supplies his religious worldview.[9] She explains that before the moment of his first reading in the text, he had "entertained no relish for books, and was wholly unconscious of any power they possessed to delight or instruct" (8). Clara's description clarifies her father's disinterested relationship to texts and reading while locating the "power to delight or instruct" squarely within the books themselves. By describing

[9] The OED defines Camisard as "Name given to the Calvinist insurgents of the Cevennes, during the persecution which followed the revocation of the edict of Nantes." *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "camisard, camisar (n.)," accessed February 25, 2018, http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2817/view/Entry/26712?redirectedFrom=camisard.

In a footnote for his edition of *Wieland*, Bryan Waterman explains that Camisards were "an apocalyptic Protestant sect that arose in the Languedoc region 500 years after the Albigensian heresy. In the early eighteenth century, they revolted against the French monarch after decades of anti-Protestant persecution. Some leaders fled to London in 1706, where they became known as 'the French prophet' and sought converts by preaching while in ecstatic trances." Brown, *Wieland*, 10.

her father as "unconscious" of their potential for entertainment or education, Clara suggests that books, under the right conditions, possess the power to bring people into conscious awareness of their value. But Clara completely elides reading—arguably the activity required to bring a person into a relationship with a book's content—from her description of what happens between her father and his religious text. Thus, through Clara's narration, the novel's first account of the relationship between people and books is one in which the book-object operates, seemingly through an agency of its own, upon the mind.

Despite the elder Wieland's original lack of interest in reading, Clara explains that there was a prehistory to his relationship with the content of this book. We learn her father had lived for years in physical proximity to this text and had, at times, engaged in physical confrontations with it. Clara recounts, "this volume had lain for years in a corner of his garret" and "he had marked it as it lay; had thrown it, as his occasions required, from one spot to another; but had felt no inclination to examine its contents, or even to inquire what was the subject of which it treated" (9). In her explanation of the scene Clara notes that the elder Wieland was in a physical relationship with this book long before he ever read it. He "marks" it, tosses it around as "occasions required", and lives alongside it for years. There is an intimacy to this arrangement brought on by longtime awareness and physical proximity, yet as Clara explains, her father "felt no inclination to examine its contents" or even discover the book's topic. In the description of this prehistory, the absence of any interest in reading underscores the text's status as an object; and the grammatical construction of these sentences similarly reflects this point. In these lines, the book is the object that the elder Wieland (as the subject) sees, throws, moves, and ignores; but, this soon begins to shift.

Clara explains that one afternoon the elder Wieland's "eye was attracted by a page of this book, which, by some accident, had been opened and placed full in his view. […] His eyes were not confined to his work, but occasionally wandering, lighted at length upon the page" (10). Across these two sentences the open page of the book hovers between subject and object positions. First the page is able to exert some power over the elder Wieland as Clara explains his "eye was attracted *by* a page of this book" (emphasis added), but this quickly shifts again as we read that his "eyes...lighted at length upon the page." There is a flicker of agency apparent in Clara's description of the book, one that attributes the elder Wieland's newfound interest in reading to the object itself. While it's reasonable to claim that the act of reading might easily beget more reading, in this description the page seems endowed with an ability to attract Wieland to it. Clara continues, "the words 'Seek and ye shall find,' were those that first offered themselves to his notice." This description at once confirms and confounds the claim that reader and book have reversed their object and subject positions since the words on the page "offer" themselves not to Wieland, but to his "notice." The instability in the relationship between book and reader, the question of who has power over whom, fits with the novel's larger scheme of indeterminacy. The truth of whether the elder Wieland or the Camisard book is in control of this scene remains unclear to readers of *Wieland*, but the outcome of that reading, once undertaken, is unmistakable.

After the words "seek and ye shall find" "offer themselves to his notice" Wieland finishes mending a garment, picks up the book and starts reading the first page. Once he begins he finds that, "[t]he further he read, the more inducement he found to continue" (10). Again, it's difficult to determine precisely the source of this "inducement"—does the act of reading incite the

inducement or does the book-object somehow induce him on its own? These opening pages depict a thorny relationship between reader and text that undercuts the stability of subject and object relations, while the result of this interaction (Wieland's religious conversion) suggests the eventual transmission of the book's information is surprisingly straightforward. From this brief and initial account, the reader of *Wieland* is faced with the suggestion that books can act upon their readers as much they rely on a person's act of reading to illuminate their content. Challenging a theory of reading as a means of cultivating subjectivity, Clara explains how her father's state of mind going into the experience largely determined the effect of his reading. She notes, "[h]is mind was in a state peculiarly fitted for the reception of devotional sentiments. The craving which had haunted him was now supplied with an object. His mind was at no loss for a theme of meditation" (10). The relationship between the mind and a book has been reversed in the span of a few sentences. Originally framing books as "possessing the power to delight or instruct," Clara now asserts that her father's mental predisposition was what allowed for this religious text to take hold of him, opening the possibility that his mind's "craving" drew this information to him. Foreshadowing later scenes, contemplation and interpretation are absent from both accounts of the elder Wieland's reading. Clara's description of her father's reading conveys a theory of reading as information acquisition. Reading does not change the elder Wieland's mind, it fills a gap and sets him in motion. As Clara's narration catches up to the time immediately preceding the events of the novel, the subject and object relations stabilize and reading asserts its determining potential.

Wieland's Resonances with Bibliomancy

This initial scene of the elder Wieland's engagement with the Camisard text recalls the practice of bibliomancy, a procedure in which a person opens a Bible at random, reads the first verse that catches their eye, and attempts to draw meaning from this line in answer to a question or conflict they are facing. Bibliomancy was widely practiced in seventeenth century England and remained recognizable into the early 20th century despite religious prohibitions against the practice dating back to St. Augustine. In his article "Books as Totems in Seventeenth Century England and New England" David Cressy makes the case that bibliomancy or *sortes Biblicae* (literally "Bible lots" as in drawing lots from lines in the Bible) attests to people's belief in the power of the Bible as an object rather than a collection of teachings. He notes how, for many, meaning was derived from "verses culled quite separately from their scriptural context" which served as "a guiding message…like a voice from heaven or a *deus ex machina*."[10] The practice of bibliomancy derives from even older practices of *sortes Virgilinae* and *sortes Homericae* in which people seeking answers who open *The Aeneid* or *The Iliad* at random to divine the correct course of action.

Bibliomancy, as described by Cressy, often settles a debate, and frequently prompts action—believers choose to move to New England, deliver a prophecy to King Charles I, or publicize a prediction for the future as a result of bibliomantic encounters. The case of the elder Wieland's reading of the Camisard text partially conforms to the expectations of bibliomancy, especially given with the circumstances of his initial encounter with the text, but there are several

[10] David Cressy, "Books as Totems in Seventeenth-Century England and New England," *Journal of Library History* 21, no. 1 (1986): 100.

significant deviations from the pattern scholars recognize. Unlike the traditional practice, which posits a degree of intention behind the person seeking a message from the text, the words on the page appear to attract the elder Wieland's attention on their own. The book lies open on the floor without any exertion of effort from the elder Wieland's and the words on the page catch his eye as he is looking, distractedly, around the room.

There is a distinct parallel to bibliomancy in Clara's specification that "seek and ye shall find" were the words that "first offered themselves to his notice." The primacy placed on the phrase or verse that is immediately apprehended when the Bible is first opened is a consistent feature across accounts of bibliomancy. Yet what follows diverges from the traditional practice. The fact that this book becomes, for the elder Wieland, a sacred text whereby he constructs the theory for his singular religion reinforces a key tenet of bibliomancy and divination through the *Aeneid* or the *Iliad* before it. Yet the novel reverses the process of engaging a sacred text in search of answers since the scene does not begin with the elder Wieland applying any special significance to the book before it attracts his eye. Instead the experience of reading elevates the text to its sacred status. This extends the confusion of the power dynamic between book and reader since it is through the force of the book, rather than the believer, that the chance reading appears to gain its power. Again complicating the straightforward dynamic of bibliomancy, the elder Wieland's initial reading encounter prompts his conversion, harkening back to St. Augustine, but offers no sense of resolution. Instead this brief moment of reading prompts a scene of feverish reading and subsequent religious fervor.

Whereas believers practiced bibliomancy as a discrete event—posing a question or worry to the Bible and opening the book to receive an answer—the elder Wieland's glancing attention

to the Camisard text unfurls into a scene of vigorous reading curtailed by only the "decline of light." Rather than depicting a scene in which reading is deployed to determine an outcome, in this scene, reading *is* the outcome. An intensive, self-directed reading program follows from the elder Wieland's initial interest in the book. We learn he spent his evenings and all hours on Sunday intensely studying the Camisard text. Eventually (the text is not clear on this timeline) the elder Wieland procures a Bible as he feels the necessity of tracing his text's citations to their original source. Clara embeds a critique of his subsequent interpretative practice as she describes the events that followed:

> His understanding had received a particular direction. All his reveries were fashioned in the same mould. His progress towards the formation of his creed was rapid. Every fact and sentiment in this book were viewed through a medium which the writings of the Camissard apostle had suggested. His constructions of the text were hasty, and formed on a narrow scale. Every thing was viewed in a disconnected position. (10)

From Clara's vantage point as a secular, enlightened reader, her father's absolute adherence to the teachings of this text, and in particular his rapid, uncritical adoption of its tenets gives cause for disapproval. Moreover, his decision to filter his entire perception of the world and its meanings through a single text is incompatible with Clara, and her brother's, considered and comparative engagement with texts. For the elder Wieland, the Camisard book is singularly informative and above reproach, for Wieland and Clara, the activity of reading proceeds from an understanding of competing interpretations and a lack of textual fixity.

The novel's account of the elder Wieland's religious conversion and subsequent self-authored religion is a keen example of how the activity of reading convenes textual authority and facilitates world-making. The elder Wieland's reverence for the truth and power of the Camisard text is entirely self-imposed. Indeed, the only explanation that Brown gives for the elder

Wieland's conversion is that this particular text took hold of his mind and supplied a worldview in the absence of any previously held beliefs. There is absolutely a divide between the second generation's secular, and, importantly, social reading practices compared to the elder Wieland's singular, devotional, and obsessive reading, which results in a personal theology that leaves everyone else outside of it. For the second generation of Wielands, reading appears to function as a means to gain information and intervene in moments of epistemological uncertainty, but this is different than with the elder Wieland, for whom reading has ontological implications. The idea of religious conversion as a consequence of solitary reading of a non-sacred text problematizes the conceit of reading as a secular, enlightened, and rational practice.

Pleyel's Account of Reading

In Chapter XIV, Pleyel recounts the events of the previous day in an extended monologue to Clara, wherein he explains his whereabouts and reasons for missing the rehearsal for the play Theodore Wieland had hoped to perform from his new German book. As part of this speech, Pleyel explains his suspicions about Clara and Carwin engaging in a possible sexual encounter (or as he terms it "clandestine correspondence"), and he reveals that he has learned Carwin is an escaped convict from Newgate prison in Dublin. Pleyel discovers this information as part of the novel's second episode of chance reading. While describing the events that precipitated this unintentional scene of reading, Pleyel insists that everything from the location of his reading (Mrs. Baynton's parlor) to the section of the newspaper he glances at, came together without strategy or intention on his part. He begins by admitting, "I can assign no reason for calling at

Mrs. Baynton's. I had seen her in the morning, and knew her to be well" (99). Nevertheless, he finds himself riding toward her house, entering the parlor, and throwing himself into a chair. Pleyel notes that his "whole frame was overpowered by dreary and comfortless sensations" linking his narration of the events with his physical rather than mental state (99). In the absence of any reason for pursuing this course of events, Pleyel cues the reader to the power of the body to compel action. He continues:

> "Some instinct induced me to lay my hand upon a newspaper. I had perused all the general intelligence it contained in the morning, and at the same spot. The act was rather mechanical than voluntary.
>
> I threw a languid glance at the first column that presented itself. The first words which I read, began with the offer of a reward of three hundred guineas for the apprehension of a convict under sentence of death, who had escaped from Newgate prison in Dublin. Good heaven! how every fibre of my frame tingled when I proceeded to read that the name of the criminal was Francis Carwin!" (99)

This is the second time that a character has been "induced" to read in as part of a seemingly chance encounter with a text. At the opening of the novel, Clara describes her father's abrupt transition to religious zealotry and insatiable reading as resulting from his surprising inducement to read on after picking up a book that lay open to the words "Seek and ye shall fine." These examples form the beginning of a pattern for how Brown presents reading in the course of *Wieland.* Far from the mode of active participation that Koenigs theorizes for the reader of *Wieland*, the readers *in Wieland* come to reading accidentally, and without thinking. Yet, as Pleyel describes how "every fibre of [his] frame tingled when [he] proceeded to read that the name of the criminal was Francis Carwin" he foreshadows Clara's dramatic physiological reaction to her own scene of revelatory reading in Chapter XIX. Reading in this scene, as in so many others throughout the novel, is inextricably linked to the feeling body.

As part of his narration, Pleyel notes that he had already read the portion of the newspaper that he now instinctively laid his hands on. He specifies that his act of re-reading was "rather mechanical than voluntary." Such a dichotomy of mechanical versus voluntary reading throws into question Pleyel's agency with regard to his consumption of this text. His term "mechanical" suggests that a kind of preordained or paranatural force set his body in motion. If he is not choosing to read but rather reading by chance, or perhaps as a result of some bodily instinct or outside force, this mode of reading would foreclose the possibility of contributing to a process of self-integration or participation in "republican political life."[11] The absence of an active intellectual consideration of this text—exemplified by the comment that the "ideas [from the passage] flowed in upon my mind"—signals Pleyel's passive reception of information, and projects a distinctly different vision of reading than one that encourages skeptical consideration of competing hypotheses. As if to further deny this mode of reading, Pleyel summarizes his realizations about Carwin with two rhetorical questions regarding whether he should warn Clara about her associations with a criminal, he responds, "I had no need to deliberate." With this line, Pleyel directly opposes the process of considering multiple paths for his actions based on what he's read by reading. He denies any need to weigh possible outcomes or consider alternatives to confronting Clara directly.

I do not aim to critique Pleyel's actions or attribute anything like brashness to his character here; I am only interested in this scene as it portrays his actions and response to reading. Specifically, I am intrigued by the way the scene intervenes in the the novel's larger

[11] Koenigs, "Whatever May Be," 738.

investment in indeterminacy and denials of causation. Pleyel's account of his reading and subsequent actions is rare because of the absence of ambiguity. Yet his straightforward account of reading as causation echoes the elder Wieland's experience of reading the Camisard book and prefigures Clara's reaction to reading the transcript of her brother's trial. In that scene her reading causes her to faint, eliminating any agency in her response to reading while nevertheless assigning a definitive causality. Across the three examples, the time it takes for the reading to take effect is shortened significantly from one episode to the next. So, while readers of *Wieland* are tunneling further into the ambiguity and mystery of the novel, the characters in *Wieland* are experiencing the ever faster and more pronounced effects of their reading.

An Embodied Communications Circuit

The eventual course of Pleyel's actions turns out to be more circuitous than his initial declaration lets on. In his report to Clara, he discloses an important side trip, explaining:

> For a time, no other image [than speaking to you immediately] made its way to my understanding. At length, it occurred to me, that though the information I possessed was, in one sense, sufficient, yet if more could be obtained, more was desirable. This passage was copied from a British paper; part of it only, perhaps, was transcribed. The printer was in possession of the original. (100)

These lines represent a rare moment of reconsideration as Pleyel explores the limits of the passage he read by admitting there might be information available beyond the text he has in front of him. As part of pursuing this possibility, Pleyel's digression offers an informative account of eighteenth-century newspapers' reprinting practices, rich with details of transmission and a reference to transatlantic exchange. At every turn Brown—through Pleyel's account—reminds us

of the bodies involved in the production and circulation of textual media. Far from describing a frictionless transmission of news and information, *Wieland* takes time to note the materials, processes, contingencies, and human actors that convey the story of Carwin from one site of textual production to the next.

Pleyel's search for further information about the reprinted passage from the British newspaper takes him to several points along Robert Darnton's "communications circuit." In his landmark essay, "What is the history of books?," Darnton explains the "life cycle" of printed books as: "[a] circuit that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader. The reader completes the circuit, because he influences the author both before and after the act of composition."[12] Specifying the ways that readers' and producers' interactions with texts continually propel the circuit, Darnton continues: "…the circuit runs full circle. It transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again."[13]

[12] Robert Darnton, "What is the history of books?," *Daedalus* 111, no. 3 (1982): 67.

[13] Ibid.

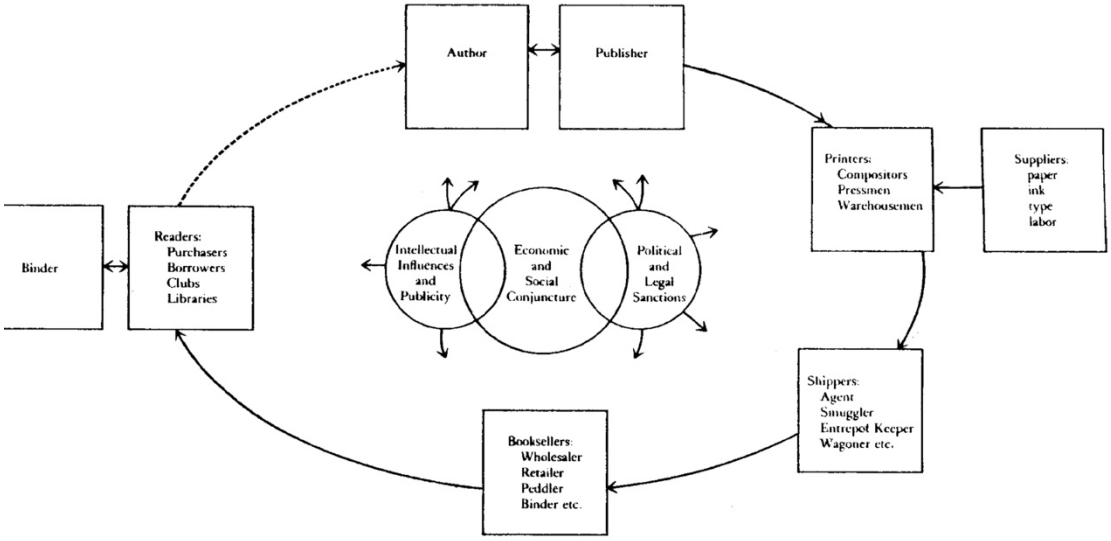

FIGURE 7.1 *The Communications Circuit*

Figure 2.1 Darnton's Communications Circuit (1982) [14]

Darnton's schematic has been foundational to the field of book history, and, though it is not a perfect analog for the life cycle of newspapers, the above diagram can also serve as a helpful illustration for the side trip that Pleyel takes to search for more information about the printed advertisement offering a reward for Carwin's arrest.

As Pleyel begins to retrace the stages of newspaper production and circulation, he first visits the home of his town's printer. Here, we can imagine Pleyel moving laterally across Darnton's circuit from his position as the reader to the newspaper printer's office. Perhaps disappointingly, we learn the printer did indeed publish all parts of the British clipping he received, but as Pleyel reads the original text of the advertisement, the printer "stood by [his] side...[and] noticed the object of which [he] was in search" (100). After observing Pleyel, the

[14] Ibid., 68.

printer explains that he only learned about the escaped criminal when "Mr. Hallet sent to me the paper, with a particular request to republish that advertisement" (100).[15] When he identifies Hallet as the person who supplied him with the copy of this British newspaper, the Pennsylvania printer implicates transatlantic shippers, British newspaper sellers, printers and publishers, and Mr. Hallet as both a reader and a kind of agent for the British paper, in a second communications circuit, operating in Britain, that produced the original text. Mr. Hallet, moving out from his role as reader, joins the British circuit with the Pennsylvania one by procuring the services of his local printer, who is also the town's newspaper editor and publisher.

Pleyel sets out to speak with Hallet after learning that he is the one who connected the printer with this information. In this second interview he discovers that the newspaper containing the information about Carwin's crimes had been enclosed in a letter to Hallet from a man named Ludloe, whom Carwin had robbed in Ireland. Hallet and Ludloe knew each other from Ludloe's time in America and, fortunately for the plot of this novel, the two kept up a correspondence after he moved to Ireland. As part of their meeting, Hallet puts the letter he received from Ludloe into Pleyel's hands "and pointed out the passages which related to Carwin" (100). With his trip to see the newspaper printer and this follow up visit to Hallet, who relays his correspondence with Ludloe, Pleyel traces a network of persons who embody the pathways of information exchange through their correspondence, conversation, newspaper sharing, and printing.

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[15] Interestingly, there is a distinct absence of the term "reading" across these scenes. Instead, characters refer to their engagement with texts by explaining that they, "found nothing more;" were "busy in perusing;" and "should never have met with [the strange affair]" if not for the content of a text.

In a novel that dramatizes the dizzying effects of disembodied voices, printed text—so often theorized in terms of depersonalized authority—is specified as a product of personal, embodied connections. There is a person involved at every stage of this content's journey from Dublin to Mrs. Baynton's parlor, and, through Pleyel's movement and interrogations, the novel clarifies for readers how the medium of print is not the agent of its own circulation. We meet the people responsible for conveying this information to the public. We read the stories of how they received the information that they then passed on. We understand the various technologies involved in the process. We learn that these personal interactions and their effects are felt across continents and within bodies Moreover, this series of scenes eliminates ambiguity, offering a rare moment of certainty in the novel. Pleyel is able to track down answers to his questions about communication in a way that readers of *Wieland* are not. Reading is central to his endeavor, but it does not produce moments that require skepticism or evaluation of possibilities. The interactions that Pleyel has as a result of his reading are in line with his experience of reading about Carwin in the first place—they offer up information that registers in his body and then leads him to act. But perhaps reading is aligned with more than simple information delivery.

In addition to personifying the nodes of the printed passage's communication circuit, the scenes of exchange Pleyel has with Hallet and the printer include details of embodiment and corporeality that specifically link print (as opposed to voice) to the body. The printer stands close to Pleyel as he reads, perhaps looking over his shoulder; Hallet places the letter from Ludloe into Pleyel's hands, pointing to the parts that concern Carwin. By bringing attention to the bodies of the people imagined in these scenes, their proximity to one another, their engagement with one another' these interactions recall Pleyel's earlier description of "how every fibre of [his] frame

tingled" as he read about Carwin's criminal history.

Clara's Material Reading

Wieland's conceit as an epistolary novel allows the narrator, Clara, to interject details of her writing process (especially interruptions to her writing at moments of high tension), occasional references to the materials she uses, as well as her acts of copying several texts into the account. These details ground the narration in its supposed moment of composition, a conceit that is extended by the note appended to the conclusion, which states it was written three years after the events of the novel. Yet Charles Brockden Brown also makes savvy use of formal conventions not associated with the epistolary novel, including his strategic use of chapter breaks. Chapter XIX is a keen example of this since it is entirely composed of Theodore Wieland's trial transcript and uses a chapter break to separate the transcript from the rest of the prose.[16] With this differentiation, there is no need for a more pronounced typographical distinction—the margins of the chapter remain consistent with Clara's narration, and there is no visual indication (such as a heading) that the prose is imported from an outside source.

In these details of textual representation, we see the novel staging its own negotiation with the material page in a move that mirrors Clara's attention to the materiality of various texts, including the court transcript that reveals her brother is the one who murdered his family. Clara

[16] Brown repeats this typographical gesture in chapter XXV where the final three paragraphs record Clara's internal quarreling over whether she should go on to narrate or "rescue this event from oblivion" (169) the scene of her brother's suicide. Once she decides she must tell her whole tale, her recollection of that event begins after a chapter break.

details how she "turned over the leaves" and later "withdrew my [sic] eyes from the page" as Mr. Cambridge came in to the room and then "pointed at the roll" (132–133). The physical presence of the papers reveals how a material text shifts the scene and Clara's understanding of her brother's actions. Operating almost as a temporal marker, this scene delineates the time of Clara's not knowing from the time of her full understanding that follows from her reading. In this case, as in several others, the act of reading becomes an instrument of revelation with effects that are felt in the body.

After the break between chapters XIX and XX, we find the most sustained and dramatic scene of reading in *Wieland*, wherein Clara describes abruptly stopping her reading of the "roll of papers" that contain the transcript of her brother's trial and subsequently fainting as a result of its revelations. Though she has been reading a record of spoken testimony and judicial utterances, Clara's narration insists upon the materiality of the account with her metonymic references to "the fatal paper". Her focus on the material text helps to construct a theory of reading as participatory engagement with a material object. She further articulates this theory with her embodied reaction to the material text recalling how "The paper dropped from my hand, and my eyes followed it. I shrunk back, as if to avoid some petrifying influence that approached me. My tongue was mute; all the functions of nature were at a stand, and I sunk upon the floor lifeless" (131). This portion of her narrative asks us to consider the ability of reading to render the mediating roles of paper and the act of transcription invisible even while the material page remains paramount.

When Clara describes cowering in front of the roll of papers we see that her act of reading has transformed the material record of her brother's testimony into a proxy for his violent acts

such that she reacts as if murder—not paper—is present in the room with her. Further, by refusing to abstract the words she reads from the pages that deliver them, Clara attributes the distress she feels to the "images impressed upon [her] mind by the fatal paper." Based on their physiological effect, it seems these images are of the murderous scenes described by her brother, not images of him giving testimony in court, or images of the letterforms impressed upon the page. In Clara's telling, the act of reading transports her beyond the space of the judicial proceedings to the space of her family's untimely demise. Her description of cowering in front of the papers, backing away from them, and being unable to look at them, further erases the mediating work of the paper and the act of textual transcription. To think of the revelation these papers offer is to think through the invisibility of the courtroom and the ability of the material text to remediate a violent scene, recounted orally, at a temporal distance. Despite Clara's references to the physical presence of the transcript, the papers have come to stand in for the violent acts perpetrated by her brother rather than the material record of his testimony. The revelation of the murders occludes the scene the papers record.

In his chapter on *Arthur Mervyn* (1799) from *The Letters of the Republic* (1990) Michael Warner argues that Charles Brockden Brown invests in the idea of public disclosure as a civic virtue. Moreover, he finds that the novel constructs an identification of the public with the legitimate. He elaborates this theory by stating:

> For Mervyn, being the novel's hero entails the adoption of disclosure as a principle of conduct…disclosing information, making things public, is understood as ensuring a civic source of validity. For that reason the strategy of disclosure in this novel can be taken as a

> fantasy-equivalent of the act of publication, even when no thematic connection with writing occurs.[17]

The same strategies of publicity that Warner investigates in *Arthur Mervyn* have their antecedents in *Wieland*, wherein the novel's pattern of revelatory reading repeatedly discloses crucial information via engagements with texts. Indeed, Warner acknowledges one connection between the two novels when he briefly mentions Brown's "fantasy of publication that carries the full authority of the law," underscoring the importance of the court transcript in resolving the mystery of who killed Theodore Wieland's family. Warner writes how in *Wieland* a "conflict of personality structures finds [sic] resolution in a fantasy of disclosur [with] a key role…played by the transcript of a courtroom trial…."[18] To expand on Warner's observation, the disclosure of Wieland's horrific acts via Clara's reading extends the novel's investments in reading as an activity that is felt in the body while resolving epistemological uncertainties.

The document Clara reads is a transcript taken down in a court of law—it is the material record of a legal proceeding. The very act of transcription in this context seeks to stabilize the oral accounts delivered to a judge. A court transcript provides an opportunity to return to and reflect upon spoken verdicts and testimony, it seeks to eliminate (however imperfectly this is accomplished) questions of "what happened?" in the span of a hearing. Clara receives the transcript—the roll of papers—from Mr. Cambridge, who is, himself, a stabilizing force in the novel. Cambridge provides a connection to a severely disrupted family genealogy since he is

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[17] Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), 166.

[18] Ibid., 169.

Clara and Theodore's uncle from their mother's side. His primary role in the novel is to serve as an advocate for Clara's safety, composure, and eventual departure to France. As part of this, he decides to trust her with the truth of her brother's crimes by delivering these papers to her. Clara remarks how Cambridge came to her aid after she fainted from the stress of Wieland's escape from prison, noting: "His skill as a reasoned man as well as a physician, was exerted to obviate the injurious effects of this disclosure; but he had wrongly estimated the strength of my body or of my mind. This new shock brought me once more to the brink of the grave…" (131). Despite causing physical distress, Cambridge's efforts to full inform Clara about the actions of her brother resolves the murder mystery and legitimizes Clara: Cambridge comments that others have treated her as a child, but he believes she deserves to know the truth.

Brown's strategic representation of the trial transcript within the pages of the novel grants readers equal access to Wieland's confession, circumscribing Clara's unreliable narration at a dramatic highpoint. Though many scenes in *Wieland* describe the textual content a character is reading, chapter XIX is a rare example of Brown directly representing that text to the reader. By depicting the transcript, Brown enables readers to participate in a fantasy of privileged access to a textual object within the diegesis. Utilizing the figure of Clara's reading, Brown collapses the distance between the reader and the fictional world of *Wieland* as the physical pages of the novel work to connect the reader to a prop within the fictional scene. Perhaps the reader notices their own embodied reactions to the revelation of Wieland's guilt as they occupy a similar position as Clara reading the scroll of papers.

Conclusion

After recovering from the fainting spell and fever brought on by reading the trial transcript—Clara notes that, at the time, she "had discontinued the perusal of the paper in the midst of the narrative" and now "desired to peruse the remainder" since she had been restored from the papers' "death-dealing power" (131). Resolved to read on, she explains "I rose from my bed, and went to a drawer where my finer clothing used to be kept. I opened it, and this fatal paper saluted my sight. I snatched it involuntarily, and withdrew to a chair" (132). The location of the papers in the drawer reserved for her "finer clothing" carries with it a mild erotic charge. Clara grabs the papers "involuntarily," and it seems that, once again, a material text has drawn someone to it and registered a bodily effect. The lack of intention or evidence of intellectual consideration on Clara's part, recalls the scene of Pleyel's "mechanical re-reading" of the newspaper, which began when he "threw a languid glance" toward it, as well as the elder Wieland's "inducement" to read on in the Camisard text. In all, these moments of involuntary reading are a vital extension of Brown's representations of embodied, revelatory reading and a rebuke of the deliberate, speculative reading practices that the novel itself invites.

The relationship of reading to embodiment offers a through-line for charting the constellation of reading scenes throughout the novel. For the elder Wieland and Clara, textual objects register in, take hold of, and move through the feeling body. For Pleyel, the process of tracking down information about Carwin through reading leads him to situations of physical proximity with several people involved in the production and dissemination of a newspaper. The connections among Clara, her father, and Pleyel's scenes underscore the novel's theorization of reading as a process concerned with sensation rather than speculation. This emphasis evokes

Elizabeth Maddock Dillon's argument that shared sensory experiences, rather than the exchange of ideas, catalyze the formation of communities.

In her article "Atlantic Aesthesis: Books and *Sensus* Communis in the New World," Dillon, working through Kant's theory of the aesthetic, explains "sensus communis" as a collective understanding formed on the basis of a "shared sensation and, importantly, shared judgment regarding that sensation."[19] Under this rubric, she defines "aesthesis" as an ongoing process of meaning-making that results from communal, sensate experiences rather than top-down impositions of taste.[20] Her article compellingly rethinks tropes of nonwhite subjects' engagement with material texts in Early America to argue that physical and sensual experiences of books provide access to "transmissible meaning" that, once shared, brings people into community. Throughout, Dillon argues against the persistent misconception that only primitive or premodern individuals would prioritize the material experience of books.[21] By working outside the paradigm of textual engagement as language decoding, Dillon's essay offers a larger framework for understanding the embodied effects of reading that are on display throughout *Wieland*. And though she does not use the term reading to describe her subjects' sensual engagements with texts, I would.

Scenes of reading in *Wieland* challenge critics' assumptions that reading must always involve intellectual or deliberative efforts. They equally challenge us to revise the category of

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[19] Elizabeth Maddock Dillion, "Atlantic Aesthesis: Books and *Sensus Communis* in the New World," *Early American Literature* 51, no. 2 (2016): 367.

[20] Ibid., 369.

[21] Ibid., 380–381.

reading to include reflexive, sensory experiences brought on by material texts. When Clara Wieland recognizes the "death-dealing power" of the scroll of papers that made her faint, she acknowledges the force of that material text and aligns herself with Dillon's concept of aesthesis. But, we also know she was reading.

Chapter Three:

Reading for Social Connection in *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in Massachusetts*

This chapter collates representations of reading across a collection of Catharine Maria Sedgwick's works to argue that reading reveals and intervenes in social connections throughout her fiction. While Sedgwick's didactic writings envision a practice of reading that is skeptical and comparative, her fiction rarely, if ever, depicts readers engaging in this critical mode. Instead, Sedgwick uses reading to reveal, establish, and occasionally disrupt attachments among her characters and imagined readers. The majority of this chapter will elaborate this use for reading through the lens of *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in Massachusetts* (1827), but I will begin with Sedgwick's 1830 short story "Cacoethes Scribendi." Roughly translating to "Feverish Writing" the story places the acts of reading and writing at the center of a domestic conflict, overtly depicting the relationship between reading and social relations that is widely evidenced in Sedgwick's fictional works.

In the imaginary town of "H," the setting for "Cacoethes Scribendi," women live entirely among themselves. Their male counterparts, young and old, have all left to pursue their fortunes in livelier regions. Yet, the narrator of the story assures us, these widows and maidens live full lives in the absence of men. We learn that the women who are not busy with childrearing, chiefly occupy their time with reading, which in this context, has been evacuated of its traditional social consequence but none of its enjoyment: "the young ladies read their books with as much interest

as if they had lovers to discuss them with."[1] Sedgwick reifies this early association of reading with social connection when she describes a gift of a literary annual from Ralph Hepburn (the only eligible man in the vicinity) to his cousin, our protagonist, Alice Courland. The narrator explains: "[Ralph] had lately paid a visit to Boston. It was at the season of the periodical inundation of annuals. He brought two of the prettiest to Alice…Poor simple girl! She sat down to read them, as if an annual were meant to be read, and she was honestly interested and charmed."[2] That Alice misunderstands the role of the literary annual as an object for reading rather than a token of affection, marks her for a bit of ridicule from the narrator. When we think of reading as a conduit for affiliation, we see how a gift book could bypass any necessity to read its content since the act of gift-giving establishes the intended social connection. In the context of nineteenth-century consumers, gift books were markers of taste and status. They played a central part in the era's vogue for gift-giving. In *The Battle for Christmas* (1997) Stephen Nissenbaum argues that gift books were a new genre of publication invented as part of the expanding commercialization of Christmas. He claims, "[gift] books were the *very first* commercial products of any sort that were manufactured specifically, and solely, for the purpose of being given away by the purchaser."[3] Nissenbaum's analysis highlights the explicit role of exchange that publishers (and customers) envisioned for these book objects, bolstering the implication made by the narrator of

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[1] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, "Cacoethes Scribendi," in *Scribbling Women: Short Stories by 19th-Century Women Writers* ed. Elaine Showalter and Christopher Bigsby (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996), 4.

[2] Ibid., 7.

[3] Stephen Nissenbaum, *The Battle for Christmas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1996), 149.

"Cacoethes Scribendi" that *reading* a gift book is beside the point. Further describing the layered uses for these objects, Isabelle Lehuu contends, "the act of reading was intertwined with practices of gift giving, status striving, and even simple gazing."[4] As part of her discussion of Eliza Leslie's "The Souvenir" Lehuu foregrounds the role of the central gift book in the short story as it facilitates new social connections and deepens existing bonds. She notes how, as objects, gift books were seen "as the symbolic intermediary in the creation of personal bonds…[that] created a circle of sociability."[5] In "Cacoethes Scribendi" Alice's gift book performs the additional work of ushering in the central conflict of the tale.

Alice's mother, Mrs. Courland, follows her daughter's example and reads the annual in its entirety. From that fateful reading, Mrs. Courland "*felt a call*" to become an author. The narrator's characterization of Mrs. Courland is laden with irony and a sense of ambiguity. She describes Courland as having "imbibed a literary taste in Boston," and notes that she reads every word of the tony *North American Review*. We also learn that she had felt, for some time, a subtle pang "within her secret soul, that she herself might become an author."[6] The substance of the narrator's critique seems initially to rest on Mrs. Courland's method and practice of reading: Courland is too earnest, too eager. She shows her naiveté by savoring every word and every mark of punctuation in the Annual's compositions. The fact that Mrs. Courland is someone who misdirects her enthusiasm for reading toward unstylish content puts her among the good

[4] Isabelle Lehuu, *Carnival on the Page: Popular Print Media in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 78.

[5] Ibid., 82.

[6] Sedgwick, "Cacoethes Scribendi," 7–8.

company of Geoffrey Crayon; though her reading yields the inverse effect of his. While Crayon's reading propels him to willfully misperceive his reality so that it conforms to the outmoded literary representations he internalizes, in "Cacoethes Scribendi" Mrs. Courland's reading convinces her that every experience she has, every bit of information she possesses, must be converted into writing. Whereas Crayon makes the world around him conform to the texts he's read, Mrs. Courland converts the world around her into text for publication.

As the story progresses and Mrs. Courland's pursuit of authorship begins to reshape her social surroundings, she recruits her family circle into the practice of writing either by encouraging them to produce compositions of their own, or by treating them as subjects for hers. Her mother's slide into authorship unnerves and embarrasses Alice. As the desire to write overtakes the other women in the family, we learn that their outward appearances come to reflect the total consumption of their social and intellectual lives by their writing habit:

> Miss Sally's pen stood emblematically erect in her turban; Miss Ruth, in her haste, had overset her inkstand, and the drops were trickling down her white dressing, or, as she now called it, writing gown; and Miss Anne had a wild flower in her hand, as she hoped, of an undescribed species, which, in her joyful agitation, she most unluckily picked to pieces.[7]

The rise of their feverish writing severely diminishes the social lives of the Courland women, and consequently, the network of gossip that had been hosted previously by their parlor. The narrator explains that before the "literary fever" took hold, the Courland home had been "the general gathering place, a sort of village exchange, where all the innocent gossips, old and young, met

[7] Ibid., 14.

together."[8] As a result of their desire for publicity through writing, the Courland women alienate themselves from the town's traditional sphere of social exchange.

Her family's obsession with writing and publication strains Alice's social relations, too, since she is the thinly veiled–and profoundly reluctant–subject of so many of their pieces. By constructing an imagined version of Alice for public consumption, the aunts and her mother fracture the girl's actual social ties. Her friends wink and smile to each other; they call her names; and, we learn Alice has become "afraid to speak of a book… afraid to touch one." This stress on Alice's personal and textual entanglements registers the detrimental effects of her family's writing and the townpeople's reading of their compositions. In fact, Alice's fear of texts runs so deeply that "the last Waverly novel actually lay in the house a month before she opened it.[9]" With this detail Sedgwick's story tightly binds together writing, reading, and social relations as interpentrating concerns. The writing her family produces intervenes in both Alice's relish for books and her social existence. This triangulation encapsulates Sedgwick's theory of reading's power to reveal and disrupt social ties.

The conclusion to the tale and the cure for the Courland women's writing fever turns out to be Ralph Hepburn's declaration of his intent to marry Alice. He delivers this proposal in the form of an essay, which he composed under the guise of giving-in to Mrs. Courland's encouragement to write. She had been insisting that he, too, feel the thrill of authorship. Seizing the opportunity to reset the social balance of the family, Ralph turns to the acts of reading and

[8] Ibid., 12.

[9] Ibid.

composition in order to, once again, operate upon the story's web of familial and social relations. We learn:

> Mrs. Courland read and re-read the sentence. She dropped a tear on it. She forgot her literary aspirations for Ralph and Alice—forgot she was herself an author—forgot every thing but the mother; and rising, embraced them both as her dear children, and expressed, in her raised and moistened eye, consent to their union, which Ralph had dutifully and prettily asked in that short and true story of his love for his sweet cousin Alice.[10]

By ending with Ralph's marriage proposal and a brief acknowledgement that soon after "the village of H. was animated with the celebration of Alice's nuptials."[11] Sedgwick's short story performs, in miniature, the conversion of writing to reading to event and event to writing to reading that organizes the plot more generally.

Early on in "Cacoethes Scribendi" Alice and her mother discuss their preference for stories that end in happy marriages, and Sedgwick's tale ends in the same way as their favorite stories do. After all the drama between Alice and her mother has centered on the indiscriminant writing of essays and fiction, Sedgwick stacks additional layers of metafiction onto the story's theory of reading. The text's enfolded concerns regarding the antisocial effects of writing and the pitfalls of misreading are impossible to disentangle from their representation via the very mode of writing and publication the story purports to critique. "Cacoethes Scribendi" is, in the end, a published story, written by a woman, about a group of women's feverish compulsion to produce published writing. If the fact of the story's embeddedness in the publication culture that precipitates the conflict between Alice and her mother nullifies its critiques surrounding the

[10] Ibid., 15.

[11] Ibid., 16.

proper "use" of gift books, the aspirations of feverish writers, or the notoriety that accompanies writing for the public, then what can be retained from this work with regard to Sedgwick's theory of reading? "Cacoethes Scribendi" raises to the level of text that which is subtext in much of Sedgwick's published fiction: reading has a unique capacity to forge and reorganize social connections for good and for ill. This remains paramount in the unfolding drama of the tale, and, as we will see, across Sedgwick's writing.

Reading Connections in Hope Leslie

Three years earlier, in her novel *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick sketches a similar theory of reading focused on revealing relationships among characters through their myriad textual affiliations. *Hope Leslie* reflects Sedgwick's persistent practice of deploying reading to illustrate connections among readers, among texts, and among readers and texts within her fiction. The novel provides several examples of scenes in which reading enriches the author's strategies of characterization. Rather than utilizing the voice of the narrator to recount the developing relationships between characters, new information is frequently presented through the device of an interpolated letter or via depictions of social scenes of reading. Interactions with texts mediate the social and familial relationships central to the drama of the novel.

Since the recovery of Sedgwick as a preeminent nineteenth-century writer, critics have largely focused on the ways her corpus challenges prevailing theories of the American literary tradition. Sedgwick's career invites reconsiderations of the role of women's writing in the making of American literature; the supposed preoccupation of women's writing with domesticity and marriage; and the ascendance of the American romance in contradistinction to the British novel

of manners. Carolyn Karcher's description of *Hope Leslie* exemplifies this final claim as she explains Sedgwick's translation of the British novel for American audiences:

> Sedgwick's realistic rendition of New England character and manners Americanizes the British novel in a double sense. Not only does it illuminate the class mobility, religious fluidity, and democratizing tendency that set American society apart from old-world analogues, but it turns conventions that had previously served to reinforce class hierarchies into vehicles for inculcating republican virtue and nonsectarian Christian principles. […] Because of her commitment to accurate representation of her society, the novel of manners, as Sedgwick developed it, can also be seen as lying at the origins of American literary realism.[12]

Recovering Sedgwick's influence as an innovator of the form and genre of the novel helps prime scholars for insights related to her theorization of reading.

Historians of reading, including William Gilmore, Ronald J. Zboray, and Mary Saracino Zboray have documented the practices of social and communal reading prevalent during the mid-nineteenth-century. Within *Hope Leslie,* Sedgwick plainly depicts the kinds of communal reading practices and primacy of letter-writing that these histories reconstruct. In addition, I argue that the novel theorizes reading, the process of its own transmission, by interrogating the role of interpolated letters and textual referents in ways that dovetail with Julia Kristeva and Gérard Genette's concepts of intertextuality and hypertext. Throughout *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick emphasizes the potential for reading to place readers in relations with other readers as well as the sources, contexts, and allusive elements that help construct literary traditions. The remainder of the chapter links scenes of reading from *Hope Leslie* with selections from her instructional texts from the late 1830s. In these conduct manuals, Sedgwick promotes reading practices that

[12] Carolyn L. Karcher, "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History," in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives* ed. Lucinda L. Damon-Bach and Victoria Clements (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 7–8.

prioritize curiosity and knowledge expansion. By tracking the uses for reading in *Hope Leslie* alongside Sedgwick's instruction on the topic of reading, I interpret the author's representational practice through her stated didactic aims.

Connecting Rhetorically

The scenes of overt and implied reading interspersed throughout *Hope Leslie* undergird the novel's theory of reading as a means to orchestrate and reveal social connections. In the novel's formulation, reading doesn't just build relationships among people as a consequence of their social reading practices—the act of reading itself trains readers to imagine they are among a group of previous and potential readers. Sedgwick reinforces this notion through her narrator's habitual references to "our young readers." By rhetorically addressing a collective, the narrator of *Hope Leslie* invites the reader to consider her relationship to other members of the novel's audience—a relationship implied by the text's own references to the multiple imagined readers who are, supposedly, engaging the text in real-time.

In this way Sedgwick's novel illustrates Andrew Piper's provocative claim that reading socializes. In *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (2012), Piper considers the ways reading can engender affiliation. He writes, "[w]hen we read, we enter into a world of commonality, whether of language, story or material object."[13] Using the twenty-first century's preoccupation with tracking and metricizing social reading practices as his starting point, Piper reveals the persistence of reading as a tool for collective formation throughout history and

[13] Andrew Piper, *Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 84.

identifies the potential of reading to realize "the constitution of some 'us'."[14] When writing addresses itself to a collective "you" or "gentle readers" or "citizens" it projects a communal understanding. In *Hope Leslie*, Sedgwick's use of direct address constructs the novel's narrator as a confidante of her readers—a gesture that runs parallel to her project of demonstrating reading's power to forge connection. Moreover, the prevalence of direct address helps indicate Sedgwick's understanding of reading as an activity that reaches beyond the fictional world a novel constructs.

In addition to the narrator's comments, Sedgwick describes the historical sources that informed her writing directly to the reader. In the novel's preface she encourages readers to pursue new resonances drawn from their own associations of early American history with the story she tells and the historical documents she urges them to review. Throughout *Theories of Reading from Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* I track how nineteenth-century authors theorize the effects of reading as a world-making, in addition to self-making, process. Rather than taking effect solely in the minds of readers by helping formulate ideological positions or clarify self-understanding, nineteenth-century writers theorize reading as an activity that can be felt in the body, affect one's perception of the world around them, reveal the ideological instability of texts, and place readers in a networked relationship with other texts and readers. As a novel, *Hope Leslie* illustrates the world-making project embedded in Sedgwick's theory of networked reading through its content as well as its generic form.

The project of the novel is to insert the story of a willful female protagonist into a historical reimagining of Massachusetts Bay Colony amidst the social, religious, and political

[14] Ibid.

turbulence that followed the Pequot war (1636–1638). In her preface to the first edition Sedgwick's the third paragraph addresses the text's relationship to the "copious, and authentic" accounts that "our ancestors" left behind for future readers to understand the history of colonial settlement in New England. Explaining her familiarity with these documents, Sedgwick explains, "the only merit claimed by the present writer, is that of a patient investigation of all the materials that could be obtained. A full delineation of these times was not even attempted; but the main solicitude has been, to exclude everything decidedly inconsistent with them."[15] (3). By identifying herself as someone who has read all the available historical accounts, Sedgwick helps readers to imagine her investigating these textual sources. We can picture the author moving among several volumes, cross-referencing their content, and verifying the testimony they provide in order to "exclude" from the narrative whatever might be inconsistent with the consensus of her primary sources.

Developing Characters

The novel begins with the backstory of William Fletcher, the patriarch of the story's central family, who grew up in England and fell in love with a woman named Alice. Alice's father forbade her from marrying William because of his affiliation with John Winthrop's sect of Puritan reformers. Heartbroken, Fletcher emigrates to Massachusetts and marries an orphan woman named Martha; together they establish a homestead for their family, outside the town

[15] Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Hope Leslie; or, Early Times in the Massachusetts*, ed. Carolyn L. Karcher (New York: Penguin Group, 1998), 3. All other references to *Hope Leslie* will be made in-text and refer to this edition.

center of Plymouth Colony. After relaying this prologue, the narration returns to the present time of the novel and, in the first of many twists, Fletcher informs Martha that their family will take on the guardianship of his beloved Alice Leslie's recently orphaned daughters (Fletcher and Alice were distant relations, which prompts this arrangement). The two daughters are imminently arriving with their widowed aunt, Mrs. Grafton, and their tutor, Master Cradock. Because of the increased burden on the Fletcher family, Governor Winthrop sends two young native servants to help Martha Fletcher tend her homestead. The young natives are Magawisca and her brother, Oneco, who were captured with their mother in the course of the Pequot war. Since their mother's death in captivity, Magawisca and Oneco have lived as servants among the English settlers. They are described as being well cared for by the Fletchers, who incorporate both of them into the life of the family. Nevertheless, since they are living as captives away from their tribal lands and community, their father, the chief Mononotto, stages a raid on the Fletcher homestead while William Fletcher, Hope Leslie, and Dame Grafton are away in Boston. Martha Fletcher and her infant child are killed while Faith Leslie and Everell Fletcher are captured by the natives as retribution for the capture of Magawisca, Oneco, and their mother.

Though Mononotto plans to execute Everell to avenge the death of his first-born son, Magawisca intervenes at the pivotal moment and saves Everell though she suffers the amputation of her arm by her father's hatchet in the process (95–97). Everell is allowed to escape in recognition of Magawisca's sacrifice and familial attachment to him. Faith Leslie remains a captive among the Pequots, and Hope vows that she will find and free her sister. The novel jumps ahead seven years to a letter from Hope to Everell anticipating his return to Massachusetts after completing his education in England. The ship that brings him back also ferries Sir Philip

Gardiner and his page Rosilin (later revealed to be his spurned former lover Rosa). Gardiner is a political climber who gets involved in Governor Winthrop's attempts to smooth native-settler relations with many negative consequences. Around this same time, Hope Leslie receives word from the native elder Nelema that Magawisca has returned to the area with a message for Hope. The two arrange a moonlight meeting in a graveyard, and Magawisca explains that she is in contact with Hope's sister, Faith, and is willing to arrange a meeting between them.

Upon reuniting in secret, Hope is distraught to learn that her sister no longer speaks English, has fallen in love with, and married, Oneco, displays Catholic tendencies, and has no intention of returning to live among the English. Sir Philip Gardiner ambushes the group and captures Magawisca and Faith while Hope is taken away by Oneco, who believes she agreed to set this trap. Faith is returned to the native community, but Magawisca is sent to prison by Governor Winthrop. Hope uses her wit and cunning to get rowed back to Plymouth by an Italian sailor who mistakes her first, for the Virgin Mary, and then, for his patron saint. Determined to right Governor Winthrop and Sir Philip's wrongs, Hope orchestrates a jailbreak for Magawisca, who returns to her people with the blessing and well-wishes of Everell and Hope. In the midst of all this, Hope has been caught in a love triangle with Everell and Governor Winthrop's niece, Esther Downing, who, paragon of Christian virtue that she is, decides to sail to England so that Hope and Everell can be together. She writes them a letter saying as much and promises to return in a couple of years so there will be no hard feelings. The book closes noting that the fated romance of William and Alice found its manifestation in Hope and Everell. Esther is described, in the last lines of the novel, as one who:

> Illustrated a truth, which […] might save a vast deal of misery: that marriage is not *essential* to the contentment, the dignity, or the happiness of woman. Indeed, those who

> saw on how wide a sphere her kindness shone, how many were made better and happier by her disinterested devotion, might have rejoiced that she did not '*Give to a party what was meant for mankind*.' (370–371)

Throughout *Hope Leslie* Sedgwick utilizes scenes of reading as a strategy for character development and to illustrate the infinitely accessible network of readers and texts that one is connected to through reading. In the novel, Sedgwick primarily depicts her characters reading as a function of their epistolary correspondence. Through interpolated letters, readers of the novel learn about: Alice's father's severe rebuke of Puritanism, which leads to Alice and William Fletcher's broken engagement; Everell's growing attachment to Magawisca as a mentor and member of his family; Martha Fletcher's wish for her son pursue an education in England; hints of a nascent romance between Hope and Everell; the hoped-for union between Esther and Everell; and finally, Esther's decision to remove to England. By communicating these critical plot points and elements of characterization via the epistolary form, Sedgwick amplifies the role of reading as the process that animates her writing.

Reading Interpolated Letters

Not only is reading required to transmit Sedgwick's creative work to audiences, within the world of the text, it is a principal means of sharing critical information among characters. By adopting this experiment in form—combining elements of the Early American vogue for epistolary novels with the nineteenth-century novel of manners—Sedgwick distributes narrative authority to her characters while self-consciously denotating reading as the essential act of world-making that her fiction requires. As readers of the novel encounter these interpolated letters, they move into a subject position commensurate with a variety of the *Hope Leslie*'s characters. This

close, even identificatory, relationship recalls Elizabeth Hewitt's articulation of the personal letter as the "generic form that both describes and literalizes social relations."[16] In his seminal study, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (1993), Ronald Zboray posits a direct link between letter-writing and fiction reading as textual media conditioned for the outpouring of emotion:

> Insofar as the popular works of literature of the period resembled correspondence, they came to mean a great deal to their readers, for the personal letter had created an avenue of emotional release, a form of intimacy, in a society increasingly threatening the individual with isolation…The commonalities between the antebellum personal letter and the period's fiction thus suggest at least a mutual interaction if not a strong causal link….The personal letter and the novel represented points along a continuum of literary expression of emotion, from the concrete grounded in community and family life to the ideal portrayed in literature.[17]

Zboray goes on to explain the rise of letter-writing as an effect of industrialization. He posits that this phenomenon reflects a modern reformation of the self as something to be constructed through writing, and letters transmitted across great distances, in an attempt to simulate a premodern formation, in which the self is constituted through immersion in a community. With regard to *Hope Leslie*, I argue that Sedgwick's depiction of reading's ability to intervene in social relations signals her interest in preserving a similar sense of immersion in community through the activity of reading.

In an early interpolated letter from Mrs. Fletcher to her husband, Sedgwick delivers a two-part discussion of reading that ranges from a critique of Anglican worship to signifying the

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[16] Elizabeth Hewitt, *Correspondence and American Literature, 1770–1865* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 6.

[17] Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993), 118.

emerging bond between Everell and Magawisca. In both cases, the vignettes Mrs. Fletcher describes are social scenes in which two people's participation in the activity of reading characterizes the relationship between them. In the first, we see a playful antagonism that connects Everell to the cosmopolitan Martha Grafton. Everell makes a joke of Grafton's attachment to her Book of Common prayer by bringing the text to her during a moment of irrational fear wherein she was sure they all would be "the prey of the wild beast" since she had "heard the alarm yell of the savages" (31).

In her letter, Mrs. Fletcher explains to Mr. Fletcher, and readers of the novel, that "Everell brought her, her prayer-book, and affecting a well-seeming gravity, he begged her to look out the prayer for distressed women, in imminent danger of being scalped by North American Indians" (31). The humor here lies in the Fletchers' adherence to Puritan doctrine, which rejects the Anglican practice of reciting scripted prayers to intervene in worldly matters. Everell knows his mother is an audience for the prank and, as readers, we are aware of Martha Fletcher's disapproval of Grafton's attachment to the Book of Common prayer. She describes how Grafton "distracted with terror, seized the book, and turned over leaf after leaf." Casting her eye toward Everell, his mother notes he was "affecting to aid her search" (31). Though we ostensibly observe a woman in the act of reading a catechism, seeking a specific page that will connect her to God during a time of great distress, when described from Mrs. Fletcher's perspective, the act of reading appears desperate and foolish since there is of course no "prayer for distressed women, in imminent danger of being scalped by Native American Indians" (31). The scene of reading Martha relates helps describe the social relations among the family while delivering a critique of Grafton's Anglican spiritual practice. There is no sense here that Grafton's reading will take effect

in her mind or lead her to critical understanding. In fact, it seems quite the opposite. At this early moment, Sedgwick invites us to engage in an act of reading (the novel) about imagined reading (Mr. Fletcher's receipt of the letter) that describes ineffectual reading (Grafton's search through the Book of Common Prayer).

As Sedgwick depicts Grafton in the midst of a failed attempt to connect with God through reading, she incites readers of the novel to critique the frightened character's recourse to written, occasional prayers by utilizing her letter-writer's subject position. Martha Fletcher presents Grafton's plan to ask for God's protection by reading a pre-approved prayer as humorous, if not preposterous. She portrays Grafton ineffectually leafing through the Book of Common Prayer, unable to locate a section of her book that never existed. The amusement that belies this pitiful scene is enabled by the reader's own seamless reading of the novel. While aunt Grafton is described in frantic search of a missing prayer, Mr. Fletcher and the readers of *Hope Leslie* proceed through Mrs. Fletcher's letter with relative ease—for one, the text exists and is transparently represented on the page. Yet this is not where Martha Fletcher's letter ends her account of reading.

Following the Grafton anecdote, Martha sketches the relationship Magawisca and Everell have cultivated through reading:

> The boy doth greatly affect the company of the Pequod girl, Magawisca. If in his studies, he meets with any trait of heroism, (and with such, truly, her mind doth seem naturally to assimilate) he straightaway calleth, for her and rendereth it into English…She, in her turn, doth take much delight in describing to him the customs of her people, and relating their traditionary tales, which are like pictures, captivating to a youthful imagination. He hath taught her to read, and reads to her Spenser's rhymes, and many other books of the like kind; of which, I am sorry to say, Dame Grafton hath brought hither stores. (32)

Here, again, we see the act of reading shown as deeply social. In the context of the novel's structure, the scene of reading provides an opportunity for Sedgwick to deepen her characterization of Everell, Magawisca, and the bond emerging between them. Though we get only a partial description of the content the two are reading and relating to each other, the role of this scene (and certainly Martha Fletcher's account of it to her husband) is to inform readers of the strong ties between Everell and Magawisca. This sets the stage for Magawisca's later sacrifice of herself to save Everell. Sedgwick's commitment to the idea that reading facilitates social formation means that in the midst of reading, about reading, about reading, the important information that this scene provides is the revelation that Everell and Magawisca have become quite close and that they share an affinity with "trait[s] of heroism." Rather than assigning value to young people's reading as a project of self-understanding, Sedgwick envisions the efficacy of reading as the potential of putting one in a relationship with others. She advances another version of this project by utilizing the device of interpolated letters to foreground the ability of reading to enact our relationships to others.

Means and Ends and Intertextuality

In her essay "To 'Act' and 'Transact': *Redwood*'s Revisionary Heroines," Lucinda Damon-Bach argues "all of Sedgwick's later work, [including] *Redwood* schools its audience in the reading process—ultimately the process of interpretation and reinterpretation—encouraging readers to become participants in the creation of cultural meaning."[18] In Damon-Bach's view, the

[18] Lucinda Damon-Bach, "To 'Act' and 'Transact': *Redwood*'s Revisionary Heroines," in *Catharine Maria Sedgwick: Critical Perspectives*, ed. Lucinda L. Damon-Bach and Victoria Clements (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 58.

characters' evolution over the course of the novel and their process of "reinterpreting themselves" presents a model of reconsideration and interpretation that readers can absorb and make use of in their own lives. While this use for reading *Redwood* satisfies Sedgwick's interest in cultivating attention and skepticism in her readers, in her depictions of reading within *Hope Leslie*, we find that reading is put to a variety of purposes and most frequently represented in the service of intervening in social relations.

Sedgwick's theorizations of reading continue in her conduct manual *Means and Ends, or Self-Training* (1839). The book is addressed to young women, whom Sedgwick imagines as her independently-minded pupils. She sets out detailed lessons on everything from education, to etiquette, to securing employment. With regard to the didactic potential of reading, she cautions her students that "an author is but one witness, and often a very fallible one." (247–249). The solution she proposes to compensate for this is that readers must avail themselves of multiple sources on any subject. In her manual, she advocates for and thoroughly describes the inquisitive and skeptical reading practices she wants to cultivate, yet, as we have seen, she chooses not to represent her fictional characters adhering to this model.[19]

Chapter XVIII in *Means and Ends*, "What to read, and how to read," offers an unually direct description of an author's views on the uses and purpose of reading. Sedgwick argues that readers must be discerning in their choices of what to read, avoiding books that are "worthless,

[19] Similar to my reading of *Wieland* with regard to Thomas Koenigs's arguments about the didactic project Charles Brockden Brown sets up for readers of that novel, I find the experience of reading Sedgwick's imaginative writing is quite distinct from the relations between readers and texts that she depicts within the worlds of her fiction.

and unimproving."[20] The parameters of value here are expressly tied to intellectual improvement through exposure to new persons, ideas, and details. Later in the chapter Sedgwick describes her ideal scene of reading by explaining,

> When I see a girl lay aside a book she is reading, with evident interest, to look out in a biographical dictionary the name of a person she has just met for the first time, or take up her Atlas to trace a traveler's course; or her Classical Dictionary to explain some allusion, I am sure she is reading, not merely because she has nothing else to do, or for a transient pleasure, but to acquire knowledge.[21]

The vision of reading Sedgwick imagines here reflexively enacts the intertextuality that deeply informs nineteenth-century American fiction. Her description of a reader moving among an array of texts to supplement her engagement with a primary volume, animates the concept of intertextuality as a process that brings multiple contexts, intertexts, and resonances for a given work into a network that is partly instantiated by an author and partly by a reader, who supplies her own associations as additional context.

Sedgwick imagines a scene of reading that begets further reading to satisfy curiosity via textual investigation. The young woman she depicts is not a passive receptacle for literary content, but neither is she shown in the process of speculative interpretation prioritized by literary critics. Her reading does not exist solely as a process of the mind; it also takes effect in her body through her physical search for additional information by engaging with supplemental texts. With this vignette, Sedgwick theorizes reading as an activity that prompts movement and the tracking down of leads (reminiscent of Pleyel's efforts in *Wieland*).

Continuing the contrast between *Means and Ends* and *Hope Leslie*, there are several

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[20] Sedgwick, *Means and Ends,* 241.

[21] Ibid., 250.

places in the novel where, rather than privileging speculative thinking and deliberative interpretation, Sedgwick attempts to direct her readers' engagement through her intrusive narrator. Repeatedly, the novel's narratorial persona attempts to clarify or interpret a section of text that the reader has just worked through. Chapter IX of the first volume begins with the narrator explaining, "There are hints in Miss Leslie's letter to Everell Fletcher, that require some amplification to be quite intelligible to our readers" (119). This notion that the reader is in need of assistance from an omniscient voice subverts contemporary scholars' expectations for the uses of fiction. Catherine Gallagher and Thomas Koenigs have argued that the rise of fictionality as the dominant mode for long-form literary productions in the eighteenth-century trained readers in the process of speculative reasoning that is required for reading and enjoying fiction. The necessity of holding the multiple potential outcomes in one's mind while reading a work of fiction was then, according to Koenigs, useful for the practices of republican democracy.[22] The narrator's commentary continues. "[Hope] looked upon herself, as the unhappy, though innocent cause, of the old Indian woman's misfortune—and, rash as generous, she had resolved, if possible, to extricate her" (119). Our narrator proceeds to detail the protagonist's motives for transgressing Governor Winthrop's authority in order to free the falsely-accused Nelema.

Such explanatory narration short-circuits the reader's opportunity to surmise Hope's feelings and motivations, while the remainder of the chapter continues to foreclose the possibility of discerning the many options for Hope's self-justification by retelling of the events previously

[22] See Catherine Gallagher, "The Rise of Fictionality," in *The Novel, Volume One: History, Geography, and Culture*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), 344–45; Thomas Koenigs, "'Whatever May Be the Merit of my Book as a Fiction': *Wieland*'s Instructional Fictionality," *ELH* 79, no. 3 (2012): 715–745.

described in Hope's letter to Everell with explanatory glosses woven in.

In addition, while Sedgwick instructs her readers in the modes of interpretative and critical reading in the "How to Read" section of *Means and Ends*, elsewhere in that text she argues for the social value of reading, the palliative effects of reading, and the important role of devotional reading. Rather than continuing to highlight Sedgwick's contribution to debates about critical, interpretative reading, I'll return again to *Hope Leslie* to further illustrate Sedgwick's inventive representation of intertextuality.

In another instance of the letter-writing and reading that overtakes Sedgwick's third-person narration, Dame Grafton appends a note for Everell to Hope's correspondence in a bid to maintain her own ties to him, and to request a new shipment of brown silk from London. This layered correspondence—represented through typographical cues on the page—asks readers to move deeper into the world of the fiction via textual mediation. Reading a letter from one character to another, which is tacked on (and makes reference to) the end of a letter by a different character, all of which is framed by the narrator's direct address to an imagined group of external readers, involves a process of distinguishing among several diegetic levels that illustrate the world-making effects of fictional scenes of reading. Rather than immersing readers in the action and drama of a fictional world, *Hope Leslie*'s use of interpolated letters highlights the mediation of Sedgwick's text as characters describe the materials and processes of composing and exchanging letters that readers of the novel are invited to imagine.

In her depictions of layered textual representation, wherein the reader of the novel reads a letter, addressed to a character, that describes a series of characters in the midst of reading other texts, Sedgwick constructs a vertical representation of the networked reading she describes in

Means and Ends of Self-training. Instead of portraying a reader moving among a set of texts that help elucidate the original piece of content, Sedgwick creates artificial distance between her readers and the fictional scene through this conceit of multilayered textual mediation. The work of imagining books, described in letters, read by characters, represented in novels asks the reader to rotate the schematic Sedgwick describes in other venues so that instead of presenting the reader at the center of an activity that extends out to texts that are farther and farther removed from the original scene of reading, we now imagine the reader in the center, looking down through layers of mediations to find the core textual representation of the scene. By depicting texts in this vein, the novel proposes a networked theory of reading as a reflexive act that emphasizes outward-facing connections rather than a self-reflexivity that helps one to know their own mind.

Documenting History in *Hope Leslie*

Perhaps because she was helping to establish the field of American fiction, Sedgwick leaves nothing to chance when she addresses her readers in the preface to *Hope Leslie* explaining, "The following volumes are not offered to the public as being in any degree an historical narrative, or a relation of real events" (5). The forthright description of the novel's relation to prior events emphasizes the distance between the narrative and "real" history. Though the term fiction does not appear in the preface, we do read an account of Sedgwick's process, which is marked by "patient investigation of all the materials that could be obtained" regarding the first New England settlers (5). Describing her research and writing, Sedgwick plays backwards her idealized scene of reading from *Means and Ends*. She illustrates her strategy of gathering material

by reading prior to beginning to compose her fiction. Admitting the influence of historical texts at the outset helps implicitly justify the procedures for reading Sedgwick later advises in her conduct books. By referencing the embedded texts that helped constitute her historical novel, Sedgwick provides encouragement for readers to track down the references she makes or the events she obliquely mentions, assuring them that they will be rewarded in these efforts.

Characterizing the historical figures from which her story springs, Sedgwick describes the New England settlers as "learned and industrious men" and insists that "Those who have not paid much attention to the history character of these early settlements, if they choose to turn their attention to this interesting subject, will be surprised to find how clear, copious, and authentic are the accounts which our ancestors left behind them" (3). Reclaiming the literate origins of the Early America complements Sedgwick's aim to aid in establishing of a uniquely American literature in the nineteenth-century. As Caroline Karcher explains in her essay "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History," the initial sentence of Sedgwick's preface to her first novel *A New-England Tale; or, Sketches of New England Character and Manners* explicitly states that the author hopes "to add something to the scanty stock of native American literature."[23] For Karcher, Sedgwick's commitment to the formation of a nascent American literature helps to undo critical assumptions about a split between the British novel and the American romance as the defining feature of the emerging American literature from the nineteenth century.[24] She writes:

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[23] Karcher, "Catharine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History," 6.

[24] Richard Chase is the primogenitor of this theory of the American literary tradition. He makes his case in *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (1933) arguing that the innovation of nineteenth-century American writers was to reject the tradition of the British novel in favor of

> For Sedgwick…the project of Americanizing the novel and adapting it to the creation of a "native" literature distinct from British and European models does not involve transforming the novel into the romance; instead, it involves limning daily life in her own country with close attention to the values, mores, and social gradations that differentiate her compatriots from other peoples.[25]

From what we learn about Sedgwick's writing process in the prefaces to *A New England Tale* and *Hope Leslie*, much of the work that went into portraying the "values, mores, and social gradations" of the American people was active reading of historical accounts left behind by early generations of Anglo-settlers. Instead of transforming the genre, Sedgwick's work grafts the English novel of manners onto the textual legacy of early New England. In this way, the project of American literature is, for Sedgwick, a project of reading. Reading is her strategy for ensuring local and historical realism. Perhaps it is no surprise then that Karcher notes how the "social and political criticism [Sedgwick] weaves into all her works…dispels the belief that women confined themselves to writing about domestic matters, leaving the province of serious fiction to men."[26]

Sedgwick explicitly names her goal of prompting additional engagement with early Anglo-American historical sources in the concluding paragraph of her preface as she writes, "These volumes are so far from being intended as a substitute for genuine history, that the ambition of the writer would be fully gratified if, by this work, any of our young countrymen should be stimulated to investigate the early history of their native land" (4). The feedback loop

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the romance, which better reflected the limitless possibility and improbable founding of the new nation.

[25] Karcher, "Catherine Maria Sedgwick in Literary History," 6.

[26] Ibid., 7–8.

of investigating, writing, reading, and investigating further that Sedgwick sets up here proposes a theory of reading as a network for infinite connections.

Conclusion

Hope Leslie deploys one last interpolated letter to resolve the novel's love triangle. Throughout second half of the novel, Esther Downing and Hope Leslie have been entangled by their mutual affection for Everell Fletcher, and upon learning that Everell does not share romantic feelings for her, Esther takes matters into her own hands. To ensure the union of her friends, Esther writes a letter and boards a ship for London. She leaves specific instructions for reading the letter with her aunt, Mrs. Winthrop, who conveys Esther's designs to Everell and Hope. Mrs. Winthrop explains, "[t]his letter…is addressed to you both, and it was my niece's request that you should read it at the same time." Briefly foregrounding the materiality of the text, the narrator states that Everell "broke the seal" of the letter. The ensuing scene makes explicit the novel's link between the act of reading and the formation of social ties as Everell and Hope "read together, to the very last word" the missive that explains Esther's departure, her knowledge that the two are in love, and her hopes for their "immediate union, and worldly well-being." (368)

Catharine Maria Sedgwick is far from the only writer in this dissertation to explore the potential for reading to intervene in social relations. Though the next chapter will focus on the role of reading with regard to the ideologically changeable nature of texts, the ability of reading to reconstitute social ties, likewise, plays an essential—and literal—role in the resolution of William Wells Brown's novel *Clotel*. Brown utilizes a scene of reading to facilitate the reunification of one

of the novel's central couples after a separation of several years and their separate emigrations to Europe. George Green, the black male protagonist of the novel, decides to go on a walk one night while visiting Paris and spends some time reading his book in a nearby cemetery. He sees a woman, an older man, and a young boy approaching, when the sight of George appears to startle this woman. She recovers quickly and the group continues walking past George. Eventually he heads back to his hotel. The next day George receives a calling card requesting that he visit the home of the old man who had walked past him. It seems that George had mistakenly left his book on a bench in the cemetery. After recovering the volume, the old man found it had a card in it from George's nearby hotel. What would have otherwise been only a missed connection, thanks to reading and a material text, leads to the happy reconnection of George and his love, Mary—the veiled woman who had been walking alongside the older man.

Chapter Four

Reading Materially in *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*

The "Look" of *Clotel*

In Trish Loughran's account of nineteenth-century American print culture and nation building, she describes William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853), the first African American novel, in these terms:

> …*Clotel* does not **look** like any other novel of the 1850s—no matter who wrote it. Unlike someone like Phillis Wheatley (who took up, in her neoclassical lyrics, the most conventional and recognizable version of the form in which she chose to write), [William Wells] Brown refuses to let *Clotel* **look** like a novel.[1] (emphasis mine)

Loughran's choice to distinguish *Clotel* from other mid-nineteenth century novels by describing the "look" of the text—twice in the span of two sentences—speaks to the hypervisibility of the novel's formal experimentation. More than any other work in this study, *Clotel* teems with intertexts, citations, and recirculated print materials—every few pages the reader finds a visually distinct document or poem interspersed with the prose of the chapter. Loughran's description suggests that readers may first apprehend Brown's innovation to the novel as a form via the visual features of his text. In this chapter, I seek to ally my method of "reading for reading" with *Clotel*'s own emphasis on the materiality of texts at the center of several scenes of reading. For Brown, the act of reading continually gestures to the physical materials, processes, and products that make a text present in the world.

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[1] Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770–1870* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007), 406.

Scholars including Geoffrey Sanborn, Christopher Mulvey, Jennifer Schell, Ann duCille, Carla L. Peterson, Lara Langer Cohen, and others have demonstrated that, in addition to Brown's evident recirculation of texts, much of *Clotel*'s continuous prose contains unattributed and unmarked passages that have been stitched together from a surfeit of contemporary sources.[2] While I draw on the theories and arguments that resulted from the work of finding the sources for these unacknowledged, plagiarized passages—my focus is the recirculated texts that are highly visible across the pages of the novel, rather than the plagiarism embedded in the prose. Though these visually distinctive passages are also connected to Brown's omnivorous compositional style, there remains a crucial difference between the inserted texts that announce themselves as such and the plagiarism that must be found out. The first helps constitute the "look" of the novel as a whole while the other is only visible after expansive and thorough comparative reading of nineteenth-century sources. As a critic deeply invested in the visual features of literary texts, I'm interested in Brown's choice to reproduce some—though far from all—of the print materials that his fictional characters read within the world of the novel.

[2] See Geoffrey Sanborn, "'People Will Pay to Hear the Drama' Plagiarism in *Clotel,*" *African American Review* 45, no.1-2 (2012): 65–82, and *Plagiarama!: William Wells Brown and the Aesthetic of Attractions* (New York: Columbia UP, 2016); Christopher Mulvey, "Annotations to *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States*," *Clotel: An Electronic Scholarly Edition*, ed. Christopher Mulvey (Charlottesville: U of Virginia Press, 2006); Jennifer Schell, "This Life Is a Stage": Performing the South in William Wells Brown's *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*," *Southern Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2008): esp. 41–60; Ann duCille, *The Coupling Convention: Sex, Text, and Tradition in Black Women's Fiction* (New York: Oxford UP, 1993), esp. 25–28; Carla L. Peterson, "Capitalism, Black (Under)Development, and the Production of the African-American Novel in the 1850s," *American Literary History* 4, no. 4 (1992): 559–583; Lara Langer Cohen, "'Notes from the State of Saint Domingue': The Practice of Citation in *Clotel*," *Early African American Print Culture*, eds. Lara Langer Cohen and Jordan Alexander Stein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012): 161–177.

Elsewhere I have argued that the social and political stakes of reproducing print materials are heightened in the case of early African American literature given print's dual role as a medium that helped circulate African American writing while continuing to facilitate the everyday practices of chattel slavery.[3] Brown's strategic representation of the print characteristics for many of his plagiarized sources in *Clotel* was the first case for which I attempted to work out this claim. By extracting texts circulating in contemporary print culture and incorporating them into his novel, Brown pierces the imaginary boundary that separates the world outside his fiction from the fictional world his text constructs. His prolific remediation of texts represents a co-mingling of fiction and reality: characters read printed sources that the narrator (and twenty-first century scholars) assure us are "no fiction." Readers of the novel are given faithful reproductions of these printed advertisements and newspaper accounts, and in the course of their reading they expose the evaluative work required to discern the relationship of any text—or text within a text—to one's own reality. This chapter argues that attending to the visually distinctive plagiarism and its connection to scenes of reading in *Clotel* reveals Brown's theory of reading as an activity that is irreducibly material and ideologically changeable. Brown's act of reprinting material that is openly opposed to the liberation of *Clotel*'s fugitive and enslaved characters allows readers to catch themselves in the act of supplying a different political valence for these texts within the context of *Clotel*. Put another way, Brown shows us that the printed text of a slave auction advertisement does not have a stable, proslavery ideology, because when we read that ad, reprinted in *Clotel*, the text is made to signify differently through this reading.

[3] See Samantha M. Sommers, "Harriet Jacobs and the Recirculation of Print Culture," *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 40, no. 3 (2015): 134–149.

I view the effusion of reprinted texts in *Clotel* as a testament to the historical reality of a growing print public sphere and as evidence of Brown's evolving inquiry into nineteenth-century assumptions regarding the authority of paper and print. The densely populated textual media environment of *Clotel* reflects a mid-nineteenth-century world that was saturated with printed texts. Innovations ranging from the cylinder printing press to reductions in newspaper postal rates helped facilitate the rapid expansion of print production and distribution.[4] *Clotel*'s first publication in 1853 coincides with increased surveillance of black bodies nationally after the passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law.[5] As a result of that legislation, blacks who wished to move across the landscape of the southern U.S. were expected to carry textual documentation with them. These authenticating documents attested to one's status as a free person or permission to travel as granted by a slaveowner. The proliferation of textual media in *Clotel* can be read as a reflection of a world of persons whose legal status and permitted movements had to be recorded on paper.

In his ongoing treatment of William Wells Brown's literary output, Geoffrey Sanborn distills a theory of African American textual production based on Brown's extensive plagiarism

[4] On the changes to printing technologies see *A History of the Book in America: Volume 3: The Industrial Book, 1840-1880*, eds. Scott E. Casper, et al. (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina Press, 2009), 53–58; for the impact of postal rate changes on the periodical press see David M. Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America* (University of Chicago Press, 2008), 49–50.

[5] For a discussion of the myriad ways *Clotel* engages the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law see Loughran, *The Republic in Print,* 413–425.

across multiple works, including at least one that he did not author himself.[6] Sanborn argues that the hallmark of Brown's style is to use borrowed materials to "interrupt the progress of the narrative," and that Brown's technique of composition "prompt[s] us to read for something other than truth and moral clarity."[7] With this line, Sanborn proposes a way of reading Brown's literary corpus that responds to his indifference to truth and original composition. He theorizes Brown's method of writing as one author's canny response to the literary-historical reality that the events and organization of the slave narrative, as a generic form, were utterly known by the mid-nineteenth century. Recognizing Brown's plagiarism as a strategic circumvention of the status quo, Sanborn writes, "what else can one do [to] enact one's freedom but suspend the forward movement of the text, over and over, until another kind of objective begins to emerge?"[8] Dovetailing with Sanborn's proposed method of reading, this chapter theorizes the absence of any consistent ideological charge for reading in *Clotel*. I dwell on scenes that place recirculated print materials at the center of the action to reveal Brown's insistence that texts do not have intrinsic politics, rather, the act of reading lends a politics to a text. By demonstrating the many acts of reading that one instance of remediation can signify, Brown challenges us to consider the attitudes we impart to the texts we read, and in doing so, he contests narratives that privilege reading as a mechanism for the formation of a liberal subject. Moreover, the scenes of reading with a recirculated text at the center form a bridge between the documentary sources Brown

[6] See Geoffrey Sanborn, "The Plagiarist's Craft: Fugitivity and Theatricality in *Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom*," *PMLA* 128, no. 4 (2013): 907–922, and *Plagiarama!* (2016).

[7] Sanborn, "The Plagiarist's Craft," 909–910.

[8] Ibid., 911.

reprints across the pages of novel and the world of *Clotel*'s fiction wherein characters read these excerpts as part of the narrative. By precariously asserting that his characters have access to the same print culture that he uses to expose the rampant violence authorized by the U.S. system of chattel slavery, Brown jumbles the categories of documentary, fictional, plagiarized, and original.

The Epistolary Origins of Recirculated Texts

While *Clotel* may be a limit case when it comes to visually depicting texts within and adjacent to a fictional narrative, the epistolary novel inaugurates this negotiation between the material page the reader holds in her hand and the page the text asks her to imagine.[9] In epistolary novels the practice of reading cleanly overlaps with the imagined correspondence that comprises the narrative—the reader of the novel reads the same letters as the imagined addressees. Fictional letter-writers may refer to their rushed handwriting, or to their tears that blot the page, but the reader is invited to suspend her disbelief and ignore the dissonance between the cleanly printed page and the imperfections of the imagined manuscript. By maintaining the formal conventions of written correspondence (salutation, date, second-person address, etc.) the epistolary novel doubles the scene of reading. The reader inhabits the position of the addressee and participates in a fantasy of direct access to the character/letter-writer's interiority as expressed via fictional correspondence.

[9] I am borrowing the term "limit case" from mathematical contexts where it is refers to: "an extreme or marginal instance of a phenomenon, in which the key variable quality or value is at the minimum or maximum extent of its possible variation." See *OED Online*, s.v. "limit, n.," last modified June 2018, proxy.library.upenn.edu:2817/view/Entry/108477?redirectedFrom=limit+case.

Historian Konstantin Dierks credits the eighteenth-century author and printer Samuel Richardson with the invention of a "new kind of novel" with a narrative "organized entirely around a series of personal letters"[10] Here Dierks's is referring to Richardson's *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740). By way of explaining the new novel's immense popularity, he notes that in the year prior to its publication, Richardson helped "popularize a new ideal of letter writing, the 'familiar letter,' meant to foster emotional intimacy rather than business efficiency or aristocratic formality."[11] In eighteenth-century Britain (as well as the American colonies), "the letter motif was everywhere in the print culture…every genre of book" along with "every newspaper and every magazine" utilized the epistolary form to frame information for readers. Moreover, Dierks asserts that "the very concept of a newspaper was rooted in letter writing: [with] a correspondent positioned to report on events happening at a distance, and [the] publisher [serving] as a gathering point for numerous correspondents." Indeed, he argues that the letter was the "leading mode of presentation" for any information circulating in print during this period.[12]

This vogue for the epistolary form reflected the reading public's insatiable appetite for letters, "because they seemed thrillingly truthful, appearing in print but supposedly not produced for print. Letters seemed to give special access to, say, an insider's perspective on politics."[13]

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[10] Konstantin Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 143.

[11] Ibid., 144.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

The eighteenth-century epistolary novel utilized the imagined materiality of letters and their accompanying conceit of privileged access to characters' thoughts and feelings to elicit sympathy and interest from readers. Turning to the nineteenth-century, as the epistolary novel declines (without fully disappearing), writers continue to represent material texts across the pages of their works, but instead of delivering a novel's content to readers, these texts are imagined as part of the fictional world the novel constructs. The rise in scenes of reading and representations of textual media within nineteenth-century fiction thus extends and transforms earlier practices of depicting the conventions of epistolarity across the pages of novels.

Seen in light of this history, the dense intertextuality of *Clotel* becomes a continuation of the epistolary novel's formal innovation. *Clotel*, with its distinctive look, participates in a long history of literary works that visually represent intradiegetic texts. As this dissertation has shown, texts from the mid-nineteenth-century are littered with representations of letters, newspapers, advertisements, poems, and other recirculated texts. In addition to the five novels in this study, we might think of, for example, Edgar Allan Poe's short stories "The Gold Bug" (1843), "The Purloined Letter" (1844), or "The Mystery of Marie Roget" (1842); David Walker's *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World* (1829); Elizabeth Stoddard's *The Morgesons* (1862); or Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). These works, and so many others, portray worlds that are filled with printed and manuscript texts: characters read novels, sell newspapers, circulate broadsides, contribute to scrapbooks, mark passages in their bibles, and visit post offices or print shops, at higher frequencies than ever before. During this same period certain works were almost entirely composed of recirculated texts, while others appropriated this compilative aesthetic. Prominent examples of these techniques include Theodore Weld's *American Slavery as It Is*

(1839), Judith Sargent Murray's *The Gleaner* (1798), Fanny Fern's *Fern Leaves from Fanny's Portfolio* (1853), Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), and Stowe's *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Brown's *Clotel* is an example of a text that fuses this genre with novelistic fiction to such an extent that it becomes impossible to decide whether the documentary texts are an apparatus that serves the fiction, or if the fictional narrative is merely an occasion for interlacing diverse source materials that document the cruelty and brutality of U.S. chattel slavery.

Brown's Theory of Reading

The ensuing sections of this chapter will address three scenes of reading, all of which include plagiarized language represented through a material text that operates as a prop within the fiction. I will demonstrate the centrality of print and "printedness" to *Clotel*'s narrative project throughout by theorizing the interactions between Brown's prose and the clippings he includes from contemporary sources. Together, these sections recount Brown's theory of reading in *Clotel*; a theory that continually insists we recognize the material basis for reading to illuminate the ways readers' attitudes and affiliations inflect the content they read. Through *Clotel*'s representations of reading Brown makes the point that a text cannot hold a stable politics—he attributes any political effect of reading to the inclinations of the reader.

Three different times in *Clotel* a male character takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and begins reading aloud to an audience of one or more. White men perform all three acts of reading: two of them read advertisements for the sale of enslaved people, and one reads an overlong article about a gruesome fight between a bull and a bear that served as Sunday entertainment for

New Orleans' residents. Women are part of (or the entire) audience for these three scenes, and eventually, two of the three men marry the woman who listens to him reading. In all three cases, Brown reproduces for readers of the novel the printed texts these men read aloud, though in one case the text of the newspaper advertisement precedes the scene of its reading.

Together these scenes reflect the importance of display in *Clotel,* which Sanborn describes—via Tom Gunning's "aesthetics of attractions"—as the key to understanding the novel's formal, tonal, and narratological disorganization. Working from Gunning's account of the late nineteenth-century's culture of spectacle, Sanborn interprets Brown's prolific plagiarism as his conscious participation in the "aesthetics of attractions" whereby readers seek out and are pleased by the "alternation of presence/absence which is embodied in the act of display."[14] What this means for Sanborn's reading of *Clotel* is that the moments of disjuncture that occur in the shifts between plagiarized passages from various sources and Brown's own writing produce excitement and command the attention of the reader.

By focusing on the material text that ushers in the reading of plagiarized passages in these scenes, I show how Brown's characters heighten the "gag" of their setup for reading by performing a visual spectacle: revealing a material text that's been hidden in their pockets.[15] These material texts represent a pivot point between the narrator of *Clotel* and the voice behind a separate text. This detail amplifies Sanborn's argument about the alignment of Brown's writing style with a nineteenth-century culture of display in two ways. The visual attraction recorded on

[14] Geoffrey Sanborn, *Plagiarama!*, 80.

[15] In a nineteenth-century context, pocket can refer to a purse, a bag, or another accessory that would hold personal effects—it need not be part of someone's clothing.

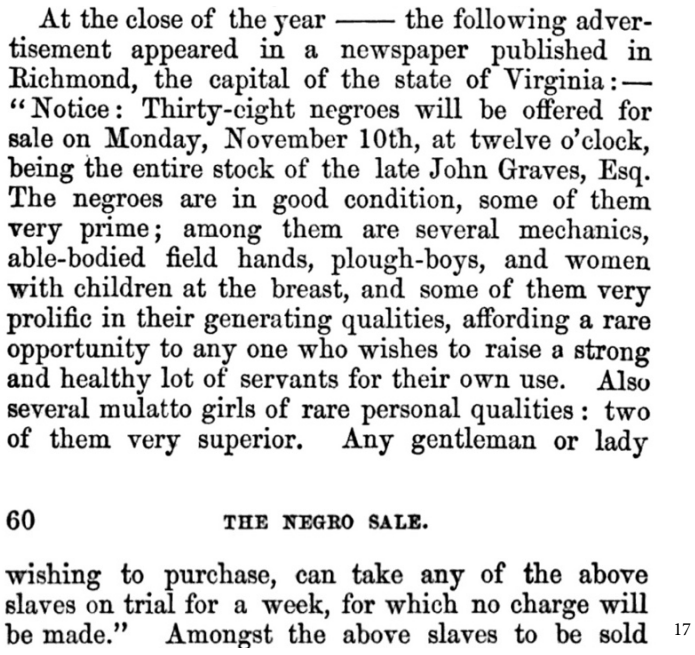
the pages of *Clotel*—the printedness of these three texts, invoked by wider margins and typographical changes—has a corresponding attraction within the world of the novel: the surprising reveal of a scrap of print. In each case, the unexpected appearance of a newspaper briefly focuses the attention of the scene on the materiality of the text that delays the narrative. Brown anchors the tonal shifts between *Clotel*'s narrative and documentary sources to a material object that he invites readers to imagine.

Representing Reading, Recirculating Texts

The first of the three scenes comes from Chapter I, "The Negro Sale," and involves Horatio Green, the lover and eventual owner of Clotel who is also the father of her two children. We learn Horatio has been courting Clotel since he met her at a "Negro Ball" in Richmond and has become a frequent guest at her mother's cottage. During one of these visits to Clotel's mother Currer's home, Horatio "drew from his pocket the newspaper, wet from the press" (78) and read an advertisement to Clotel that announced her impending sale alongside her mother, sister, and thirty-five other enslaved blacks.[16] Brown does not reproduce the text of the advertisement as part of this scene of reading, but his narrator explains that the text Horatio reads is "the advertisement for the sale of the slaves to which we have alluded" (78). This line refers readers back to the intradiegetic text Brown introduces at the start of the same paragraph. He prefaces the extract by stating: "At the close of the year––––the following advertisement appeared in a

[16] All in-text citations will refer to the 2016 Broadview edition of *Clotel*. William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, ed. Geoffrey Sanborn (Ontario: Broadview Press, 2016).

newspaper published in Richmond, the capital of the state of Virginia:––" (77). Brown then reprints the ad in line with the margins of his prose:



At the close of the year —— the following advertisement appeared in a newspaper published in Richmond, the capital of the state of Virginia:— "Notice: Thirty-eight negroes will be offered for sale on Monday, November 10th, at twelve o'clock, being the entire stock of the late John Graves, Esq. The negroes are in good condition, some of them very prime; among them are several mechanics, able-bodied field hands, plough-boys, and women with children at the breast, and some of them very prolific in their generating qualities, affording a rare opportunity to any one who wishes to raise a strong and healthy lot of servants for their own use. Also several mulatto girls of rare personal qualities: two of them very superior. Any gentleman or lady

60 THE NEGRO SALE.

wishing to purchase, can take any of the above slaves on trial for a week, for which no charge will be made." Amongst the above slaves to be sold [17]

Figure 4.1 Detail of *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853)

The detail of the advertisement's margins deserves attention since later examples of reprinted ads all break from the paragraphs that precede them. By including the newspaper text flush with the margins of the paragraph, Brown avoids any visible disruption to the block of text on the page. This decision means that the advertisement is visually unified with Brown's later description of the scene of reading between Horatio and Clotel. Thus, when our narrator explains that readers have already encountered the text of the newspaper scrap that Horatio pulls from his pocket, we

[17] William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (London: Partridge & Oakley, 1853), 59–60. books.google.com/books?id=JLoBAAAAQAAJ&pg=PP11#v=onepage&q&f=false.

may not have previously registered that the ad included earlier in the paragraph had the potential to be depicted materially in the forthcoming scene.

Brown puts his readers on notice with this callback to a prior interpolated text—especially so early in the novel. With this move he advises us that the fictional world he's created will be replete with recirculated texts from nineteenth-century print culture and that these texts may show up in unexpected places. Robert Levine indicates in his footnotes to the 2010 Bedford/St. Martin's edition of the novel that the advertisement announcing the sale of Clotel is itself a rewriting of an advertisement that had been quoted in Theodore Weld's compilation *American Slavery as It Is*.[18] This strategy of recirculation gently pierces the fiction of the novel. Brown's choice to incorporate the Richmond advertisement into the novel goes beyond the project of representing nineteenth-century Virginia in a realist mode and infringes upon the assumed sovereignty of the fictional world of the work of art.[19] The language he uses to introduce *Clotel*'s eponymous heroine, her sister, and her mother, is a revision of a scrap of text he imports from the print environment of the mid-nineteenth century—a text that had been excised already from its original source and recirculated in Weld's volume. The world outside the text intermingles with the world that Brown constructs to such a degree that in the very first chapter the words that describe Clotel and Althesa to readers are not original to Brown.

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[18] William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010), 85.

[19]As mentioned in my first chapter, Eric Hayot's description of the "self-contained unity" of an "aesthetic world" has informed my thinking about the ways the world outside the text can intrude upon the world of a novel. See Eric Hayot, *On Literary Worlds* (New York: Oxford UP, 2012), 45–47.

Following the closed quotation mark separating the text of the advertisement from the rest of the paragraph, the narrator explains, "Amongst the above slaves to be sold were Currer and her two daughters, Clotel and Althesa; the latter were the girls spoken of in the advertisement as 'very superior'" (77). The belated identification of our protagonist and her family performs a kind of delayed revelation that rhymes with Sanborn's argument about Brown's strategy of delay through plagiarism. The reader finds out the meaning and relevance of what she's just read thanks to the narrator's subsequent commentary on the reprinted text. Brown doubles the effect of this strategy when his narrator also discloses that readers have previously seen the content of the scrap of paper Horatio reads to Clotel. The effect of this belated reveal is that readers catch up to the significance of the reprinted ad twice in the span of one paragraph.

The loop between the reprinted text contained within the paragraph of Brown's prose, the scene of reading that centers on the scrap of print Horatio pulls from his pocket, and the novel's subsequent depiction of the slave auction that the recirculated advertisement describes, attests to the remarkable permeability of *Clotel*'s diegetic levels. Brown reprints the text of a Richmond newspaper in such a way that it appears to be the invention of *Clotel*'s narrator—then materializes that reprinted text as a prop within a scene of reading, before finally enacting the very event the print advertisement forecasts. While many have argued that Brown's recirculation of printed materials helps authorize his depictions of life under U.S. chattel slavery, this imported text does more than augment the narration of the novel: the reprinted text becomes part of a scene and contributes to the events of the plot. The advertisement propels us both backward and

forward in our reading of the novel. Moreover, as a single act of textual representation, the recirculated advertisement signifies four distinct moments of reading.

Noting that the advertisement was from a Richmond newspaper, *Clotel*'s narrator implies an original scene of reading in which mid-nineteenth century residents of the city could have encountered this text. Then, we learn that Horatio read this advertisement earlier in the day, bringing it "wet from the press" to Currer's home. This is a second implied scene of reading, which comes immediately before the description of Horatio reading to Clotel. Finally, if we accept that reading the novel constitutes another scene of reading, we see how the Richmond advertisement, a reprinted text included amidst a paragraph of the novel, gestures out to four distinct scenes of reading. This disparity between a single act of textual representation and the number of implied scenes of reading reaffirms Brown's contention that the materials of reading—printed and manuscript writing, scraps of paper, even nineteenth-century novels—provide the ground for untold significations.

Reading at Odds with Itself

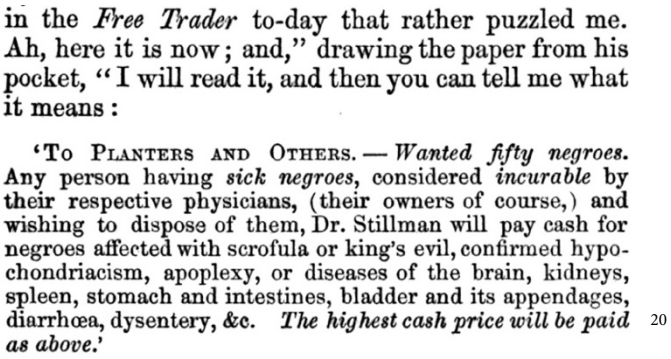
A second scene of reading that begins with the reveal of a material text involves the parson, Reverend John Peck, his daughter, Georgiana, and Peck's former schoolmate who is visiting them from the North, Mr. Miles Carlton. Readers first meet Reverend Peck in Chapter II, "Going to the South." At that time, Peck is an unnamed man described as "tall, thin-faced, [and] dressed in black, with a white neckcloth, which immediately proclaimed him to be a clergyman." He arrives on the scene to consult the slave trader, Dick Walker, about the purchase of "a good, trusty woman for house service" (85). Walker has arrived in Peck's city of Natchez, Mississippi

after traveling by steamboat from Richmond where he purchased Clotel's mother Currer and her sister Althesa at the same auction where Clotel was bought by Horatio Green.

Chapter XI, "The Parson Poet," opens with the narrator's account of Carlton's stay with the Reverend and his daughter, and it's clear that Carlton and Georgiana have embarked on a coy courtship. We learn, "If Miss Peck was invited out, Mr. Carlton was, as a matter of course. She seldom rode out, unless with him," and Carlton was, for his part, "fascinated with the charms of Georgiana" (122). Against the backdrop of this emerging romance, Carlton stages a scene of reading during an afternoon meal. He appeals to Reverend Peck and Georgiana's knowledge of the South's culture of slavery since their family owns enslaved people who either work in their home or on their plantation, which is nine miles outside of Natchez:

> "By-the-by," remarked Carlton, "I saw an advertisement in the Free Trader to-day that rather puzzled me. Ah, here it is now; and," drawing the paper from his pocket, "I will read it, and then you can tell me what it means[.]" (123)

The text that follows Carlton's introduction is separate from the preceding paragraph, includes small caps, italics, and an em dash to emulate the style of printed ads; it's also set in type that's smaller than the prose of the paragraph above.



in the *Free Trader* to-day that rather puzzled me. Ah, here it is now; and," drawing the paper from his pocket, "I will read it, and then you can tell me what it means:

'To Planters and Others. — *Wanted fifty negroes.* Any person having *sick negroes*, considered *incurable* by their respective physicians, (their owners of course,) and wishing to dispose of them, Dr. Stillman will pay cash for negroes affected with scrofula or king's evil, confirmed hypochondriacism, apoplexy, or diseases of the brain, kidneys, spleen, stomach and intestines, bladder and its appendages, diarrhœa, dysentery, &c. *The highest cash price will be paid as above.*'

Figure 4.2 Detail of *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853)

The text Carlton reads aloud is a want-ad placed by a man named Dr. Stillman, who offers to "pay cash" for enslaved people who are sick and "considered *incurable*" by slaveholders who might be "wishing to dispose of them." Dr. Stillman lists a wide range of diseases and other ailments suitable to his purposes and assures readers of the *Free Trader*, "*The highest cash price will be paid as above.*" After reading the ad aloud, Carlton describes his confusion to Reverend Peck, Georgiana, and by extension, *Clotel*'s readers.

At first, he thought the doctor was planning to buy and cure these enslaved people, but then he realized that many of the diseases listed in the ad were "certainly incurable." Reverend Peck laughs at Carlton's ignorance, and explains that the doctor is looking to purchase sick people so that he can use them for his medical lectures. Directing Carlton to a different column in the paper, Peck clarifies the doctor's scheme through the additional printed text, which is again reproduced for the reader. This extract, a prospectus for the local medical college Dr. Stillman oversees, explains the particular advantages of the college including "great opportunities

[20] William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (London: Partridge & Oakley, 1853), 123. books.google.com/books?id=JLoBAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false.

for the acquisition of anatomical knowledge," facilitated by the examination and dissection of enslaved bodies. Stillman promises prospective students that they will able to participate in this grotesque curriculum, "without offending any individuals in the community!" Carlton asks if the medical college has to wait for the people to die before they use their bodies. Reverend Peck explains, "'They keep them on hand, and when they need one they bleed him to death'" (124). Both the advertisement Carlton reads aloud and the prospectus Peck directs him to are recirculated texts that Brown imports from nineteenth-century sources. Geoffrey Sanborn has found the advertisement and the medical college's prospectus reprinted in the 1846 abolitionist anthology *A Brief View of American Chattelized Humanity*, compiled by Jonathan Walker.[21] As Carlton reflects on what he's read and discussed with the Reverend and Georgiana, he admits that this reading has led him to reconsider the truth claims of Northern anti-slavery activists: "I have often heard what I considered hard stories in abolition meetings in New York about slavery; but now I shall begin to think that many of them are true," (124). By modelling how reading and conversation can initiate a change of heart, Carlton represents the ideal Northern convert to abolitionism and makes an excellent proxy for readers of *Clotel* who had an undecided stance toward chattel slavery.

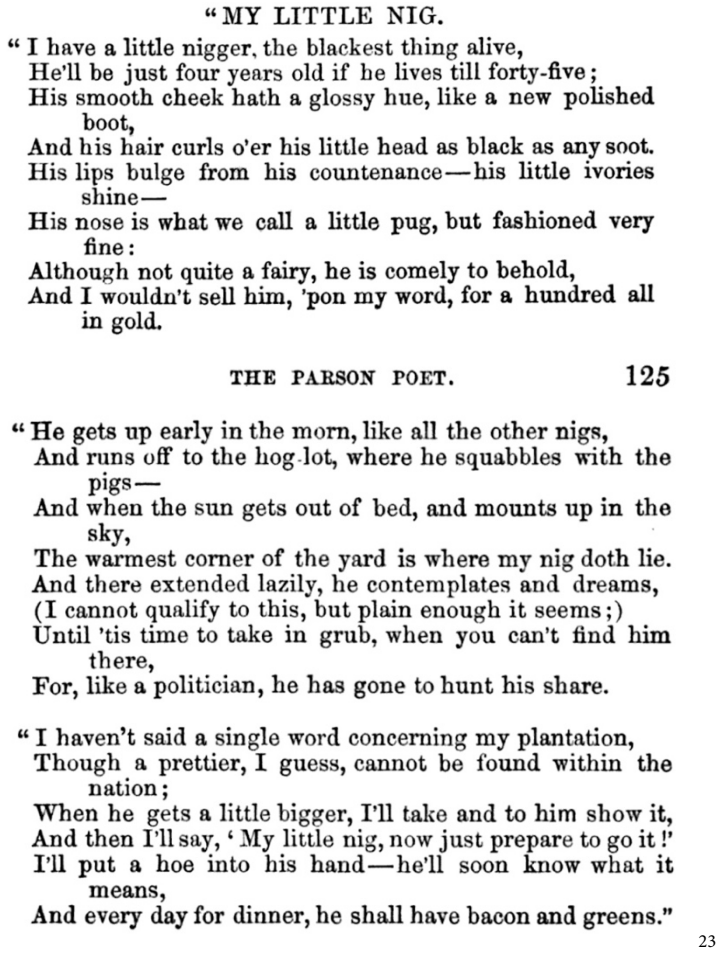
Carlton's discussion of the treatment of black bodies under slavery is focused on the newspaper he supplies. At a material level, Brown's choice to represent the full text of the advertisement on the page of the novel means that Carlton's act of reading does not perform the

[21] See Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, ed. Geoffrey Sanborn, 123n1, 123n2. See also Jonathan Walker, *A Brief View of American Chattelized Humanity, and its Supports* (Boston: Published by the Author, 1846), 10–12. ebooks.library.cornell.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=mayantislavery;idno=10841907.

work of abstraction. *Clotel*'s narrator doesn't describe Carlton's reading from a distance, nor does Brown quote from the advertisement within a paragraph of prose. The two newspaper excerpts retain their printed characteristics and serve as visual texts for readers of the novel. By isolating the words Carlton reads off the paper he pulls from his pocket, Brown plays with ideas of print's flexibility and inflexibility since the ad can move from a nineteenth-century newspaper to the pages of *Clotel* while the indications of its printedness withstand that transition. This point is of a piece with Brown's representations of reading throughout the novel, since he repeatedly depicts reading as an activity that is tied to the physical materials that make texts present in the world. By maintaining the printedness of the newspaper selections, Brown helps demonstrate how the act of *reading*, rather than recirculation, lends a fresh politics to a text. Moreover, the reprinted advertisement and prospectus infuse the novel with even more material from the world outside the text, challenging readers to track the continually shifting boundary between *Clotel*'s fictional representations and historical reality.

But because nothing about Brown's writing is ever straightforward the very next scene of reading, which follows on the heels of this one, does nothing to advance the cause of abolition and even maintains the racist status quo the chapter seemed to be undoing. This second scene of reading from the chapter, again, centers on a material text. Two sentences after Carlton admits the shift in his mentality regarding the claims of Northern abolitionists, Reverend Peck says to him, "'I have written a short poem for your sister's album, as you requested me" (124). Carlton obliges by taking the piece of paper with Peck's poem on it, and we learn "he laughed as his eyes glanced over it." Georgiana implores him, "'Read it out, Mr. Carlton […] let me hear what it is; I know papa gets off some very droll things at times.'" The narrator concludes the scene and the

diegetic action of the chapter with the line, "Carlton complied with the young lady's request, and read aloud the following rare specimen of poetical genius" (124). Brown then reprints the poem "My Little Nig," which Sanborn explains was written by a man named Thomas G. Key, first published in the *Hamburg Journal* from South Carolina, and later recirculated in *The Liberator* as a testament to the lack of respect that slaveholders had for the people they owned.[22]



"MY LITTLE NIG.

"I have a little nigger, the blackest thing alive,
He'll be just four years old if he lives till forty-five;
His smooth cheek hath a glossy hue, like a new polished boot,
And his hair curls o'er his little head as black as any soot.
His lips bulge from his countenance—his little ivories shine—
His nose is what we call a little pug, but fashioned very fine:
Although not quite a fairy, he is comely to behold,
And I wouldn't sell him, 'pon my word, for a hundred all in gold.

THE PARSON POET. 125

"He gets up early in the morn, like all the other nigs,
And runs off to the hog-lot, where he squabbles with the pigs—
And when the sun gets out of bed, and mounts up in the sky,
The warmest corner of the yard is where my nig doth lie.
And there extended lazily, he contemplates and dreams,
(I cannot qualify to this, but plain enough it seems;)
Until 'tis time to take in grub, when you can't find him there,
For, like a politician, he has gone to hunt his share.

"I haven't said a single word concerning my plantation,
Though a prettier, I guess, cannot be found within the nation;
When he gets a little bigger, I'll take and to him show it,
And then I'll say, 'My little nig, now just prepare to go it!'
I'll put a hoe into his hand—he'll soon know what it means,
And every day for dinner, he shall have bacon and greens."

23

Figure 4.3 Detail of *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (1853)

[22] See Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, ed. Geoffrey Sanborn, 125n1.

[23] William Wells Brown, *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter* (London: Partridge & Oakley, 1853), 124–125. books.google.com/books?id=JLoBAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false.

The poem is twenty-two lines long, broken into three stanzas. The first two have eight lines each and the last has only six. The stanzas are composed of end-rhymed couplets and each line has approximately fourteen syllables, though the meter is irregular. Brown maintains the line and stanza breaks as he recirculates this poem. Again, the imagined scene of Carlton reading aloud does not affect the representation of the poem across the pages of *Clotel*. The title of Chapter XI is "The Parson Poet," but Brown fulfills the promise of that description only after the three characters discuss the *Free Trader* selections. Viewing "My Little Nig" as the culmination of the chapter and conclusion to the scene may leave readers with familiar dissonant feelings regarding the novel's political aims. The first two reprinted texts in the chapter seemed to replicate the gesture of Theodore Weld and Jonathan Walker's anti-slavery anthologies. Through their remediation of Southern newspapers these collections created an opportunity for re-reading that transformed the everyday print culture of slavery into fodder for the abolitionist cause. With this poem, which we are supposed to imagine is an original composition by Reverend Peck, Brown's characters are no longer modeling transformative reading practices indicated by the previous two texts.

The chapter makes apparent the changeable politics of reading. The earlier scene from this chapter depicts precisely the mode of reading that literary critics and nineteenth-century progressives prioritize: Carlton reads sections of the newspaper, deliberates their meaning among his peers, and with his new understanding, reconsiders his skepticism about the treatment of enslaved people in the U.S. South. Despite all of this, in his very next act of reading Carlton seems to have learned nothing from the previous case. Taking a piece of paper in his hands, he laughs as he reads Peck's poem, which compares the skin of a black person to boot leather, makes fun of

his unnamed black subject's nose and lips, refers to him as "comely," presumes laziness, and maintains a paternalizing tone throughout. This scene lays bare the contingency of any ideological charge for reading in *Clotel*. In the space of a brief chapter Carlton demonstrates how reading can be inquisitive and skeptical, leading to a shift in thinking; then he immediately follows this with an uncritical, even delighted, reading of an original poem that dehumanizes an enslaved black person in a bid for humor. Brown leaves readers of *Clotel* to guess at how these two scenes of reading reflect on one another. The chapter's lack of consistency regarding the representation of reading as a morally and politically improving project fits with the ideological indeterminacy of the novel as a whole, but Brown's depiction of multiple and incongruous ways of reading contrasts sharply with popular conflations of reading with liberation, especially in the context of formerly enslaved subjects.

Strategic Re-reading

The ambition of Weld, Brown, and many other anti-slavery writers working in the mid-nineteenth-century was not to present new or different information, but to recirculate printed texts so that they could be read *differently*. Preserving a sense of sameness—which required that their reprinted material maintained the appearance of fidelity to the original instance publication—is crucial to their project.[24] The demand Weld makes of his readers is only to read

[24] To underscore the importance of this printed "sameness," in 1853 a pro-slavery Maryland clergyman, Edward J. Stearns, published a rebuttal to Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and the just-published *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1853). One of Stearns's aims is to prove that Stowe has misrepresented her sources in *A Key*, and he attempts to do so through appeals to typography. He writes of *A Key*:

what is there on the page; what has been liberally circulated without consequence in prominent newspapers throughout the United States. He asks readers of *American Slavery as It Is* to take in the meaning and implications of the texts he recirculates. In his "Public Opinion" section, Weld explains his method: "To show that the 'public opinion' of the slave states, towards the slaves, is absolutely *diabolical* we will insert a few, out of a multitude, of similar advertisements from a variety of southern newspapers now before us."[25] The text that follows is a reprinted runaway slave advertisement in which the slaveholder, Micajah Ricks, declares that he had just recently branded the face of the escaped enslaved woman. Ricks includes this detail in his description of the woman's appearance and clothing. He also notes the ages and appearance of her two young sons, whom she brought with her.

"Now, though the portion of the work before us is evidently a hodge-podge, and jumbled together, too, in beautiful confusion, I think I can put my finger on passage after passage, and say, without fear of mistake, That's her own! and among these passages are certain odd misinterpretations, to two or three of which I must now call the reader's attention." (190)

Following this, Stearns reproduces a quotation from Stowe's *Key* that reprints language from Southern slave codes. Finding proof of Stowe's falsifications Stearn writes, "The *italics* are Mrs. Stowe's, and if the reader will carefully examine the last clause, he will be at no loss to perceive why she left *that* 'in roman:' *she* thought it knocked her proposition in the head, but then, like the Baltimore lawyer, she didn't know what 'the *court*' might think,–especially if she could draw off their attention to the first part of the paragraph! It won't do, Mrs. Stowe! The public are at least *as* sharp as the *Old* Baltimore Court." See Edward J. Stearns, *Notes on* Uncle Tom's Cabin*: Being a Logical Answer to Its Allegations and Inferences Against Slavery as an Institution* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, Grambo, & Co., 1853), 190–193.

[25] Theodore Weld, *American Slavery as It Is: Testimony of A Thousand Witnesses* (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1839), 152. books.google.com/books?id=bSITAAAAYAAJ&dq=american%20slavery%20as%20it%20is&pg=PA1#v=onepage&q&f=false.

Working to combat skepticism from his audience, Weld surmises that readers may assume this advertisement was "published in an insignificant sheet printed in some obscure corner of the state; perhaps […] edited by some scape-gallows, who is detested by the whole community." Weld's rebuttal to this rhetorical challenge is distinctly grounded in the material and visual features of the newspaper where this ad appeared: "the 'North Carolina Standard,' […] is a large six columned weekly paper, handsomely printed and ably edited; it is the leading Democratic paper in that state, and is published at Raleigh, the Capital of the state."[26] The impressive design, circulation, size, printing, and editing are Weld's first line of evidence for his assertion that the *North Carolina Standard* is a respectable and popular paper. He supports his point with physical details, as if the paper's high production value reflects the public's sense of its civic value. Weld continues, "Now reader, put all these things together and con them over, and then read again the preceding advertisement contained in the same number of the paper, and you have the true "North Carolina STANDARD," by which to measure the protection extended to slaves by the 'public opinion' of that state."[27] The imperative to "read again" encapsulates a theory of reading in which meaning depends upon the insights and political posture a reader brings to a text. For Weld and others, the act of remediation proves that the visual and material features of a text can remain the same while the effect of reading drastically transforms through the efforts of the reader.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid., 152–153.

Stage-Coach Reading and the Culture of Reprinting

A final scene of reading with a material text at its center comes from Chapter XXII, "A Ride in a Stage-Coach." Like many chapters in *Clotel*, this one opens by transporting the reader back to a setting in which she last left one of the novel's many central characters. The narrator begins, "We shall now return to Cincinnati, where we left Clotel preparing to go to Richmond in search of her daughter" (172). When we last read about Clotel she had successfully escaped from slavery by disguising herself as a man and traveling North with William, a fellow runaway also owned by her most recent enslaver, Mr. Cooper. The pair boarded a steamship in Vicksburgh headed to Louisville with Clotel pretending to be a very ill gentleman named Mr. Johnson and William serving as her supposed valet. In Louisville the pair spent the night at a hotel were John C. Calhoun was also in residence—heightening the drama of their escape. The next day Clotel and William boarded another steamer bound for Pittsburgh, and as soon as the boat made its first stop in Cincinnati, they were both free. Despite William's protests, Clotel decides to return to Virginia in search of her daughter, Mary, now enslaved by her father, Horatio Green, and his wife. Clotel stays in Cincinnati for a few days to make arrangements for her trip while William continues to travel North. Chapter XXII picks up the story at this point.

While in Cincinnati, Clotel moves about the city wearing her own clothes, but once she is ready to leave again she resumes her disguise, this time giving "more the appearance of an Italian or Spanish gentleman" (172–173). Presumably after traveling via steamship (the novel is silent on this point) she arrives in Wheeling (part of present-day West Virginia) and books a seat in a stagecoach for the last leg of the journey to Richmond. Our narrator describes the scene inside the coach by first noting that a "ride in a stage-coach, over an American road, is unpleasant

under the most favorable circumstances" but owing to the eight "genuine Americans" assembled in this particular coach, the group could not "be together without whiling away the time somewhat pleasantly" (173). Among the group of eight is an older man with two daughters, one younger than twenty and the other right around that age; a slim, pale minister who we learn is from New England; a stout Southern man wearing a white hat; two other "ordinary" American gentlemen; and Clotel in disguise.

The discussion turns to Temperance for several pages. Though the New England minister is outspoken in his support, the Southern man counters with a long story about visiting family in Vermont, a temperance state. He explains that the first night of his visit, he was kept up past midnight listening to everyone espouse their pro-Temperance views. But the very next day, his aunt, uncle, and two cousins all separately revealed themselves to be hypocrites since each one kept a secret supply of liquor. The narrator reports that this story "was received with unbounded applause by all except the pale gent. in spectacles […] the white hat gent. was now the lion of the company," (176). The minister, unwilling to cede the ground of the argument, persists in his pro-Temperance rhetoric, then pivots to a pointed critique of the general character of Southerners.

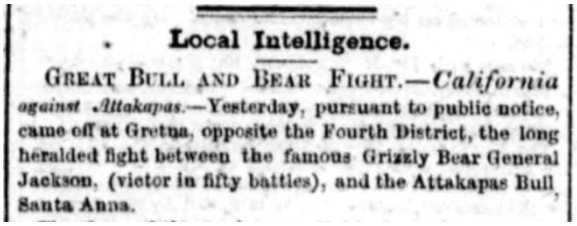
Throughout all of this, Brown's narration keeps our eponymous heroine on the fringes of the scene. It's not until the last paragraph of the chapter that we learn "it must not be supposed that the old gent. with the two daughters, and even the young ladies themselves had been silent. Clotel and they had not only given their opinions as regarded the merits of the discussion, but that sly glance of the eye, which is ever given where the young of both sexes meet, had been freely at work" (181). Despite this assurance, we never read any dialogue from Clotel, though at one point the narrator invokes her perspective to mention that she "could have borne ample

testimony, had she dared to have taken sides with the Connecticut man [since] her residence in Vicksburgh had given her an opportunity of knowing something of the character of [Southerners]" (178). But instead of including Clotel's testimony, Brown brings the debate to a close through a recirculated text. The Northern minister pulls a newspaper out of his pocket and reads aloud a long article recounting a violent fight staged between a bull and a bear that had been held for entertainment on a recent Sabbath in New Orleans.

The reprinted newspaper article comprises nearly twenty-five percent of the words in "A Ride in a Stage-Coach"—the chapter could be easily renamed "A Connecticut Man Reads the Newspaper." The minister's strategy of reading resets the debate from subjective experience to (ostensibly) objective reporting, while the duration of his reading enhances the force of his appeal to the authority of the newspaper. The minister first mentions that the paper has "not less than three advertisements of bull fights to take place on the Sabbath," though Brown does not reprint these ads for the reader (178). But he does include the long report on one of these fights. The minister doesn't give the name of the newspaper he's reading; he only specifies that it's from New Orleans. In the Broadview edition of *Clotel*, Geoffrey Sanborn lists the April 9, 1853 edition of the *New York Weekly Herald* as the source for this reprinted text.[28] In my own searches I've found that the article was additionally reprinted in the June 17, 1853 edition of the *Illinois Daily*

[28] See *Clotel; or, The President's Daughter*, ed. Geoffrey Sanborn, 181n3, 278. I followed Sanborn's notes indicating that the article is part of the *America's Historical Newspapers* database, but at the time of this writing there were no issues of the *New York Weekly Herald* available in that collection, and the April 9, 1853 issue of *The New York Herald* (a daily newspaper) does not contain "Sunday Amusements in New Orleans." The article does appear on page 8 of the April 5, 1853 edition of *The New York Herald* and a prior announcement for the bullfight was printed in the April 3, 1853 edition of the same paper.

Journal and the October 21, 1853 edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Both of these reprints mention that the original text is from the March 28, 1853 edition of the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, which I've been able to confirm.



Local Intelligence.

GREAT BULL AND BEAR FIGHT.—*California against Attakapas.*—Yesterday, pursuant to public notice, came off at Gretna, opposite the Fourth District, the long heralded fight between the famous Grizzly Bear General Jackson, (victor in fifty battles), and the Attakapas Bull Santa Anna.

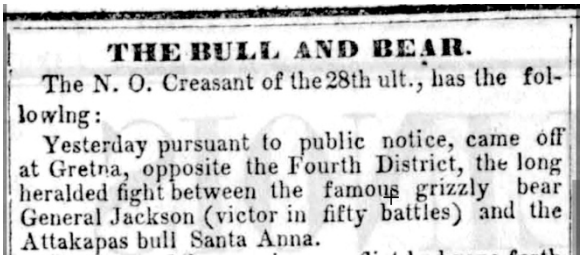
[29]

Figure 4.4 Detail from *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, 28 March 1853

The article from the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* appears on the second page of a six-page paper under the heading "Local Intelligence." The subhead reads: "GREAT BULL AND BEAR FIGHT. –– *California against Attakapas*.––" The text of "against Attakapas" is slightly smaller than "California" as the subhead breaks to accommodate the column width. The line "GREAT BULL AND BEAR FIGHT. –– *California against Attakapas*.––" is not included as part of the reprinted text in *Clotel* or the New York, Illinois, or Sydney versions of the article. Yet Brown's omission of the final sentence from the article is the most consequential difference between the text the minister reads aloud in the novel and the text from the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*. The March 28th New Orleans account of the fight ends with this comment from the editor: "It was a most savage exhibition, and we chronicle it as we would a murder or other lamentable fact. May

[29] "Great Bull and Bear Fight." *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, vol. VI, no. 20, 28 March 1853, Morning, 2. *Library of Congress*, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1853-03-28/ed-1/seq-2/.

we never see such another."[30] By excising this last line, Brown presents New Orleans residents and readers as indifferent to the brutality and violence of the bull and bear fight, even though the March 28th text includes a clear rebuke of the event. The editors of *The New York Herald* and *Illinois Daily Journal* choose to include this final line in their reprints of the article, but the line is missing from the version printed in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. The headlines and prefaces for the article are also inconsistent across the different printings.



THE BULL AND BEAR.

The N. O. Creasant of the 28th ult., has the following:

Yesterday pursuant to public notice, came off at Gretna, opposite the Fourth District, the long heralded fight between the famous grizzly bear General Jackson (victor in fifty battles) and the Attakapas bull Santa Anna.

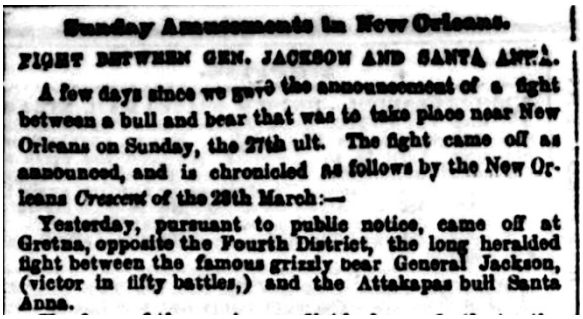
[31]

Figure 4.5 Detail from *Illinois Daily Journal*, 17 June 1853

The June 17th 1853 edition of the *Illinois Daily Journal* is the least editorialized reprinting of the New Orleans article that I have found so far. The article appears on page two of the four-page paper, with a headline that reads "**THE BULL AND BEAR.**" Immediately below this is the truncated, uncritical preface: "The N. O. Creasant [sic] of the 28th ult., has the following:" From there, the text matches the *New Orleans Daily Crescent* article.

[30] "Great Bull and Bear Fight." *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, 28 March 1853, 2.

[31] "The Bull and Bear." *Illinois Daily Journal*, vol. VII, no. 304, 17 June 1853, 2. *Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections*, idnc.library.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/illinois?a=d&d=SJO18530617.2.94.



Sunday Amusements in New Orleans.

FIGHT BETWEEN GEN. JACKSON AND SANTA ANNA.

A few days since we gave the announcement of a fight between a bull and bear that was to take place near New Orleans on Sunday, the 27th ult. The fight came off as announced, and is chronicled as follows by the New Orleans *Crescent* of the 28th March:—

Yesterday, pursuant to public notice, came off at Gretna, opposite the Fourth District, the long heralded fight between the famous grizzly bear General Jackson, (victor in fifty battles,) and the Attakapas bull Santa Anna.

[32]

Figure 4.6 Detail from *The New York Herald*, 5 April 1853

The headline for the version of the article that's printed in the April 5th edition of *The New York Herald* reads: "**Sunday Amusements in New Orleans.** FIGHT BETWEEN GEN. JACKSON AND SANTA ANNA." A brief, though uncritical, preface follows explaining, "A few days since we gave the announcement of a fight between a bull and bear that was to take place near New Orleans on Sunday, the 27th ult. The fight came off as announced, and is chronicled as follows by the New Orleans *Crescent* of the 28th March:––" From here the *Herald* reprints the text of the March 28th *New Orleans Daily Crescent* account.

[32] "Sunday Amusements in New Orleans." *The New York Herald*, no. 7409, 5 April 1853, 8. *Library of Congress*, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1853-04-05/ed-1/seq-8/.

TELEGRAPHIC.

WASHINGTON, April 2, 1853.

The *Union*, of this morning, speaks of Commander Hollins' conduct, in the seizure of San Juan, Nicaragua, as characterized by commendable promptness, energy, and prudence.

FIGHT BETWEEN GENERAL JACKSON AND SANTA ANNA.—By the following notice which we find in the New Orleans papers, it would appear that the inhabitants of the Crescent City, or at least a portion of them, are not over particular in the selection of their Sabbath amusements. A few missionaries from the Eastern States would find a rich field for their labors among the citizens of the First municipality:—

The fight between the renowned champion grizzly bear, "Gen. Jackson," and the fighting bull, "Santa Anna," to come off on Sunday afternoon, March 27th, at Gretna, is attracting great attention. We have no doubt that crowds will avail themselves of this rare chance for sport; for the immense size, strength, and ferocity of both animals, and the great name they have each already earned in the arena, is well known, and gives earnest of a well contested and exciting battle.

For those who delight in this old Spanish sport, this opportunity of witnessing a good fight is one rarely offered, and not to be neglected. Every accommodation has been provided at the ground for spectators, and the ferryboats will run regularly during the day, while all necessary precautions have been taken to afford to all a safe and complete view of the encounter. The animals are to be turned loose into a large iron-barred enclosure povided for the occasion.

33

Figure 4.7 Detail from *The New York Herald*, 3 April 1853

The April 3, 1853 edition of *The New York Herald* does include the announcement referenced in the preface to the April 5th article, and this text is a more clearly politicized description of the New Orleans event. Under the section heading "TELEGRAPHIC" there is the subhead: "Fight between General Jackson and Santa Anna.–." This is followed by a pointed critique, presumably from the *Herald*'s editor, who writes:

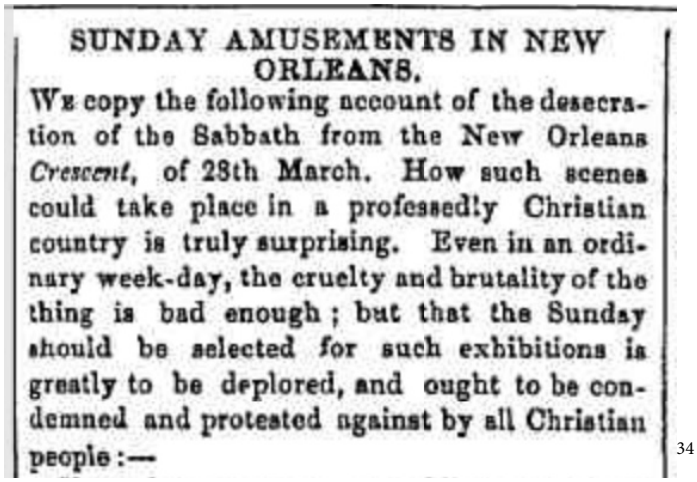
> By the following notice which we find in the New Orleans papers, it would appear that the inhabitants of the Crescent City, or at least a portion of them, are not over particular in the selection of their Sabbath amusements. A few missionaries from the Eastern States would find a rich field for their labors among the citizens of the First municipality:–

[33] "Fight between General Jackson and Santa Anna." *The New York Herald*, no. 7407, 3 April 1853, 4. *Library of Congress*, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1853-04-03/ed-1/seq-4/.

This mild admonition captures the spirit of the Northern minister's critique of Southern character, but falls short of his unequivocal delivery. The New York newspaper allows that there may be "a portion" of New Orleans inhabitants who are offended by the Sunday scheduling for this violent entertainment. Additionally, the call for Eastern missionaries to reform the residents of New Orleans projects significantly less alarm than the minister. It certainly falls short of declaring that the bullfight indicts the "general character" of all Southerners.

The Sydney Morning Herald's October 21, 1853 reprinting is the only version of the article that appends a pointed critique of the fight directly to the text, condemning it as a violation of the sanctity of the sabbath. Under the headline "SUNDAY AMUSEMENTS IN NEW ORLEANS." the editor includes the following note above the reprinted text:

> We copy the following account of the desecration of the Sabbath from the New Orleans *Crescent*, of 28th March. How such scenes could take place in a professedly Christian country is truly surprising. Even in an ordinary week-day, the cruelty and brutality of the thing is bad enough; but that the Sunday should be selected for such exhibitions is greatly to be deplored, and ought to be condemned and protested against by all Christian people:––



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[34]

Figure 4.8 Detail from *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 October 1853

The sentiment of *The Sydney Morning Herald* editor mirrors the Northern minister's initial criticism of New Orleans residents in the stage-coach scene. Because this is the only newspaper reprint that omits the final line of the article, matching the recirculated text in *Clotel*, it raises the possibility that *The Sydney Morning Herald* could have been the source for Brown's recirculated text. If this were true, the account of the Sunday bullfight in New Orleans would have come to Brown with the frame of a religious critique already in place.

It's not particularly surprising to learn that a New Orleans newspaper article about a brutal and dramatic fight between a bull and bear circulated widely, even for months after the event. Scholars of nineteenth-century American print culture have come to expect this kind of global Anglophone reprinting. What I'm interested in here is the way Brown absorbs the anti-Southerner frame of the Sydney newspaper article into the character of the Connecticut minister. This move shifts the location of the critique from the newspaper page to a person imagined as

[34] "Sunday Amusements in New Orleans." *The Sydney Morning Herald*, vol. XXXIV, no. 5123, 21 Oct. 1853, 5. *National Library of Australia,* trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/28643906.

part of the world of *Clotel*. If we set aside, for a moment, the fact that the minister in the stage-coach does not *materially* exist as anything more than printed words on the page, Brown's decision to omit the anti-Southerner preface from his recirculation of the article begins to look like a choice to depict a reader imparting his own critique of Southern character onto a newspaper text in the same way that Theodore Weld and Jonathan Walker asked readers to re-interpret Southern newspapers. This scene of the minister reading aloud is then in keeping with Brown's larger project of revealing how the acts of reading lend political valences to texts.

Epilogue

Books Beyond Reading

The combined chapters of this project have conceived of several theories that challenge the assumption that reading is always, or even usually, concerned with the project of liberal subject formation. This epilogue is a provocation that begins to sketch a possibility for reading and its associated materials (books, broadsides, letters, etc.) to operate independent of the subject entirely. In this I draw on new thinking in queer studies, especially Greta LaFleur's efforts to decouple sex and the subject in *The Natural History of Sexuality in Early America* (2018) and Benjamin Kahan's research into recovering non-subject-based understandings of sexuality through his method of historical etiology.[35] I explore the ways books, as objects, can operate as a system for organizing separate, nontextual bodies of knowledge, connected to their use as vehicles for metaphor. These possibilities are pointedly on display throughout Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale* (1851).

Meticulous readers of *Moby-Dick* will note that the novel does not actually begin with the iconic imperative "Call me Ishmael," but with a somber scene of reading. Starting in the 1851 American edition, the novel includes two early sections labeled "Etymology" and another with

[35] See Greta LaFleur, "Epilogue: Thinking Sex—without the Subject," in *The Natural History of Sexuality in Early America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2018); Benjamin Kahan, "The Walk-in Closet: Situation Homosexuality and Homosexual Panic in Hellman's *The Children's Hour*," *Criticism* 55, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 177–201 as well as Kahan's forthcoming: *The Book of Minor Perverts: Sexology, Etiology, and the Emergences of Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019).

the heading "Extracts." The second Etymology section includes axiomatic definitions related to the origins for the word "whale" followed by translations for the word whale in thirteen languages ranging from Hebrew to Erromangoan, a native language from the Vanuatu archipelago in the South Pacific. Yet the first Etymology section offers nothing so philological.

Across "Etymology" and "Extracts" Melville decouples textual content from books. We see books represented as things and texts that have been abstracted from their original contexts. Under the first "Etymology" heading and the parenthetical "SUPPLIED BY A LATE CONSUMPTIVE USHER TO A GRAMMAR SCHOOL" we find a short recollection of a pale Usher dusting his books. This vignette captures the Usher engaged in an act of caretaking and presents his books as objects for conservation, with a capacity to prompt meditation. These books are not sites of reading, in the mind-expanding sense; instead, they capture the novel's early interest in theorizing books as objects unencumbered by their relationship to human subjects. Melville writes: "The pale Usher—threadbare in coat, heart, body, and brain; I see him now. He was ever dusting his old lexicons and grammars, with a queer handkerchief, mockingly embellished with all the gay flags of all the known nations of the world. He loved to dust his old grammars; it somehow mildly reminded him of his mortality" (n.p). This passage situates the reader in a world of book-objects and reference texts, a schema that persists over the next few pages. Readers are not privy to the content of the Usher's books, apart from their genres, and the action of dusting further draws attention to the physical form of the volumes.

By conjuring an image of dusty volumes, the speaker obliquely indicates the passing of time, evidenced by an accumulation of dust. The second sentence, which recalls the Usher's own musings on the relation between himself and his "old grammars," suggests the books and the

man who keeps them adhere to different timelines. We learn that while in the act of dusting, the Usher would be "mildly reminded…of his mortality." This line suggests the possibility that human subjects could be subordinated to the realm of books, as the Usher appears to contemplate the fact that his books will outlast him. Amidst this three-sentence vignette a theory emerges wherein books, while a distinctly human invention, exceed their originators because of their different rates of decay. The first "Etymology" section presents a daring meditation on the permanency and utility of books without regard for the content they contain or the people who might read them.

Much later in the novel, we find an exploration of the ways the materials of reading can encompass and organize bodies of knowledge not related to textual content. Supplanting the existing science of Cetology with "some sort of popular comprehensive classification."[36] Ishmael marshals the materials of reading to create a taxonomy for several species of whales that is keyed to the different sizes and shapes of books. Melville's use of categories and divisions native to book production (folio, quarto, duodecimo) as well as longform narrative (individual whale species are listed as chapters within books) posits a potentially limitless redeployment of these book-centric terms in the service of other bodies of knowledge. Books—objects previously thought to be containers for recorded knowledge—come to represent a portable system for the organization, and categorization of non-textual information. By utilizing the size, shape, and physical qualities of books as vehicles for metaphor and comparison, Melville brings into relief the kinds of knowledge that books convey aside from their textual content. We are reminded that we can

[36] Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick; or, The Whale*, eds. Hershel Parker and Harrison Hayford (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002) 117. All further citations will be made in-text.

know the size, shape, and qualities of a book in a more immediate and, perhaps, lasting way than what we come to know by reading. In a novel rich with scenes of reading and numerous intertexts, readers are invited to reckon with a set of books that exceed the activity of reading, challenging us to consider the limits to our perception of textual objects.

This loop of learning, seeing, and knowing plays out in miniature when Ishmael explains how he often reads his "whale books" by looking through a small scrap of whale skin which he enjoys "fancying has an enlarging effect." Books have already been redeployed as a non-textual means for understanding whales, but here Ishmael reads his text through a scrap of whale skin and marks his place in books about whales with a bit of substance sloughed off from the outermost layer of a whale's body. He revels in the irony of this and takes pleasure in placing the skin within the body of a book describing the history, anatomy, and biology the animal. This image of Ishmael looking through the whale skin at the text of his book harkens back to a moment of indecipherability related to the "hieroglyphics" he notices on the surface of a whale, though seemingly protected by several layers of skin. Though he can't translate the markings of the whale for himself, we see he can bring a bit of skin into position over a text he *can* read.

There are many other instances in the novel where readers are confronted with ungraspable, or perhaps imperceptible, objects and ideas. As Samuel Otter and others have demonstrated, *Moby-Dick* is shot through with questions of perspective and vantage point. A recurring theme in these discussions is the novel's interest in moments that prompt our recognition of the limits to what we can know. For Ishmael, this is most often expressed when he's confronted with his own inability to decipher, as in the case of the whale's "hierogyphics."

He brings these challenges to the foreground, even celebrates them, throughout his discussions of sperm whales. In one of the most iconic moments of considering this species, Ishmael notes:

> How is it, then, with the whale? True, both his eyes, in themselves, must simultaneously act; but is his brain so much more comprehensive, combining, and subtle than man's, that he can at the same moment of time attentively examine two distinct prospects, one on one side of him, and the other in an exactly opposite direction? If he can, then is it as marvellous a thing in him, as if a man were able simultaneously to go through the demonstrations of two distinct problems in Euclid. (263)

Ishmael takes time to elaborate the ways sperm whales defy representation, the sublime feeling that observing the shape of their heads elicits in him, even the fact that their skeletons give "very little idea of [their] general shape" (262). In all of their inaccessibility, these whales remind him of the particularity of his own relation to the world. There is much to be understood that it is beyond the limits of his perspective. In his essay "Reading *Moby-Dick*," Samuel Otter writes, "The sperm whale poses a perceptual difficulty, as the narrator wonders…how it takes in the world with eyes placed on opposite sides of its head…"[37] Otter concludes his essay with the claim that in *Moby-Dick* "whale and book are joined…as objects in the quest to understand the principles of coherence" (83). I'd like to suggest that this pairing demonstrates only one aspect of the explanatory power of book-objects in Melville's novel.

At the very end of Chapter 110 "Queequeg in His Coffin," after Queequeg recovers from his fever and proceeds to reclaim his coffin as a "sea chest" (366) Ishmael remarks on his friend's efforts to carve the lid of his coffin to match his tattoos:

> [H]e was striving, in his rude way, to copy parts of the twisted tattooing on his body. And this tattooing had been the work of a departed prophet and seer of his island, who, by those hieroglyphic marks, had written out on his body a complete theory of the heavens

[37] Samuel Otter, "Reading *Moby-Dick*," in *The New Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 81.

> and the earth…so that Queequeg in his own proper person was a riddle to unfold; a wondrous work in one volume…whose mysteries not even himself could read, though his own live heart beat against them; and these mysteries were therefore destined…to moulder away with the living parchment whereon they were inscribed…. (366–367)

In the span of two sentences Ishmael reconceives of Queequeg's body as a book and his tattoos as hieroglyphics. The indecipherability of Queequeg's body as well as the cosmology his tattoos represent underlies Ishmael's description such that it works its way into his explanatory analogy: Queequeg is "a riddle to unfold." By merging the metaphorical capacity of textual objects with the materiality of Queequeg's body, Melville resolves the disunity of text and object on display in the early scene of the pale Usher. This indecipherable text is one and the same with Queequeg—absorbed into a living parchment, mastered by a nonreading subject. Such a gesture suspends any assumption regarding the primacy of reading as a means to engage the content and materiality of texts and points the way for thinking through books beyond reading.

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